# A PILGRIM'S FURTHER PROGRESS

## DIALOGUES ON CHRISTIAN TEACHING

BY

CECIL JOHN CADOUX

M.A., D.D., D.LITT.

*Vice-Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford*

BASIL BLACKWELL

OXFORD

1943

Printed in Great Britain for BASIL BLACKWELL & MOTT LIMITED
by A. R. MOWBRAY & CO. LIMITED, London and Oxford

TO

THEODORE

HAROLD

RUTH

AND

JOAN

'But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and in liberal things shall he continue'.

*Isaiah* xxxii. 8.

'If truth do any where manifest itself, seek not to smother it with glozing delusion, acknowledge the greatness thereof, and think it your best victory, when the same doth prevail over you'.

RICHARD HOOKER, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594).

'If so great and considerable a part of the world as America is . . . was yet unknown to all the world besides for so many generations together, well may it be conceived . . . that . . . many truths, yea and those of main concernment and importance, may be yet unborn and not come forth out of their mother's womb—I mean the secrets of the scripture—to see the light of the sun. . . . No man is completely furnished for the ministry of the Gospel . . . who is not as well able to make some new discovery, and to bring forth something of himself in the things of God in one kind or other, as to preach the common and received truths. . . . That is neither new nor unjustifiable by the practice of wise men, to examine, yea and to impugn, received opinions'.

JOHN GOODWIN, *Imputatio Fidei* (1642).

'Reproach not anything thy adversary speaks with this, that thou never heardst it before. For this may not so much discover his error as thy ignorance; and that which seems to thee a new error, if it be truly examined by the Word, may prove an old truth. And if thou wilt needs condemn whatever savours of novelty, how shall the truths we yet know not be brought in, or the errors that yet remain with us be purged out?'

WILLIAM DELL, *The Way of True Peace and Unity among the Faithful and Churches of Christ, in all humility and bowels of love presented to them* (1649).

'I knew not how hardly men's minds are changed from their former apprehensions, be the evidence never so plain'.

RICHARD BAXTER (1615–1691) in *Reliquiae Baxterianae*.

'In religion we must be as bold, as free, as honest, as prepared to face all realities as in science or philosophy. Slavery to tradition, fear of inquiry, submission to institutions are not religion but the want of it, not faith but unbelief'.

JOHN OMAN, *Honest Religion* (1941).

'As we've seen, unreality in religion is something with which God can have nothing to do'.

JOHN MARSH, *The Living God* (1943).

# PREFACE

Any one who in these days takes it in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which he most surely believes will do well to consider for whose sake he is setting it forth. The answer to that question, so far as the present work is concerned, is—in general, the whole community of those interested in Christian teaching, and more particularly, those who are concerned, or who ought to be concerned, to know what Liberal Protestantism has to say for itself in times when so many are denouncing it as the grand source of all our religious troubles, the repudiation of which source constitutes the first step in a return to sanity.

I have chosen the catechetical type of dialogue as the form in which to set my declaration forth. There are several kinds of catechisms: but the main distinction to be drawn is between that kind wherein the answers are given by the pupil under instruction, and that wherein the answers are given by the teacher to a supposed enquirer. An example of the former type is the Catechism printed in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, the purpose of which is to test the sufficiency of the knowledge possessed by the candidate for Confirmation. Examples of the latter would be the *Tridentine Catechism* of the Roman Church, and the so-called *Racovian Catechism*, each of which aims at expounding in a sort of systematic manifesto the teaching for which the body which issues it stands. Akin to this second type is a treatise like Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo?* The Larger and the Shorter Westminster Catechisms seem to occupy a sort of intermediate position between the two main varieties. A feature common, however, to all real catechisms is that the answers constitute collectively a body of positive doctrinal teaching. I have called the work here presented 'dialogues', as being on the whole less formal and more conversational than a 'catechism' in the strict sense. But in so far as it is catechetical, it resembles the second rather than the first of the two types just described. The questions, that is to say, are those of an enquirer or learner, the answers those of a teacher supposed to be competent to deal with them.

Such a method of composing a theological treatise has certain obvious drawbacks: and it may be as well at this point to put the reader on his guard against them. The main danger is that the form of the work may at first sight suggest that the author is claiming for his utterances a sort of pontifical or magisterial authority. For, of course, 'the Interpreter' in the ensuing pages is simply myself, and his answers are simply my own judgments, while the poor 'Pilgrim' can ask only such questions as I put into his mouth. But it hardly needs to be said that to accept such a suggestion as has been mentioned would be a real unfairness to the author. The form of my composition is simply form, and does not imply any desire on my part to lay down the law in the quasi-dictatorial manner of a schoolmaster, or to run away from all objections save those which I feel able to bowl over like so many Aunt Sallies. I wish to evade no relevant objections; and for my answers to them I claim no other authority than the measure of truth which they may contain.

A minor difficulty is that in a dialogue one cannot classify and articulate the material in the same clear and thorough way as is possible in a normal treatise. The detailed table of contents is therefore intended to help the reader to keep his hand on the thread of the discussion.

Provided these and other difficulties can be surmounted, the catechetical or dialogue form possesses certain advantages of its own. It allows of a simpler and more clean-cut isolation of the author's treatment of separate points, such as ought to render his meaning clearer to less-expert readers, while not quenching the interest of those more familiar with the lie of the land. It allows, moreover, of a freer and more homely style of speech than would be strictly proper in an ordinary literary work, and thus relieves to some extent the heaviness often involved in the close treatment of deep and serious themes. It also keeps the author mindful of the need of dealing fairly and sympathetically with the objections to which others feel his views lie open, and enables him to show how far he has succeeded in understanding and appreciating them.

The name of 'Interpreter' was first suggested to me by a friend: and I accepted it as fitly expressing the rôle to which I was venturing to aspire. This choice was in its turn responsible for fixing the title of the book. But I trust I shall not be on that ground suspected of desiring to challenge comparison with the immortal Bunyan. As a slight safeguard I have named my interlocutor 'Pilgrim' and not 'Christian'.

It has recently become customary in certain circles to distinguish sharply between 'preaching' and 'teaching'—κήρυγμα and διδαχή. The distinction is sometimes drawn for the purpose of relatively disparaging the latter. The earliest evangelists of the Christian faith, we are told, did not 'teach'—still less did they argue: they 'proclaimed'. And how often have I heard fervent students and ministers insist that the minister's duty in the pulpit is not to deliver his own private opinions, but to 'preach the Gospel'!

Now I am far from supposing that the distinction is an idle one. For a certain type of pulpit-ministry—that, namely, in which it is needful simply to testify to the foundation-realities of the Christian faith—what is wanted is no doubt witness rather than argument, declaration rather than explanation. But we have to be very careful how far we press the distinction. The preacher's so-called 'private opinions' are simply his convictions, designated in less-respectful terms: and if 'the Gospel' he preaches does not tally with his convictions, he has no right or title to preach it. Much of the emphasis laid on the distinction, in fact, springs from that wilful modern tendency to shut one's eyes at all costs to the subjective conditions of religious belief. Be that as it may, it is clear that in any proper presentation of Christianity—as the New Testament itself makes abundantly plain—explanation and declaration lie close alongside one another, and must always go hand-in-hand. And this for the obvious reason that, while the Christian's fellowman is a fitting recipient of sheer testimony borne to the great spiritual realities of our religion, it is an affront to his rights as an intelligent child of God to expect him to be content without any intellectual accompaniment or complement to the spiritual witness he is expected to accept.

In any case no one seriously doubts that there is a place in Christian literature for reasoned doctrinal elucidation: so that the task I have set myself in writing this book is a legitimate one—at least so far as its objective is concerned. The reader will observe that, in the course of the first two chapters, I have explained what I understand to be the true relation between religion and doctrine; and as this view of the relation is fundamental to my whole attitude to theological questions, I want to beg that it be kept in mind throughout, in order that the bearing of the convictions I express may not be needlessly misunderstood.

If the task of theological exposition is to be undertaken at all, it is obvious that such exposition ought to aim at being, as far as possible, coherent and clear. Coherence is a mark of truth, so far as man can know it: and while one must of course admit that the human mind is incapable of plumbing 'the deep things of God' to their ultimate foundation, it would be a foolish neglect of our plain duty not to follow the clear leadings of our intelligence as far as ever they are able to guide us. Ultimately, of course, we reach the end of our rational resources, and are compelled to acknowledge ourselves to be in the presence of mysteries, antinomies, and paradoxes which we do not possess the means of clarifying. But to make such awareness of our limitations an excuse for snapping our fingers at reason before these limitations are reached, and to excuse our defiance of it by referring to the ultimate mystery of things, is unworthy of a serious theologian and suicidal as a means of defending or even understanding the faith.

It must, of course, be frankly admitted that the attempt to build, elaborate, and judge Christian doctrine is one beset by its own peculiar dangers. The assertion is probably true that there has never been any new movement of Christian thought but what has led some of its adherents badly astray. But if we are to put forth no effort and undertake no enterprise which involves the risk of any damage being done in the course of it, we shall never theologize at all. I am not suggesting that, in our theologizing, we should recklessly disregard the susceptibilities and vulnerabilities of other people. What I mean is this: the possibility that some people may, on their own responsibility, misuse our findings, and that other people (not obliged to consider our opinions at all unless they wish to) may be put off or feel upset by the expression of views different from their own, is not a valid reason why theological questions should not be thoroughly and frankly discussed, so long as this is done with a sincere motive and in a spirit of reverence towards both God and man.

One of the greatest hindrances to mutual understanding in the field of Christian doctrine is the loose use of question-begging labels, without regard to the precise measure of justice, if any, with which they can be affixed. Nothing is commoner in present-day controversy than to hear a particular theologian or a particular theory characterized by some broad epithet which is meant to be derogatory—such as 'old-fashioned', 'high-and-dry', 'Pelagian', 'Socinian', 'Modernist', 'Liberal', 'humanistic', and so on—and which is offered as an equivalent for a reasoned statement of the grounds on which the speaker dissents from it. Closely akin to this cheap type of abuse is the habit of drawing from some isolated expression or conclusion of a writer an unwelcome inference which, at least at first sight, seems to follow from it, and then, without further consideration, raising hands of holy horror at it, as if it were of itself so contrary to the obvious truth as to discredit the whole body of teaching associated with it. No procedure, surely, could be more unfair. Each argument deserves to be impartially weighed on its own merits, and studied in its own context. To attempt to reach and to defend the truth by relying mainly on the twin arguments *ad verecundiam* and *ad terrorem* is doomed in advance to failure—'assurèd loss before the match be played'.

On a long view, the safest path of theological progress is a bold and trustful use of reason and intelligence, combined with reverence for the great central sanctities, human and Divine. Errors of judgment may, of course, be committed by the way. But the possibility of error has to be faced, *whatever* theological path we tread. And to seek the corrective of it in an open-minded re-examination of our thought-processes, and in repeated efforts to reach coherence in our conclusions, is—if the teaching of experience is to count—a far-safer policy than to seek it (as so many prefer to do) by taking our stand on some body of objective declarations, arbitrarily assumed to be necessarily immune from error.

C. J. C.

*May 1943*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# A PILGRIM'S FURTHER PROGRESS

## I

## THE EXISTENCE AND CHARACTER OF GOD

*Pilgrim.* What do you mean by the word 'God'?

*Interpreter.* By the word 'God' I mean the one, supreme, everlasting, holy, personal Being, perfect in knowledge, power, and goodness, Who is the ultimate ground of reality, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the Lord and Lover of all creatures.

*P.* Why should I believe in the existence of such a God?

*I.* Because belief in His existence is a natural and necessary act of faith on the part of a spiritual being like yourself.

*P.* Why do you call this belief 'an act of faith'?

*I.* Because as a spiritual being man can no more dispense with faith (which means simply trust or reliance) as a basis for life and thought, than as a scientist or mathematician he can dispense with it as a basis for his knowledge of the physical world.

*P.* In what way does the scientist or mathematician base his work on faith? I thought his claim was to operate by means of reason alone.

*I.* If he does make that claim, he is misinterpreting his own method. For before he begins to reason and argue, he has to take for granted (that is, to accept on faith) certain great axioms, such as the uniformity and knowability of Nature, the reliability of sense-perception, and the validity of rational inference as a means of arriving at truth.

*P.* Why do you call these beliefs 'axioms'?

*I.* Because the truth of them is seen intuitively and grasped by immediate acts of faith, not as the conclusions of processes of argument. They are the indispensable pre-requisites of argument, not its outcome.

*P.* Why should I regard the existence of God as an axiom in this sense?

*I.* Because it is as needful and natural to *spiritual* beings, for the understanding of life and the satisfaction of the soul's hunger, as is the acceptance of the axioms of science to *scientific* beings for the understanding of the natural world.

*P.* If that is so, how comes it that so many good and intelligent persons do not believe in God?

*I.* Because there exist spiritually-undeveloped persons just as there exist intellectually- and artistically-undeveloped persons. It is not always possible to account completely for such defective development. It may be due partly to avoidable neglect or inattention, and partly to such persons being constitutionally at an elementary stage of development.

*P.* Is there then no positive *proof* of the existence of God?

*I.* That depends on what you mean by proof.

*P.* Can 'proof' mean more than one thing?

*I.* O yes. A proof may be either deductive, or inductive, or experimental.

*P.* What is a deductive proof?

*I.* A deductive proof or 'syllogism' is the drawing-out of a conclusion necessarily involved in or implied by at least two 'premises', that is, two assertions which are taken as given. A simple example would be: Granted the two premises, (1) 'All men are mortal', and (2) 'Socrates is a man', the conclusion necessarily follows that 'Socrates is mortal'. If the premises are true, the conclusion is absolutely certain: but failing that, no reliable deduction can be drawn, and no 'proof' therefore is possible.

*P.* Can there be a deductive proof of God's existence?

*I.* No—for this reason: the infinite magnitude of the conclusion would rule out the possibility of obtaining, or even imagining, any sufficiently-great premises from which to deduce it. Even if we could frame such premises, we should simply have to take them for granted: and if we had to do that, we might just as well take the conclusion itself for granted right away.

*P.* Well, what is an inductive proof?

*I.* An inductive proof is the drawing of a more-or-less probable conclusion from a number of observed or experienced data. Thus, if all the swans we have ever seen are white, the chances are that one of which we have only heard is also white—in other words, that *all* swans are white. Such an argument gives no absolute certainty: for when Australia was visited, black swans were found. But the strength of an inductive argument varies greatly with the circumstances of the case, and may amount to a very-high degree of probability, while never reaching really-absolute logical cogency.

*P*. Can there be an inductive proof of God's existence?

*I*. Certainly. The existence of God is rendered in the highest degree probable by the converging evidence of such phenomena as (1) the numerous indications of intelligent design in Nature, and our need to envisage an adequate cause for them, (2) man's awareness of authoritative moral standards, and (3) the general tendency of the human race to hold religious beliefs and practise religious worship. This evidence does not constitute a binding demonstration; but it supplies a valuable assurance that what we had in the first place posited as an axiom by an act of faith is fully consonant with a reasonable interpretation of the world as we know it.

*P*. And now I should like you to tell me what is an experimental proof.

*I*. By an experimental (as distinct from an inductive) proof I mean a deliberate verification of some prior assumption or hypothesis by putting it directly to the test of our personal experience. Its commonest sample is: 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating'.

*P*. How would that apply to belief in God?

*I*. When men act on and live by a trust in God, made initially on the strength of their simple intuition as spiritual beings, they have normally found that what might be expected to follow if their intuitions were sound does actually follow: nay, that the more fully and loyally they trust God, the more does God seem to justify their trust.

*P*. How then would you sum up your answer to the question about proving God's existence?

*I*. I should say that the real ground for a confident belief in God must, in the nature of the case, be a personal act of faith, not a logical proof. The only logical proof that gives absolute certainty is a syllogistic deduction: but the conclusion has to rest on premises. The existence of God might well be one of the premises of a syllogism, but it could never be the conclusion, for lack of adequate premises from which to deduce it. But when once His existence has been posited by faith as an axiom, then both inductive argument and verification by experience are valuable as confirmations of the truth of the axiom. Only in that sense is belief in God capable of being logically proved.

*P.* But is it not possible that God may exist, and yet be quite other than what at the beginning you said He was?

*I.* No, for if He were other than what I described, it would not be natural or even possible for man, as a spiritual being, to posit His existence by an axiomatic act of faith.

*P.* How do you make that out?

*I.* Well, is it not patent that, if God were more than one, were not immortal and supreme, were impersonal, imperfect, or devoid of holiness, were not the ultimate ground of all being, had not created and did not sustain the universe, had no authority over created beings, and did not love them, men would not find themselves hungering and thirsting after Him as they do, and reposing their faith in Him as the only One in Whom their souls can rest?

*P.* Yes, I suppose it is. But what is the one great principle involved in such an argument?

*I.* This—that we cannot imagine God to be greater or better than He actually is, and that the highest characteristics and relationships we know of must not only be true of Him, but must mean more to Him than attributes and powers which we know to be lower in dignity and worth. Thus, since we ourselves are personal beings, and personal life is the highest type of existence known to us, God must be, not an impersonal force, but a living person: otherwise, He would be a Being of a lower rank than ourselves—which is absurd. Again, since personal love is the most sacred relationship between living beings known to us, then God's love and grace must be more fundamental in His dealings with us than even His Creatorship and His sovereignty, and our personal communion with Him must mean more to Him than legal correctness or commercial satisfaction.

*P.* In saying that belief in God is at bottom an axiomatic act of faith and not the conclusion of a process of argument, do you suggest that the conscious positing of such an axiom is chronologically the first step in the formation of our belief?

*I.* No. The priority of the act of faith is logical only, rarely if ever chronological. Chronologically, simple acceptance on the assurance of others generally comes first. Moreover, the act of faith is usually only implicit or subconscious at first, and indeed sometimes remains so throughout a believer's life.

## II

## THE NATURE AND CONDITIONS OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

*Pilgrim*. Before we go any further, I should like you to clear up certain questions connected with Christian doctrine generally.

*Interpreter*. What questions in particular?

*P*. Well, suppose you begin by explaining to me the relation between faith, religious experience, theology, doctrine, and orthodoxy.

*I*. Faith, I should say, is man's assurance that there does exist a God of the character we have described, Who has dealings with him, and his reverent and loyal acceptance of these dealings. Religious experience is what he himself feels and sees of these dealings. Theology is the attempt to investigate intelligently and systematically the significance of man's religious experience for his beliefs about God. Doctrines are the findings to which theology leads. Orthodoxy means the sum-total of doctrines which are sound and tenable: but inasmuch as opinions differ greatly as to which doctrines *are* sound and tenable, the word 'orthodoxy' has acquired a secondary and less-justifiable meaning as designating those doctrines which have long been traditionally accepted within some tacitly-predefined group of Christian people.

*P*. Seeing that God is eternally unchangeable, and that man's mind is always subject to the same laws of thought, how do you account for the wide differences between the doctrines of one man or group of men, and those of another?

*I*. By the fact that, notwithstanding the two great constants you have mentioned, each theologian brings to his task certain subjective characteristics peculiar to himself or shared by only a certain number of his fellows; and these help in some measure to shape the conclusions he reaches.

*P*. But cannot all theologians, who honestly desire to reach the truth, allow for these subjective factors, and eliminate any distortion due to them?

*I.* Ideally, they should be able to do so: but there is one great obstacle in the way of such elimination.

*P.* What is that?

*I.* It is man's natural disinclination to take seriously the subjective conditions of all his thinking. This disinclination arises from his unwillingness to seem to throw doubt on, or call in question, conclusions of the truth of which he feels strongly convinced. Hence the almost-total neglect of these subjective conditions in early philosophy and throughout the centuries during which the first Christian doctrines were being hammered out. In more recent times proper attention to them (though acknowledged in theory to be necessary) is hampered by the sanctity with which tradition has by now invested certain doctrines framed long ago before the subjective factor was allowed for.

*P.* But is it not only natural that, when once subjective conditions are admitted to be a possible cause of error in doctrines, men should fear that they can no longer be sure of anything?

*I.* It is natural, certainly; but there is no real need for such a sense of insecurity.

*P.* How can it possibly be avoided?

*I.* By constantly remembering the broad distinction between the foundation-realities of religion and the doctrinal conceptions based on them and designed to describe and clarify them.

*P.* Will you elaborate this distinction a little further?

*I.* Certainly. By the foundation-realities I mean the religious convictions which are either axiomatically presupposed in all the thinking of a spiritual person (such as the existence and perfection of God and the authority of His will as the moral law), or directly rooted in his religious experience (such as the Lordship and Saviourhood of Jesus Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, and the power of prayer). To be distinguished from these are the doctrinal conceptions or propositions, to which men's minds have been led as a result of reflecting on the foundation-realities: examples would be the pre-existence of Christ, the Triune nature of God, the Atonement (as usually understood), the inerrancy of the Bible, and in fact the general interpretation of it.

*P.* Well, what does the difference between these two groups signify?

*I.* The difference means this—that, while the foundation-realities are absolute, and as such are the unquestioned possession of all Christians in common, the doctrines are always in some measure relative, and are therefore never sacrosanct and inherently unalterable.

*P.* But how do you know that the foundation-realities are absolute? Are they not just as liable to perversion, through the subjective factor, as the resultant doctrines themselves?

*I.* No: because these foundation-realities, though there is a subjective element in our grasp of them, and though we have to use imperfect human words in order to speak of them, are not *wedded* to verbal propositions in the way that formulated doctrines are. They are either matters of immediate human experience, or else presuppositions of spiritual thinking. In either case they can be accounted for only by referring them to the agency of One Who is other and greater than ourselves. Doctrinal propositions, on the other hand, are quite clearly human constructions. As such, their formulation is naturally to a larger extent affected by the subjective conditions of the theologian's mind, and is much more liable to partial and varying limitation or perversion in consequence.

*P.* Would you say, then, that it is hopeless for theologians to expect ever to reach agreement in formulating true doctrines?

*I.* Entire agreement is probably out of the question. But a much closer approach would be possible if certain needful conditions could be observed.

*P.* What conditions are those?

*I.* Well, theologians should in the first place realize that the religious truth they are seeking is of a piece with all other truth attainable by man—for the simple reason that all truth, whether 'religious' or not, is God's truth, and God cannot deny or contradict Himself, or be isolated from any portion of reality.

*P.* What follows from this unitary view of reality?

*I.* This—that, notwithstanding the great differences in subject-matter, religious truth is to be attained by substantially the same principles and methods as have proved themselves valid in less-contentious fields of enquiry, such as the physical sciences.

*P.* But is not that to ignore the peculiar element of revelation which is said to characterize the truth of religion?

*I.* No; I am not forgetting revelation. If such a God as we have confessed exists, He must needs reveal Himself to man, and indeed must take the initiative in so doing. I am only avoiding the error of limiting revelation to what we usually call 'religion'.

*P.* But how can the term 'revelation' be applied to non-religious knowledge like the sciences? Are they not the concern of man's unaided reason?

*I.* By no means. Man's reason is never unaided—firstly, because it is created and guided by God, and secondly, because, through His created works, God presents or 'reveals' to man certain objective data upon which his reason and intelligence can work. Without such data being presented to him, science would be impossible, for man's reason could then reach nothing beyond the pure abstractions of mathematical and logical forms, if so much.

*P.* Have we not then to distinguish between Christianity as the 'religion of revelation' and other religions as 'natural' or unrevealed?

*I.* No; that is a clumsy means of marking the distinction. As Newman admitted, 'there is something true and divinely revealed in every religion'. Not even the so-called 'scandal of particularity' is a Christian monopoly: hence the proposed distinction between a general and a special revelation does not clear the matter up. On the other hand, Christianity involves just as much use of the human element (intelligence, conscience, and so on) as do the other religions of the world. It must therefore be distinguished from them in other ways and by the use of other terms.

*P.* You are certainly giving what some would regard as a peculiar meaning to the word 'revelation'. Coming back to science for a moment, what is there in it that corresponds to the Christian's humble committal of himself in religion to the self-unfolding of God?

*I.* There is the scientist's love for truth, his eager, humble, disinterested quest for it, and his self-effacing loyalty to its laws. The differences between the scientist and the theologian relate to the *content* of the particular fields they are severally studying, not to the essential principles governing their respective methods of work.

*P.* How then would you distinguish between theology and that greater science we call 'philosophy'?

*I.* I should distinguish between them as I distinguish between the whole and the part. Theology is the philosophy of religion. The task of philosophy is the systematization of experience as a whole; the task of theology is the systematization of *religious* experience.

*P.* But do not some thinkers distinguish sharply between (1) theology as concerned with revealed truth, and (2) philosophy as concerned with purely-natural knowledge?

*I.* Indeed they do: but I think they are mistaken. I have already shown you that revelation is needed by the scientist or philosopher as much as it is by the theologian: and I now observe that intelligent investigation is needed by the theologian as much as it is by the scientist or philosopher. How, without it, is the theologian to tell whether what some book or teacher puts before him as a true 'revelation' is so or not? You will notice that those who depreciate reliance on reason and intelligence when dealing with religious revelation never hesitate to use these powers vigorously themselves in this connexion, thus tacitly pre-supposing their validity. Moreover, since revelation is a real item in human experience, any philosophy which left it out of account would condemn itself *ipso facto* as sadly inadequate.

*P.* What place do you assign to the Bible in the construction of Christian doctrine?

*I.* A most-important place—because it embodies a record of God's dealings with man and of man's experience of God which is unique in its clarity, truth, and spiritual power.

*P.* Is not the Bible the authoritative Word of God?

*I.* It certainly *contains* the Word of God, and God's Word is always authoritative: but it contains it in a very-human setting There is also a more-general sense in which *the whole* of the Bible can be called 'the Word of God', because the story as a whole unfolds to us the fulfilment of the Divine purpose. But in neither case is it the Word of God in the sense that all things said in it are true in point of fact or that all judgments expressed in it reflect truly the Divine mind.

*P.* If that be so, how are we to distinguish between those parts of the book which are God's Word from that human setting which contains or conveys it?

*I.* By the guidance of God's Holy Spirit operating more and more effectively within us, through conscience and intelligence, as we read with a sincere desire to learn.

*P.* But if it is this Spirit upon which we are after all really to rely, why do we need the Bible at all?

*I.* In the same way, roughly, as the medical student, relying *ultimately* on his own experience, observation, and reflection, needs also to have before him the findings of his experienced medical predecessors. He needs them, in order to learn from them: but he is always at liberty to check and sift them. The same combination of (1) dependence on an external teacher, and (2) the ultimate autonomy of private judgment, can be illustrated from any scientific study you like to name.

*P.* What is to happen if I misread, as I possibly may, the guidance of God's Spirit?

*I.* Such misreading is admittedly possible; and the risk of it has to be faced. And let us observe, in passing, that, because you are differently made from your neighbour, your misreadings are likely to be somewhat different from his: hence arise the varieties of opinion, which are so often adduced as an objection to private judgment. That is why an intelligent learner will always take careful heed of the judgment of those who are more experienced than himself. But as in other studies, so here, the really-final corrective of error lies in a re-examination of the objective data, under the guidance of God's Spirit of Truth. That is, in point of fact, how all human errors are in the last resort corrected. To suppose that we can correct them adequately by setting up a single external authority over ourselves, and electing to treat it as infallible, is as unnecessary, as insufferable, and as unsuccessful in religion as you can see perfectly well it would be in medicine or in astronomy.

*P.* Coming back to the Bible—does it not stand apart in a class by itself, distinct from all other religious literature?

*I.* Yes, in the sense that it deals with a unique series of events, contains a specially-significant message, and bears a purer and more-fontal character than any other body of literature known to us. But the line of demarcation between it and other religious writings, as drawn by the Hebrew Canon of the Old Testament and the Christian Canon of the New, is not so sharp and final as to establish a qualitative difference between *all* other such writings and *every part* of the canonical Scriptures. There is, for instance, no reason other than what can be based upon their respective inherent qualities for regarding the Old-Testament Apocrypha as uninspired and for regarding Ecclesiastes as inspired. And one can think of many pieces of later Christian writing in which the Word of God is more clearly heard than it is, say, in the Song of Songs, or the Second and Third Epistles of John, or the Epistle of Jude.

*P.* What is this 'Higher Criticism' which I hear Fundamentalists denouncing so vehemently?

*I.* 'Higher Criticism' does not mean, as some ignorantly assume that it does, a superior or carping attitude to the Scriptures. Nor does it spring, as has so often and so unfairly been said, from religious unbelief. It means the serious examination of the Scriptures, in the first place documentarily and historically, on the same principles of investigation and by means of the same laws of probability, as are unquestioningly accepted in all non-biblical literary and historical study.

*P.* But why is it called 'Higher'?

*I.* Simply to distinguish it, as dealing with literary and historical questions, from the so-called 'Lower Criticism', which deals with the problem of determining the original *wording* of the Scripture-documents, in view of the discrepancies found in our extant manuscripts of them.

*P.* Does it deal with the ethical and religious teachings of the Bible, as well as with its literary and historical problems?

*I.* Strictly speaking, no. Its primary province is limited to questions of history and literature. Since, however, these are intertwined with questions of religion and ethics, our judgments on the latter are bound to be affected by our conclusions on the former. It is this fact which rebuts the plea sometimes advanced that our learned forefathers in the faith were perfectly familiar with all the data which we have to face to-day. And in any case, the same Spirit-guided intelligence which justifies literary and historical criticism equips us for the handling of ulterior questions also.

*P.* That sounds reasonable enough. But why don't Fundamentalists like it?

*I.* Chiefly because of their ignorance regarding it. They assume quite wrongly that it means setting up man's judgment against God's, that it denies the inspiration of the Bible, that it is inseparably tied up with all the extreme views of individual critics of former times, and that it is bound to lead eventually to total scepticism. Fuller knowledge would disabuse them of these misconceptions: but they are too often either disinclined to seek it or incapable of receiving it. They are alarmed by the discovery that Criticism proves a number of their previously-accepted literary and historical judgments to be erroneous; and so in a panic they condemn the whole movement.

*P.* But are they not right at least in believing that Higher Criticism lowers the esteem in which Christians were formerly wont to hold the contents of Scripture?

*I.* To some extent that is so; but it is only the negative element in a movement of thought which is on the whole good. It is incidental to a wider knowledge of the truth. Painful for a time it may be: but the pain is simply the price we must pay for receiving a larger blessing —the larger blessing being in this case a better appreciation of the Bible's true riches.

*P.* Yet does not the Fundamentalist's simple faith in the whole Bible contrast favourably with the Critic's precarious picking-and-choosing?

*I.* Not at all. For the Fundamentalist in reality picks-and-chooses as much as the Critic does—when he prefers some parts of the Bible as being more comforting and edifying than others. These latter parts, though he professes to believe them to be 'God's Holy Word', and therefore reads them devoutly, say nothing enlightening to him. The difference between the Fundamentalist and the Critic therefore, in their devotional use of the Bible, is not that the Critic picks-and-chooses, while the Fundamentalist humbly accepts the whole, but that the Critic picks-and-chooses with his eyes open and on a deliberate and rational plan, while the Fundamentalist picks-and-chooses without recognizing that he is doing so, and on no thought-out principle. Furthermore, not only does the Fundamentalist pick-and-choose between one part of the Bible and another; he picks-and-chooses in selecting the Bible as of supreme religious value from among all other good literature. Now if a man's private judgment, led thus by the Spirit of God, can justify him in seeing God's Word more clearly in the Bible than elsewhere, it must by the same token justify him in seeing God's Word more clearly in one part of the

Bible than another, and even in refusing to see God's Word at all in some parts of it.

*P.* How does Higher Criticism affect theology?

*I.* It compels the theologian to make allowance for the 'human setting' when he is using the Bible as a doctrinal source. The clear evidence of religious progress reflected in the Bible forces him to treat all doctrines taught in the Bible as 'relative', that is to say, as bearing the stamp of their teachers' limitations as well as the stamp of their illumination. The religious experiences reflected and recorded in the Bible, on the other hand, are fundamental: only the thought-forms in which they are clothed must not be treated as necessarily final or absolute.

*P.* But is that true of the New Testament? I thought the New Testament was the ultimate standard of authority for Christian belief as for Christian conduct.

*I.* Neither the whole Bible, nor any part of it, is, strictly speaking, an *ultimate* standard. Only God Himself can rightly be so described. Yet among all objective embodiments of His Will and Nature, the Bible does hold a central and special place: and within the Bible again, a central and special place is held by the New Testament. This is because it contains the record of the life of Jesus and of the impact which He made on the lives and thoughts of the first two generations of His followers. But its prime value in this respect lies in the foundation-realities to which it bears witness. Such theological doctrines as it contains deserve our reverence, and are to a large extent assimilable to our thought: but they ought not to be regarded as final and inerrant. They bear the stamp of first-century thinking, with its sundry limitations. Apart from various other forms of error, sheer self-contradiction would result from any serious attempt to treat the whole of its multifarious doctrinal utterances as infallible.

*P.* Why do not all conservative theologians reject or attack Higher Criticism as the Fundamentalists do? I am told many of them accept it quite heartily.

*I.* They do not reject it because they realize that in its essentials it is too well-grounded to be likely to succumb to attack. Unlike the Fundamentalists, they realize that it is useless to build on people's ignorance.

*P.* But how do they reconcile their acceptance of Criticism with their conservative theological views?

*I.* By treating the strictly-historical, as it affects central doctrinal issues, as either unattainable or irrelevant. In both cases they are in my judgment sadly mistaken.

*P.* But will not what we can regard as 'strictly-historical' largely depend on our own doctrinal views?

*I.* It has no business to do so. In those matters of historical enquiry, with which doctrinal issues are closely connected, the historical evidence, weighed and assessed with no more doctrinal presuppositions than are involved in an intellectual competence for historical enquiry as such, and a reverent docility towards God and Truth, is entitled to take precedence over any distinctly-doctrinal consideration.

*P.* Would you say that a man's religion depends on his success in attaining a sufficiency of accurate doctrine?

*I.* The amount of accurate doctrine needful to a man's religion varies with his capacity and opportunity for the acquisition of it. Many of the problems raised by theology are insoluble even by the best human intelligence. Clearly, the possession of the true solutions of these cannot be an indispensable condition of healthy religious life, for there is no one living who can solve them. But even in the case of less-mysterious questions than these, it is certainly possible for one who does not possess the capacity or opportunity for reaching the truth (which is, nevertheless, *ex-hypothesi* ideally attainable) to lead a fully-healthy religious life, to commune with God, to receive His grace, and to obey His Will. In such cases, partially-erroneous belief is often the vehicle or accompaniment of genuine piety. Yet the serious quest for God's Truth is an obligation enjoined by Him on man: and one who fails to use in the pursuit of it what powers he has falls short of fulfilling God's Will for him; and his religion necessarily suffers in consequence.

*P.* What is the test of a true doctrine?

*I.* Firstly, that it shall be intellectually consistent with other known truth; and secondly that it shall minister to the ultimate well-being of the believer and his fellows. (The ultimate harmony of the true and the beneficent is assured by the goodness of God's Nature). While on the one hand the basis of all morality is some religious belief (even if it be one held subconsciously), on the other hand the right test of all religious belief is the quality of the moral fruit that issues from it.

## III

# THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

### SECTION I

### *OUR MEANS OF LEARNING THE FACTS CONCERNING HIS LIFE ON EARTH*

*Pilgrim.* What means have we of really ascertaining the truth about Jesus?

*Interpreter.* There are three main sources to be considered—(1) the history of His earthly ministry and teaching, (2) His followers' experience of Him as Saviour, and (3) the theories they evolved in order to account for this history and this experience.

*P.* Is there any order of precedence in which these three sources should be consulted?

*I.* Yes, the right order is that in which I have named them. In particular, it is essential to begin with the history.

*P.* Why are you so emphatic about that?

*I.* Because the earthly life of Jesus, besides being the earliest in point of time, is in a way the basis of the other two. In particular, while the Christian experience of Him is vital to any proper understanding of His Person and Work, at the same time any theory about Him built on that alone, and not starting with and developed from the accredited story of His life on earth, is bound to be erroneous.

*P.* But if we must begin with the history, will not everything depend on the presuppositions with which we approach the records? Some of my friends tell me that, since all our Gospels were written by men holding certain beliefs about Jesus, I must myself start my study with those same beliefs if I want to reach the real truth regarding what they relate.

*I.* That, I know, is what some people are saying; but it is a mistake. Christian beliefs about Jesus ought to be based on the historical facts, not *vice versa*. Remember Canon R. C. Moberly's wise words, written in *Lux Mundi* in 1889: 'Councils, we admit, and Creeds, cannot go behind, but must wholly rest upon the history of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

*P.* But can one rightly assess the evidence unless one is a believer?

*I.* That depends on what you mean by 'a believer'. One can certainly assess the evidence without possessing a theory of Christ's Person to start with. The only 'belief' required as a condition of successful enquiry (apart from technical historical and literary competence) is that reverent docility towards God and Truth of which we spoke yesterday. That is the one great pre-condition of all the accepted conclusions both of Lower and Higher Criticism. And—what matters more—that seems to have been the one condition which Jesus Himself demanded from those to whom He addressed His message.

*P.* Then what am I to say to those who tell me that, because no record contains bare fact without interpretation, I must not try to detach the bare facts about Jesus' life from the interpretations which the Evangelists have given to them?

*I.* You can safely dismiss that as an aberration—not because the Evangelists' interpretations are uninteresting or unimportant, but because the prohibition you quote is a palpable absurdity. If no version of a recorded fact is worth reconstructing except on the lines on which its earliest recorders interpreted it, all serious history-writing must needs come to a full stop. Besides, the very scholars who so argue do not hesitate to give to the Parables, for instance, very different interpretations from what the Evangelists give them. Look for yourself at the Parable in Matthew xx. 1-16, for instance. By comparing xix. 30, xx. 16, and the last words of xx. 8, you can see at once that the Evangelist was totally at sea as to the real meaning of the Parable. Yet the 'bare fact' that the Parable was so spoken is unaffected by that discovery. What then is the sense of saying that we must not separate the bare facts about Jesus from the Evangelists' interpretation of them?

*P.* Yes, I agree that we must be free to sift, and that—beside some technical competence in the handling of historical documents—we need no doctrinal preparation for the work other than the reverent docility of which you spoke. But what sort of records *are* the Gospels, and what sort of trust can one repose in their statements?

*I.* For a full answer to that question, I must refer you to the works of Drs. B. H. Streeter, Vincent Taylor, and T. W. Manson. And I shall have to assume, next time we meet, that you will know what is meant by the symbols Q, L, and M, as well as something about the diverse characteristics of the three Synoptic Gospels. But, broadly speaking, the position is this: the Synoptists' statements about the deeds and words of Jesus, unless (as is here and there the case, especially in Matthew) there are assignable reasons, either documentary or internal, for regarding them as created by the Church's own thought or devotion, can be taken as substantially accurate.

*P.* What about the Fourth Gospel?

*I.* The narrative and chronology of the Fourth Gospel rest in large measure on a good line of tradition, partly independent of the Synoptic line, and are therefore of great historical value. The work *as a whole*, however, can hardly be that of an eye-witness; otherwise it would not represent Jesus as publicly advancing His Messianic claim from the outset of His ministry, which we know from the Synoptics He did not do. Nor can the discourses contained in it be regarded as historically true in at all the same degree as can the Synoptic sayings: their style differs widely from that of the uninventable Synoptic teaching, but is indistinguishable from that of the Fourth Evangelist's own reflections. These discourses are therefore best regarded as on the whole a free interpretation created by the Evangelist for the purpose of setting forth what he felt was the real significance of Jesus' ministry, somewhat in the same way that the *Dialogues* of Plato give us for the most part, not Socrates' *ipsissima verba*, but Plato's own philosophical views as to what Socrates' teaching implied. There is abundant evidence to the effect that that sort of proceeding was regarded in ancient literature as entirely legitimate.

*P.* Is that the view usually taken of the Johannine discourses?

*I.* I should say it is the one almost universally held by Continental critics and by the most prominent American scholars. In England it is generally admitted that the Johannine discourses include a much larger element of 'interpretation' on the part of the Evangelist than does the Synoptic teaching. But some very eminent English critics insist that, even so, these discourses must be included in any complete account of Jesus' teaching, and that many of the short pithy sayings they contain may well be actual sayings of Jesus Himself.

*P.* I take it that you do not share that view. Will you tell me why?

*I.* I cannot wholly share it because, when once it has been granted that the words have been mainly chosen by the Evangelist for the purpose of setting forth his own interpretation, we are without any objective means of distilling Jesus' own utterances from the rest of the discourse-material. It seems to me better therefore to treat this material in general as a valuable interpretation of Jesus offered by a sincere Christian, rather than as even a rough *report* of things actually said by Him and by others. I ought perhaps to add that this view does not destroy the devotional value of the Fourth Gospel for us, provided we can reconcile ourselves to its now-unfamiliar style of writing. Devotional value in works about Jesus is not limited to those which accurately transcribe His spoken words.

*P.* But is it not being increasingly recognized that a considerable element of interpretation is present in *all* the Gospel-documents, including the oldest?

*I.* Yes, it is: and up to a point rightly so. But it would be a great mistake to refuse on that ground to take account of the broad difference which still remains between the Synoptic and the Johannine Gospels. Certainly the historical exactitude of the former is never absolutely complete, much as we—with our thirst for historical truth—wish it were.

> Truth is God: trample lies and lies' father, God's foe!
> Fix fact fast: truths change by an hour's revolution:
> What deed's very doer, unaided, can show
> How 'twas done a year—month—week—day—minute ago?

On the other hand, we must not exaggerate the element of historical insecurity in the Synoptic Gospels. We know that Peter's own recollections lie behind the Gospel of Mark; that the Apostle Matthew was in all probability himself the author of Q; and that L probably consists of material collected by Luke through personal enquiry in Palestine not later than A.D. 57-59. Moreover, there is the weight of internal probability and coherence to be taken into account. It is generally acknowledged that for the most part the Parables ascribed to Jesus must have been actually spoken by Him, because (so far as we know) no one else existed who could have produced them. And if so, the same is likely to be true of the rest of the teaching.

*P.* What is this 'Form-criticism' I hear so much about?

*I.* Form-criticism is the analytical and comparative study of the different forms taken by the various items composing the oldest Synoptic record. The contents of this record are classified under various types, thus: short stories, tales (including most miracle-stories), items of teaching (several kinds), 'legends', and so forth. It is a method of investigation which has arisen within the last twenty-five years.

*P.* What do the Form-critics claim to have discovered by the use of this method?

*I.* They claim that it throws light on the ways in which the oldest Gospel-traditions took shape in the course of mission-preaching, that it thus enables us to see the likeness between certain types of Gospel-matter and similar matter in other ancient literature, and in particular that it reveals the wide extent to which the needs and conditions of the primitive Church helped to shape her narratives of the Lord's life and words.

*P.* Do you regard these claims as justified?

*I.* I think Form-criticism has done good work in enlarging and systematizing our observation of the earliest forms taken by the Gospel-traditions, and even in making us more aware of the influence exerted on them by the exigences of early Church-life. But that is the very utmost I could grant: and that does not take us very much beyond what the latest documentary study had already taught us.

*P.* Why are you so grudging in your appreciation of Form-criticism?

*I.* Firstly, because its classification of the 'forms' is not clean-cut: on the margins between one type and another are intermediate groups of 'mixed' forms, wherein two supposedly-distinguishable types overlap. Secondly, the mere segregation of types or forms, and the observation of similarities between them and other types of the same kind in other literature, cannot in the nature of things enlarge our means of discovering the amount of historical reality behind the several items of tradition. If we avail ourselves to the full of the comparison which documentary analysis enables us to make, if we have our eyes open throughout to the possibility of the influence of early Christian experience and thought on the stories, and above all if we know how to apply properly the test of internal evidence and inherent probability, we really have all we need; and we are not likely to be greatly helped by the sort of findings to which Form-criticism leads. Thirdly, the leading Form-critics differ very widely from one another as to the historical conclusions to be drawn from their analyses; and this fact of itself casts doubt on the value of the study for historical purposes. Fourthly, the more sceptical of the Form-critics use the discipline as a means of blocking all attempts to penetrate behind the Gospel-traditions and to reconstruct the story of Jesus in conformity with the real facts. In some cases this is done in order, by thus discrediting 'Liberalism', to rehabilitate the pre-Liberal and traditional Christology.

*P.* Still, if Form-criticism and a comparison of the successive strata composing the Gospel-material prove that the later strata contain unhistorical editorial additions grafted on to the earlier, is it not probable that even our oldest discoverable strata contain similar enlargements of a still-earlier tradition? Where is the process to stop?

*I.* The possibility you speak of is not to be denied: and where internal evidence justifies the suspicion that this has happened, it must of course be allowed for. But three considerations save us from being for that reason launched on an indefinite process of successive reductions (resembling the nugatory task of peeling an onion). Firstly, at least as much factual basis must be posited as is needed to explain the rise of the Christian Church. Secondly, there are the positive grounds I have already enumerated for regarding the contents of Mark, Q, and L as historically sound. Thirdly, the admittedly-difficult task of reconstructing the factual basis is clearly preferable to either (1) the customary modern refusal to seek at all for such a basis, or (2) the uncritical acceptance of all the Gospel-material, even including its most-palpable glosses, as equally reliable. In particular, I want to warn you against those misguided friends of ours who, while doing lip-service to 'historical criticism', pour scorn on every critical 'quest for the historical Jesus' as if it involved a rejection of 'the Apostolic testimony' regarding Him.

## III (*continued*)

# THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

### SECTION 2

### *OUTLINE OF THE HISTORICAL FACTS*

*Pilgrim*. As a first step towards reconstructing the story of Jesus' life, will you tell me your beliefs in regard to the circumstances of His birth?

*Interpreter*. I believe that He was born at Nazareth in Galilee about 6 B.C. as the son of the elderly carpenter Joseph (probably a descendant of David) and as the first child of his young wife Mary.

*P*. Why do you not accept the Gospel-stories of His virgin-birth and of His birth having taken place at Bethlehem in Judaea?

*I*. Not because either of these (not even the virgin-birth) is inherently inconceivable, but primarily because belief in both of these stories (which cannot be traced in Christian literature to an earlier date than A.D. 75) can be quite adequately accounted for by the need which Christians then felt of believing that Jesus must have fulfilled *all* the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament—among others, Isaiah vii. 14 (which *in the Septuagint version* depicts Immanuel as a virgin's son), and Micah v. 2 (which places the Davidic Messiah's birth naturally enough at Bethlehem, the former seat of David's family). But several other considerations weigh with me—for instance, the inherent improbability of a virgin-birth, the difficulty of believing it without far-stronger positive evidence, and the numerous historical difficulties attending Luke's explanation of how the couple came to be at Bethlehem when the child was born.

*P*. What about His boyhood?

*I*. We are told in Luke ii. 52 that He 'advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man'. I take this to imply that, so far as His physical and psychological natures went, He developed from infancy into manhood in the normal human way.

*P.* But was there nothing remarkable about Him at this early period?

*I.* Yes, it is clear from the story recorded in Luke ii. 41-51, about His visit as a boy to the Temple, that even in youth He enjoyed a unique intimacy with God as His heavenly Father, an intimacy not unconditioned by the limitations normal to a naturally-developing humanity, but uninjured by any consciousness of having lapsed from unbroken and wholehearted love and loyalty to God.

*P.* What manner of man was He in His adult years?

*I.* On the physical and psychological side, He was a normal man—as the author of the Hebrews in ii. 17 and iv. 15 explicitly states. Not only was He subject to all the physical limitations inseparable from life in the flesh, and to the normal play of the human emotions; but intellectually also He shared the general conditions of human growth, and, despite His penetrating insight into persons and situations—an insight enhanced by some measure of special psychical sensitiveness—He neither possessed nor claimed any complete or infallible knowledge.

*P.* What about the religious and moral side?

*I.* The evidence makes it clear that, as in boyhood, so throughout life, Jesus enjoyed a uniquely-close intimacy with God, and that He lived in entire obedience to what He felt to be God's Will. The uniqueness is marked by His references to God and to Himself as respectively 'the Father' and 'the Son', and by His close application to Himself of the passages in Deutero-Isaiah about 'the Servant of the Lord'. Yet it is to be observed from Luke ii. 52 and Hebrews v. 8 that the uniqueness did not exclude the element of progress in His personal religion: moreover, it is exceedingly hard to say exactly how, if at all, Jesus' experience of God in His life differed *in quality and method* (as distinct from degree) from that of the loving and devoted servants of God in every age.

*P.* But is it not His sinlessness that makes all the difference?

*I.* I know that many regard His sinlessness as the one obvious key to the situation; but I doubt whether this concept really tells us as much as is commonly assumed. For one thing sinlessness is a negative quality. For another, sin is something far more confidently talked about than clearly understood or carefully defined. Who can tell us where the boundary runs between sin on the one hand and frailty, error, and imperfection on the other? And we need to remember that the meaning given to the term in the Old Testament and by the Jewish contemporaries of Jesus was not exactly the same as that given by the modern Christian preacher. It certainly included much that we should describe by other terms, such as immaturity, limitation, weakness, ignorance, inexperience, mistake, etc. That at least in such a sense 'sin' characterized every human life was one of the fixed items in that body of Jewish belief in which Jesus Himself had been educated. From what little evidence we possess, it seems unlikely that He discarded it as regards Himself.

*P*. What evidence is there on the point, beside the two passages about His progress which you quoted in your last answer but one?

*I*. There is first of all His question to the Rich Ruler recorded in Mark x. 18: 'Why callest thou Me good? There is none good except one—God'. But there are also the probably-genuine words recorded in the early apocryphal *Gospel according to the Hebrews* as having been said by Him when first invited by His family to go and receive John's baptism: 'What sin have I committed that I should go and be baptized by him?—unless perchance this very thing that I have said is ignorance'. This has far-more verisimilitude than the lame gloss inserted in Matthew iii. 14 f.—an explanation which explains nothing. And if it be true, its unusual character would amply explain why it found no place in any of the canonical Gospels.

*P*. What then is your conclusion about His sinlessness?

*I*. I would say that, rather than wax emphatic about a negative quality of which we cannot give a precise account, either generally, or as regards Jesus Himself, we shall do better to concentrate on the positive quality of His character—the uniqueness, namely, of His wholehearted and unbroken communion with and loyalty to God.

*P*. But is there nothing more we can say about the character of this uniqueness?

*I*. We can say this: in the total quality of Jesus' life, there was not only an unparalleled showing-forth of goodness, purity, courage, and love, but an unanalysable power and supremacy which laid an authoritative claim on the allegiance of men, and created in such as responded to it a new sense of nearness to God, a new consciousness of moral power, and a new enthusiasm for the service of man.

*P.* How would you describe His fundamental attitude to men?

*I.* I should say that His filial intimacy with God meant so much to Him that He felt it to be His life's task on God's behalf to bring all other men into a similarly-filial relationship with God. That, I imagine, is what Paul meant when he said in Romans viii. 29 that Jesus was to be 'the first-born among many brothers'.

*P.* How did He endeavour to realize this ambition?

*I.* In the first place by befriending and teaching men—and chiefly those who through suffering or wrong-doing were in the most urgent need of His help. 'Come hither to Me, all ye who are toiling and burdened; and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is kindly, and My burden light'.

*P.* In what thought-forms did He envisage His ministry?

*I.* His central idea was probably the consciousness, which came to Him at His baptism, of having been specially endowed by the Holy Spirit of God for the office of Messiah of Israel. This experience was followed immediately by a spiritual crisis, which He viewed as a victorious struggle with Satan the tempter, such as gave Him thenceforward a power over the evil spirits responsible for the sins and illnesses of men. Furthermore, His Messiahship carried with it the presence and imminent triumph of the long-awaited 'Kingdom of God'.

*P.* What do you think Jesus meant by 'the Kingdom of God'?

*I.* He meant essentially the willing acceptance by man of God's royal authority and fatherly love. The phrase might be used intensively, to designate that condition of affairs as such, or extensively, to denote the group or society of individuals with whom such a condition of affairs prevailed. The Kingdom could rightly be said to be already present in a new and special sense, for Jesus Himself and His disciples represented its reality and power. But that did not exclude the anticipation of a climax destined to be brought about by God in the fairly-near future. Nor, I might add, does it exclude the need for men to prepare for, and indeed to hasten, the coming of that climax by their own strenuous service and their own fervent prayers.

*P.* What did Jesus' Messiahship and His bringing of the Kingdom involve for His attitude to men?

*I.* They involved His right to be regarded by men, not only as teacher, friend, prophet, and leader, but as Lord. So it was that He assumed authority to revise the precepts of the Mosaic Law, to call men to follow Him to the uttermost, and to expect them to undertake the severest sacrifices for His sake and for the sake of His service. The parabolic description of the two houses at the end of the Sermon on the Mount indicates how vitally important He knew to be the task of obedient compliance with His teaching.

*P.* What about the miracles ascribed to Him?

*I.* The miracles alleged to have been wrought by Jesus fall into two main classes, (1) the healing-miracles (including raisings of the [at least apparently] dead), and (2) the Nature-miracles (turning water into wine, stilling a storm, walking on the water, finding a coin in a fish's mouth, blasting a fig-tree). The question we have to put to ourselves about each miracle-story is not—as people so often assume—'Is it credible?' or 'Is it conceivable?', but 'In view of *all* that we know, which is the more-probable alternative—that it *did* occur, or that it did not occur?' When such a question is put, the only answer I find I can give is that the healing-miracles probably did occur, but that the Nature-miracles probably did not.

*P.* Why do you draw this distinction? Are not both classes of incidents attested by the same witnesses?

*I.* No, that is not so; and the distinction I draw rests largely on this fact. Our oldest Gospel-sources, Q and L, refer to healing-miracles, but do not mention any of the Nature-miracles (for the L-incident recorded in Luke v. 1-11 is not, strictly speaking, a miracle). The oldest documents to mention Nature-miracles are the sources immediately behind Mark's Gospel, which was not itself written until nearly forty years after Jesus' death. Moreover, the conclusion suggested to us by this state of our documents is confirmed by all we now know through science of God's ways in Nature, the miracles of healing being scientifically far more credible than the Nature-miracles.

*P.* But in disbelieving the Nature-miracles, are you not overlooking the unique powers of so great and wonderful a person as Jesus obviously was?

*I.* Not at all: it would clearly have needed a great personality to effect the healing-miracles which He effected. But I cannot see that the general fact of Jesus' greatness warrants our belief in inherently most-improbable physical deeds, when the earliest evidence we have for them is a narrative written over thirty years after their supposed occurrence by a man who was not present to witness them. Add to this the facts (1) that powerful characters usually tend to evoke unhistorical miracle-stories about themselves; (2) that a comparison of the miracle-stories in Matthew with their earlier Marcan parallels shows beyond contradiction how prone the early Christian mind was to enlarge the miraculous element unhistorically; and (3) that the miracle of the fig-tree (in Mark and Matthew only) is almost certainly a garbled account of a *parable* spoken by Jesus (and recorded only in Luke xiii. 6-9).

*P.* How then would you sum up your view of the miracles of Jesus?

*I.* I should say, Jesus wrought no Nature-miracles, but He healed the sick, especially those mentally deranged (and so thought to be possessed by evil spirits), and He even raised to life some who were at least apparently dead. We cannot *fully* understand the true nature of these deeds: but we can say (1) that modern psychological and medical study is making them increasingly credible; (2) that they were dependent on the sufferer's faith or trust in Jesus' power (or on that of his friends)—as well as on that power itself; (3) that the primary motive behind them was the compassion Jesus felt for suffering humanity; but (4) that this did not prevent them from being at the same time signs of the presence of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God.

*P.* What did Jesus mean by calling Himself 'the Son of Man'?

*I.* This phrase in Aramaic would mean simply 'the man'. Occasionally Jesus used it as an indirect equivalent of the first person singular, like the 'Est qui . . . ' of Horace's first Ode. But for the most part He was echoing the words of Daniel vii, which introduce 'one like a son of man' (that is, a human figure) as a personification of righteous Israel. It is probable, therefore, that Jesus usually meant by the phrase the holy community which He aspired to call into being (with Himself as its head), especially when He was thinking of His and their trials and ultimate victory. But with that collective interpretation of His Messiahship He combined the picture of the Suffering Servant of the Lord portrayed in Deutero-Isaiah, giving to that figure also, in all probability, a collective as well as a personal interpretation.

*P.* Was not the Messiahship a purely-Jewish office? What was to happen to the rest of the human race?

*I.* The Messiahship was, it is true, a distinctively-national rôle: but Jesus interpreted it in the light of the great prophetic idea that Israel's task was to impart the knowledge of the true God to the other nations of the world. That idea is expressed in many of the later books of the Old Testament, but most clearly in the Deutero-Isaianic Servant-poems, which, as I have just reminded you, Jesus certainly treated as foreshadowing His own work. There are many indications in the Gospels that He took over this prophetic universalism as part of His own plan, especially when we study these indications in the light of two facts: (1) that the Messiah was widely expected to conquer the Gentiles as enemies and oppressors of Israel, and (2) that in Jesus' time the tension between Israel and the Roman Empire was becoming more and more acute.

*P.* Apart from the general idea of Israel converting the heathen to the true God, what specific contribution to the problem did Jesus offer?

*I.* By bidding the Jews pay tribute to Caesar, love their enemies, and return good for evil, as part of the new way of life involved in their acceptance of or admission into the Kingdom of God, He was providing the one feasible and healing solution of the political tension. In rejecting Jesus, the Jews rejected also His way of life; and this step meant not assuaging, but accentuating, their animosity against Rome, with the result that ultimately they broke out into rebellion and were completely crushed.

*P.* But if Jesus knew in advance that the nation as a whole would reject Him, how could He ever have hoped to launch Israel on an enterprise of world-redemption?

*I.* It is, in my judgment, a mistake to suppose that He foreknew His rejection from the commencement of His ministry. The words of bitter disappointment which He uttered towards its close, and which are recorded in Luke xiii. 34 f., Matthew xxiii. 37-39, and Luke xix. 41-44, are absolutely meaningless, unless He had previously been hoping that He would be, not rejected, but followed, by His fellowcountrymen. And apart from the inherent probabilities of the case, there are several other arguments leading to the same conclusion, for example, His frequent use of the word 'brothers' to designate His hearers—for the natural meaning of this word would be, not an inner circle of disciples in distinction from the rest of Israel, but Jews as such in distinction from Gentiles. That means that He was addressing Jews *quâ* Jews, and evidently on the assumption that they would listen and obey.

*P.* Then what became of His plans, when it was borne in upon Him that this would not happen?

*I.* The first result was, of course, that He foresaw His own death and therewith the frustration for the time being of His universalistic ambitions for Israel. As involved in this frustration, He foresaw His country's disastrous war with Rome, bringing tragic suffering on innocent and guilty alike, widespread massacre, and national ruin. His agony at the prospect of war, and His passionate appeals and warnings in the desperate hope of averting it ere it was too late, come out in several passages—for instance, Luke xii. 54–xiii. 9, xix. 41-44, xxiii. 27-31. But in descending Himself into death as the way which the Father was appointing for Him in the existing state of things, Jesus set against His poignant sorrow the conviction that His death would move men to a new and widespread act of repentance (as foreshadowed in Isaiah liii) and so undo in some measure the harm caused by Israel's failure. He was further convinced that God would vindicate His cause against the folly of His enemies by bringing Him back in glory ere the generation of His contemporaries had died out.

*P.* But if He really expected this last, surely the course of events falsified the expectation, did it not?

*I.* Only in so far as the outward form in which He cast it was concerned. He never returned in visible glory on the clouds (supposing we are right in taking His words in that realistic way): but His saving power and work as Lord of the Church have been a fulfilment of at least the inner substance of the Parousia-hope.

*P.* What of His prediction that He would rise again after three days?

*I.* When Jesus uttered this prediction, He was almost certainly referring to the Parousia itself, and using the phrase 'three days' to designate a short indefinite interval—a meaning which it often has in Scripture. The surprise of His friends at the events of Easter Sunday is surely a proof that He had not made it clear to them that He would reappear after three days, or on the third day, understood *literally* (for it is inconceivable that had He done so, they would have forgotten it). His words to the penitent robber, 'To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise', are a further proof that two or three literal days in the tomb was not what He expected.

*P.* How then are we to understand the Resurrection-narratives?

*I.* You need to remember that the actual evidence for Jesus' appearance to His friends is older and stronger than that for His tomb being actually found empty. 1 Corinthians xv. 3-8 (where the empty tomb is not mentioned) is proof of that. The appearances were clearly of an unusual or psychic character, as is indicated by the failure of His friends to recognize Him at first (see, for instance, Luke xxiv. 16; John xx. 14 f., xxi. 4), by the *suddenness* with which He appeared and disappeared (Luke xxiv. 15, 31, 36; John xx. 19, 26), and by His ability to pass easily through closed doors (John xx. 19, 26). That is not to say that they were purely-subjective hallucinations. Psychical research encourages us to believe that persons who have died are sometimes mysteriously able to manifest themselves visibly and audibly to their friends, without any rising-again of the physical body. And though we are still much in the dark as to the precise character of such phenomena, there is no real reason to doubt or deny their objective reality.

*P.* But surely there is much more in the Resurrection-story than simply a series of psychic, even if in some sense objective, visions?

*I.* Granting that such visions did occur, and had the effect of reassuring Jesus' timorous and grief-stricken friends that He had overcome the power of death, and was already living and active in spite of it, it would—for Palestinian Jews—follow as the night the day that His tomb *must* be empty; for, unlike the Greeks and unlike ourselves, they had no idea of a person living without a physical body. This psychological necessity—coupled possibly with ignorance on the part of most as to precisely where His body had been laid—would, as time passed by, inevitably generate reports as to the emptiness of the tomb, along with other additions to the picture, such as the risen Christ eating food, being physically handled (as we read in Luke xxiv. 37-43;

John xx. 25-29), and as having *continuous* intercourse with the disciples for forty days (Acts i. 3 f.). The inexactitude of these reports is further revealed by their irreconcilable mutual inconsistencies, and is easily intelligible when we consider the dates at which they were severally written. The account in Acts i. 9-11 of the visible bodily Ascension—in itself surely a well-nigh incredible event—is thus seen to have arisen as a fitting termination, imaginatively provided, to the series of Resurrection-appearances.

*P.* Does that complete your summary of the knowable facts about Jesus' life and ministry?

*I.* Well, I would like to add this last point—that the Epistles and the Johannine discourses, while they do not materially increase our factual knowledge of the details of Jesus' life and ministry, do throw indirectly most-important light on them by attesting the marvellous power and grandeur of His personality. What was it in Him that made men think it fitting to speak of Him as the writer of these Epistles and discourses do? No doubt, it is not easy to describe this quality of His in precise terms; and we must not attempt to do so here: its effect on Christian thought we shall see when we come to survey the earlier stages in the development of the doctrine of His Person. But it is very important to note its existence at this point in our discussion, as one of the most relevant historical facts about Him.

## III (*continued*)

# THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

### SECTION 3

### *THE EXPERIENCED SALVATION*

*Pilgrim.* Now that we have summarized the historical facts about Jesus' life on earth, what is the next step to take?

*Interpreter.* The next step is to consider the experience of salvation which Christians owe to Him.

*P.* But do not some claim that it is a mistake to begin building our theology on the basis of our own experience rather than on the relationships existing between Jesus Christ and God and on what these involve for the relations of God and man in general?

*I.* We are not *beginning* with our religious experience; for we have already looked carefully into such facts concerning Jesus' life as can be historically known. But clearly, before we can say what His Person and ministry ultimately mean, we must study the actual changes He has wrought in His disciples. I should have thought that was obvious.

*P.* I suppose it is. Clearly, therefore, I ought now to ask you to tell me what essentially *is* this 'salvation' or 'redemption' which Christians have found in Him?

*I.* I will certainly try: but before I do so, I must warn you that two facts make it rather a difficult task: (1) the great variety of forms which the experience has taken with different men, and (2) the strong disinclination on the part of the average good Christian to admit any distinction between the essential experience and the form it happens to have taken in his own case, and his consequent inability to recognize as *essentially* the same experience any experience different *in form* from his own.

*P.* Still, there must be a common element which differentiates Christian salvation from all else, and makes it what it is. How would you define it?

*I.* I should say that salvation through Christ is the sense and knowledge that come to us through Him, and especially through His death, that we have been brought into close and peaceful fellowship with God through God's own forthgoing and fatherly love, and that we have been thereby endowed with a new power of communing with Him and a new moral insight and capacity for doing what is right.

*P.* Why have you not used the great word 'forgiveness' in this connexion?

*I.* Not at all because it would be inaccurate to do so, but because the word needs explaining if it is to convey to a modern ear the truth it stands for.

*P.* What exactly do you mean?

*I.* 'Forgiveness' is correlative with 'sin'—a term frequently used very loosely and so not very intelligibly. I prefer to start from the *personal* nature of God's highest relations with us. As our Father, He chiefly desires that we should be in close, intimate, loving, personal relations with Him, as every good human father desires his children to stand related to himself. Conversely, God having so made us for Himself, our own hearts are naturally unquiet unless and until they rest in peaceful fellowship with Him. Begin there, and you will seize the heart of the matter as regards sin and forgiveness—for sin is that in us (whether act or state) which breaks or hinders the personal fellowship between God and ourselves, and for which we are responsible; while forgiveness is that act of God which, if accepted by ourselves, restores it.

*P.* But what has Christ to do with our experience of this relationship?

*I.* By the whole impact of His life, His teaching, His surrender to death, and His triumph over it, He imparts to as many as consent and desire to be led by Him a sureness of God, a conviction of God's goodness, and a filial trust and love for God. To the so-called 'once-born' this experience develops by slow and unperceived stages into ever fuller and fuller consciousness. To the so-called 'twice-born' it comes more-or-less suddenly at a particular crisis in life (usually called 'conversion'). But the essential elements in the experience are the same in either case.

*P*. And what bearing has that experience on sin?

*I*. This: the person so led by Christ comes to see his own life in a new light. He comes to hate and dread everything that stands between himself and God, however innocent he may have previously thought it to be. He now knows it to be 'sin', and he longs for God to remove it. That is to say, he repents; and God's answer to his repentance is to 'forgive' him, to remove, that is, the sin-barrier between the penitent and Himself. Sin's power to part the man from God is thus, through Christ, destroyed; and he is at peace with God. By the same token, sin's power to cloud his judgment and mar his moral life is also destroyed: he becomes a better and more-enlightened man. The deepest needs of his being are thus satisfied.

*P*. Do not theologians usually define sin as wilful rebellion against the known Will of God?

*I*. They do. But I regard that definition as too narrow; for much of what men discover through Christ to be separating them from God does not fall within its terms. There is much truth in the often over-harshly rejected idea that sin is defect—a missing or loss of what is good. That view has in its support at least the etymological meaning of the word 'sin' both in Hebrew and in Greek.

*P*. But does not that view implicitly deny the element of guilt in sin?

*I*. Not necessarily; for a man may well be guilty for omitting to do something. And even in cases where, at the time of acting, he had no intention of doing wrong, his conscience often tells him afterwards that he ought to have done better, and he accepts moral responsibility and blame for not having done better. A puzzling state of affairs, no doubt: but there it is.

*P*. But can sin ever be guiltless?

*I*. It is hard to see how we can rightly describe an involuntary shortcoming by the same grave term as we need to use in order to characterize an act of wilful and deliberate disobedience, especially if the shortcoming in question is not for a long time afterwards, perhaps never in this life, recognized as blameworthy. Our difficulty over this word 'guilt' is due to its being a legal or juridical term, while we are applying it to what is fundamentally a personal, or rather a family-, relationship. While recognizing, therefore, the reality of 'guilt', I should prefer not to use the word as strictly synonymous or co-terminous with 'sin'. I would rather base my sense of the great seriousness of all sin on the harmfulness of frustrating God's loving purpose for us as His children. The tragic greatness of the harm, our responsibility for it, its opposition to the Will of God, and His condemnation of it, are all seen more and more clearly in proportion as one grows and advances in filial intimacy with God.

*P.* Do you believe that sin is universal; and if so, how would you account for its universality?

*I.* That all men have sinned is one of those assertions which we feel instinctively to be true, however unable we may be to demonstrate its truth empirically or to account for it satisfactorily. (Not all, however, have admitted it: even so orthodox a father as Athanasius said that there were many sinless lives before and after the time of Christ). Some modern writers try to make theological capital out of the fact that human life is inseparable from finitude and limitation, and that growth necessarily implies imperfection, in order to justify what seem to me exaggerated and morbid statements about sin. As, however, I have myself admitted that I cannot draw precisely the dividing-line between sin and error, I do not quite know how to put these people right. If sin be really inseparable from growth, the universality of it would be clear; for there is no man that groweth not. But I see that that is not satisfactory, for one cannot naturally describe as 'guilt' or even as 'sin' the immaturity out of which we all have to grow. Anyhow sin, in the sense at least of harmful defect for which we have to accept responsibility, is common to all human lives known to us. Why it should be so we cannot say. The story of the Fall of Man in Genesis iii is often viewed as an ancient attempt to account for it: but its purely-legendary character renders it in any case of little help to us to-day, save as a parabolic assertion of man's proneness to go wrong.

*P.* Do not some people link up the universality of sin with the social and moral solidarity of the race?

*I.* Yes; and I should not care to deny the connexion. But I doubt if racial unity can throw more light on the problem of sin than individual experience can. After all, however closely bound up each of us is in the bundle of life with our fellows, it is as individuals and as individuals alone that we can deal with our moral responsibilities by way of repentance and reconciliation with God.

*P*. I am afraid your account of sin will expose you in certain quarters to the charge of not taking it seriously enough.

*I*. That may well be: but if it does, I shall deny the soft impeachment with some confidence. I know sin to be unspeakably evil; and I do not therefore want to speak disparagingly of those who feel this fact very acutely. But some of them seem to me to be unable to discuss the matter at all without losing all sense of proportion: and if you do not seem sufficiently impressed, they reproachfully quote to you the words of Anselm, 'Nondum considerasti, quanti ponderis sit peccatum', and proceed to perform a sort of dervish dance over your short-sighted liberal complacency. I sometimes wonder whether this *modus operandi* does not owe a little of its popularity to its power of manoeuvring an opponent into an invidious position: for he cannot very well raise objections to it without seeming to say, with Little Jack Horner, 'What a good boy am I!' To take full account of the tragic seriousness of sin, it is not necessary to throw one's sense of proportion to the winds, and refuse to take cognizance of all the relevant facts, especially when one is palpably incapable of providing any intelligible or coherent account of what precisely sin is.

*P*. Well, I hope you will be able to make your peace with your critics. But meanwhile, I should like you to say a little more about Jesus Christ as the One Who saves us from sin and brings us into that filial relationship to God of which you spoke.

*I*. It is, I should say, integral to the experience of salvation to see that in Christ God Himself has acted with reconciling power. You remember Paul's words in 2 Corinthians v. 19—'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself'. The question as to how precisely Christ's part in the reconciling process is to be explained is the problem we shall have to discuss at a later stage. But it is relevant at this point to observe that Christians have never felt that the Master's saving work could be adequately described as simply the *declaration* to men of what was true about themselves and God, though of course it included that. There was so much of Christ Himself in His saving work that whoever has been saved by it cannot but be thereby involved in a direct relation of whole-hearted devotion to Him.

*P*. What exactly do you mean by a relation of whole-hearted devotion?

*I*. I mean submission, gratitude, obedience, imitation, reverence, and love. That is the essence of the matter: but men differ so much in their powers of apprehension and in the method of their self-expression that the devotedness appears in a great variety of forms.

*P.* What would you say are the main types of it?

*I.* Two main types may be very broadly distinguished. We may call them for the moment the 'mystical' and the 'historical'. The 'mystical' disciple is conscious of enjoying the real personal presence of Jesus Himself, dealing with him as the 'lover of his soul'. The 'historical' disciple is not conscious of having himself had any such first-hand experience: but the Gospel-story is the medium through which he receives an equivalent possession in the sense of God's presence, care, and guidance (as heavenly Father, or as indwelling 'Holy Spirit').

*P.* How do you account for the difference between these two types of Christian devotion?

*I.* It is impossible to account for it in any complete way. But I see no reason for doubting the objective reality of the 'mystical' Christian's sense of Christ's presence. The difficulty is to explain the 'historical' Christian's lack of it, if his mystical comrade's account of the matter is correct. Facts do not warrant us in putting his lack down to unbelief or other personal defect, though that is what the mystic is naturally inclined at once to do. Possibly the non-universality of the mystical experience is due to the existence of some limitations of range set by the mysterious and unknown conditions of the life beyond to Jesus' personal contacts—limitations analogous to, yet differing from and far-less cramping than, the spatial conditions which limited His bodily presence during His earthly ministry. We do not know. But such a solution seems to me to be at least preferable to charging either the 'mystical' disciple with involuntary misrepresentation, or the 'historical' disciple with unbelief or some other spiritual deficiency.

*P.* You would reckon both types, then, as genuinely Christian?

*I.* O yes. It is important to remember that common to both is faith in Jesus Christ as the living Lord, the Son of God in a unique sense, the way to the Father, the means of repentance and forgiveness, the guide and pattern—in a word, as the Saviour.

*P.* What about the sacramental type? Ought not that to be included in your account somewhere?

*I.* It is indeed a genuine variety of Christian discipleship: but as it rests on a doctrinal presupposition regarding the precise nature of the Lord's Supper, the proper place to discuss it is in that connexion. In to-day's talk we are confining ourselves to experience pure and simple, unaffected by more than the very simplest doctrinal conclusions.

*P.* What exactly is meant by the phrase 'Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever'?

*I.* The thought which it most promptly brings to me is the way in which the saving power of the living Christ, as we have described it, has proved itself to be unaffected by the lapse of time. This survival-power holds good for the spiritual and moral awakening both of the individual and of the Church at large. I like to recall those great words of Lecky's: 'Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priest-craft and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the Church, it has preserved, in the character and example of its Founder, an enduring principle of regeneration'. Dr. Bartlet also refers to this feature of Christianity as 'a wonderful proof of its unique spiritual vitality, . . . an inexhaustible latent force issuing in repeated self-reform from within itself, the like of which is seen in no other religion. . . . I have spoken', he writes further on, 'of the secret of ever-renewed youth lying at the heart of Christianity. But it is for all candid observers an open secret, after the repeated experiences of the past. It is simply that Christianity has its Christ, such a Christ as is reflected in the pages of the New Testament'.

## III (*continued*)

# THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

### SECTION 4

### *THE RESULTANT DOCTRINE OF HIS PERSON*

*Pilgrim.* I take it we have now to discuss the doctrines of the Person and Work of Christ?

*Interpreter.* Yes; and as we do so, I want you to try to bear in mind the conclusions we came to in our second talk regarding the nature and conditions of Christian doctrine.

*P.* I certainly will. But would you care to remind me at this stage of the salient points?

*I.* Well, I am chiefly anxious that you should remember (1) the clear distinction between (*a*) the foundation-realities of Christian thought and experience (such as we have just been summarizing in connexion with salvation), and (*b*) the doctrines resulting from our reflexion on these realities: (2) the inescapable duty of doctrine-building, the value of success in it, and its necessary reactions on experience itself: but also (3) the relative and non-final quality inherent in all formulated doctrine, due to the differing subjective limitations of all theological thinkers. I lay stress on this last point, not in order to depreciate the doctrinal findings of the past, but lest you should be misled by certain erroneous pleas much used in these days—as that (*a*) certain great doctrinal affirmations have been given to the Church by direct Divine revelation, and not thrashed out by human (albeit Divinely-aided) argumentative quest; or (*b*) that because a doctrine is found to be taught in the New Testament, it is therefore infallible; or (*c*) that this or that doctrine is beyond dispute because it is the belief of 'the Church as a whole'.

*P.* The first two of these last-named dangers you have already warned me against: but I should like you to expound the third of them a little more.

*I.* The third error is misleading because it begs the question as to what precisely constitutes 'the Church'. It tacitly assumes the

Church to be the body which accepts the particular belief in question. The argument is consequently circular. Moreover, it ignores the fact that Christians have often been unanimously wrong. Thus, the early believers were sure that Christ would soon return to earth: the mediaeval Church was sure that heretics ought to be persecuted unto death: the whole Church was sure for many centuries that the Scriptures were inerrant. It is no answer to this to say that these erroneous views were never embodied in the Church's creeds. That was only because nobody ever formally challenged them. The process of putting a belief into a formal creed introduces no new principle, and does not necessarily confer on that belief any greater authority than is possessed by other unanimously-held beliefs. On the contrary, it displays if anything an inferior grade of authority—for what was put into creeds was usually some controversial conclusion which was *not* accepted by all Christians, however those who did accept it might arrogate to themselves the sole right to be regarded as the true Church. A frequent modern form of the same unwarranted claim (I mean, the tacit *assumption* of the point in dispute) is to call the view which one prefers an item of 'the Christian faith' or of 'what Christians believe', or 'what the Christian means' when he says this or that.

*P*. Well, where do we begin?

*I*. The best starting-point is Jesus' own interpretation of His Person. Behind His claim to be the conqueror of Satan and the rightful Lord of men was His consciousness of being the Messiah, and behind that His consciousness of being (in some unique sense) the Son of God and God's Spirit-anointed Servant. These two last-named ideas coalesce in His own experience, as indicated in Mark i. 10-11, Luke iii. 22 (as Moffatt gives it), Luke iv. 18-19, and Matthew xii. 18-21. We may conveniently call such a Christology 'Pneumatic' (the Greek word for 'Spirit' being 'pneuma'). The fact that it seems to have been held by Jesus Himself does not, of course, rule out the need of further speculation, but it does give the doctrine a very-strong claim on our acceptance.

*P*. But does it not differ from the teaching of the New Testament as a whole?

*I*. It has more support there than is usually supposed. Apart from the weight which Jesus' own teaching gives it, it is in the main the doctrine taught in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Petrine speeches in Acts: look for instance at Acts ii. 22, 36, iii. 13-14, 22, 26, iv. 27-30, and x. 36-38. The First Epistle of Peter (perhaps also the Epistle of James) tacitly presupposes it—with vague hints in i. 11 and 20 at the Messiah's pre-existence, and in i. 19, ii. 22, and iii. 18 affirmations of Jesus' sinlessness. The Christology of *The Shepherd* of Hermas is broadly of the same type. Moreover, the customary designation of Jesus in the prayers prescribed in ix. 2-3 and x. 2-3 of the *Didache* is 'Jesus Thy Servant'.

*P.* What, please, is the *Didache*?

*I.* The *Didache* is a simple manual of Church-rules produced somewhere in Syria, apparently towards the end of the first century. It acquired immense vogue, being quoted as 'Scripture' by two orthodox writers round about A.D. 200, and being wholly or partly embodied in several later and widely-used codes of Church-procedure. Its theological standpoint is indeed different from the Pauline and Johannine (which later dominated the Christian mind), and is so uncongenial to many modern scholars, both on theological and on ecclesiastical grounds, that they make it out to be the product, perhaps quite late in date, of some unrepresentative hole-and-corner group which had got out of touch with the Church at large. Its wide vogue makes such a view quite untenable: its oldest parts are probably of very primitive date; and it has an indefeasible right to be regarded as representing a Christian outlook widely held in Syria round about A.D. 90.

*P.* Did Paul accept what you have called the Pneumatic Christology?

*I.* He would not, I think, have contradicted it; and we know that he felt a profound interest in the quality of Jesus' human life and character. But he certainly went beyond the simple Palestinian theory. In studying his enlargements, we must remember that in him Christianity had passed beyond the soil of Palestinian and Syrian Judaism, and had entered the world of Greek thought.

*P.* What difference did that make?

*I.* It meant that Christian doctrine was now being thought out in a partially-new intellectual atmosphere. The Greek spirit was intellectually more logical and scientific than the Hebraic. This advantage is seen in the way in which the cruder features of primitive Christian eschatology were purged away in Gentile Christendom. But the Greek had a less-clear grasp than the Hebrew of what moral personality meant: his appreciation of the realities of personal experience was really very shaky, and he was prone to deal with them in his thinking as impersonal metaphysical abstractions.

*P.* You surely do not mean that Paul's system was one of metaphysical abstractions?

*I.* Not at all. Paul was, as he said in another connexion, a debtor to the Jew as well as to the Greek. Besides, his own religious experience was so real and vivid that he never lost sight of its personal aspect. At the same time, his more-theological utterances do show some influence of the Greek spirit; and that spirit was to bulk more and more in Christian thinking as time went on.

*P.* What fresh theological ideas regarding the Person of Christ seem to be traceable to Paul's mind or circle?

*I.* One of the most important is the theory of Christ's pre-existence. I do not mean to assert positively that he invented this belief, either consciously or unconsciously: but it is found doctrinally elaborated for the first time in his writings.

*P.* Do not some writers claim that Jesus asserted His own pre-existence?

*I.* They do—but without sufficient ground. They base their view on the fact that He called Himself 'Son of Man', and that in *some* Jewish apocalypses the Son of Man is a pre-existent heavenly being: but there is nothing to show that Jesus interpreted the term in that way. Others regard His pre-existence as certainly involved in the Divinity guaranteed by His saving work: but such argumentation cannot establish anything as to Jesus' own self-consciousness—and that is what is in question here. So far as we know, the real Jesus knew and said nothing about His pre-existence. The doctrine must be viewed as an inference (many would say, a necessary inference) from the greatness of His Person and Work, and indirectly as a tribute to it.

*P.* Did Paul assert that Christ was God?

*I.* Not explicitly. Passages like Romans ix. 5b (which is a parenthetical doxology, and possibly an early gloss), Acts xx. 28 (which is ambiguous), and Titus ii. 13 (which is probably not from Paul's hand), are inconclusive. Paul habitually differentiates Christ from God. But his exaltation of Christ as 'the Lord', and his occasional application to Him (as in 1 Corinthians i. 31, ii. 16, 2 Corinthians x. 17, and

Romans x. 12-13) of Old-Testament passages in which 'the Lord' originally meant Yahweh undoubtedly prepared the way for later Christians to ascribe full Divine rank to Him.

*P.* What is the next discernible stage in the development of the doctrine of Christ's Person?

*I.* The next stage to consider (though it is hardly a direct continuation of the Pauline theory) is that represented by the later elements in the Synoptic Gospels. In Mark (as distinct from Q and L) Jesus is made to work Nature-miracles, in addition to His miracles of healing: you will recall what we said about this the day before yesterday. He also becomes Himself the forgiver of sins, as distinct from the One Who assures penitent sinners that God forgives them. In Matthew and Luke He becomes, more unambiguously than in Mark, the Judge at the Last Judgment. Moreover, in these two Gospels (as distinct from Mark), His specific Divine endowment is carried back from the descent of the Spirit on Him at His baptism to His miraculous birth from a Virgin Mother. You remember we discussed that also. While, however, the Synoptic documents reflect later as well as earlier stages of Christian thought, it is significant that, even in their final form, so much of the earlier viewpoint was retained. In fact the very production of these Gospels, after the Church had already got the Pauline Epistles, makes it look as if a need was felt for something even closer to the actual history of Jesus than the Pauline Christology provided.

*P.* Was there no continuation of the line of thought opened up by Paul?

*I.* Yes, we see that type continued in the Christology of the Fourth Gospel, probably produced at Ephesus soon after A.D. 100. In this Gospel, while the main historical events of Jesus' life are preserved, and the true concept of His unique Sonship is emphasized, yet in his Prologue the author broaches the idea of the co-eternal Divine Logos (that is, the reason, or 'Word', of God) having in Jesus 'become flesh'. Here the Divine element in Jesus is, in pursuance of Paul's thoughts about pre-existence, carried back behind the miraculous birth (which the Fourth Evangelist ignores) to the very beginning of things. It is from that verse in the Prologue (John i. 14) that we get the idea of 'Incarnation', which has somehow come to be widely regarded as the one indispensable key to the Christological problem, whether one can attach to it any specific meaning and harmonize it with the rest of the data, or not.

*P.* How does that theory of Incarnation affect the Fourth Evangelist's grasp of Jesus' actual character and ministry?

*I.* I am afraid it affects it somewhat adversely. Not only does he depart from strict history (in his virtual omission of the Kingdom of God from his account of Jesus' teaching, and in his representation of Jesus' Messianic claim as publicly advanced from the beginning), but he misses some of the truest and noblest features in the quality of Jesus' life as the Synoptists depict it. The Johannine Jesus is not tempted, is never said to be moved with compassion, never weeps over Jerusalem, never enjoins love for enemies, does not go out to seek and save the lost, undergoes no agony in the Garden, and does not even pray except by way of furnishing by-standers with an object-lesson, as we see in John xi. 41-42 and xii. 27-30. He makes no effort to inculcate the ethics of the Kingdom, but is wholly concerned in getting His own claims to unique Divine Sonship acknowledged by men.

*P.* But did He not weep at Lazarus' grave?

*I.* Yes, and possibly we ought to reckon this as a recognition on the Evangelist's part of His human sympathy with the bereaved. But this is not very clear, and does not naturally fit in with the rest of the story. For on hearing that Lazarus was ill, Jesus had purposely postponed His departure for Bethany for two days. Moreover, why should He weep, if Lazarus was to be restored to life within the next few minutes? At best it is an isolated exception to the general character of the Johannine portrait.

*P.* What do you infer from this change of emphasis in recording the Saviour's life?

*I.* I infer that, while the Johannine theology marks an advance on earlier thought in virtually transcending the crudities of primitive Christian eschatology, and in showing how the Christian facts could all be viewed from the standpoint of a single transcendental principle, and while it also retains certain clear traces of the compassionate spirit of the original Gospel (as we see in John iii. 16 and vi. 37), its Greek atmosphere and affinities involved such a concentration on metaphysical speculation as to cause its author to lose touch with some of the living personal realities of the Saviour's own character and religion.

*P.* What was the consequence of this acceptance by the Church of a Hellenized rather than an Hebraic version of Christ's Person?

*I.* Parallel to the steady loss of interest in the moral and religious quality of His life on earth, was the growing insistence on His being recognized and worshipped as 'God'. The Fourth Gospel (in xx. 28) for the first time unambiguously acclaims Him so: and it is at about the same period, as we learn from Pliny, that the Christians of Bithynia were accustomed at their meetings to sing a hymn to Christ 'as if to a god' (quasi deo). The propriety of this attitude in time established itself in the Church. The tendency it represented was of such a nature that it perpetuated itself automatically; for no one would be inclined to complain that the Church's Saviour was being *over*-exalted. Some modern Christians take it for granted that the full worship of Christ as God was a uniform practice of the whole Church from the early days of the Apostles onwards. That, however, is an error. The attribution of full Deity to Christ and the regular custom of praying to Him were the results of a long development of thought. Throughout the second century the Fourth Gospel was not nearly so much quoted as were the Synoptics, and the Pauline theology was only very partially understood. Still, a movement of thought was going on, in which—while Jesus' saving power was experienced and glorified—the quality of His earthly life was largely lost sight of. That certainly is what has happened in the case of many modern theologians. Emil Brunner, for example, has gone so far as to speak with the utmost contempt of the study of the historical life of Jesus on earth.

*P.* Oh? What does he say?

*I.* On pp. 87 and 88 of his little book, *The Word and the World*, he writes thus: 'The biography of Jesus of Nazareth—this latest product of an ill-informed theology would have been just as repulsive to the early Christians as a mummified corpse is repulsive to us. Jesus of Nazareth, the rabbi, the so-called historical Jesus, was an object of no interest for the early Christians and it is of no interest to-day for those who have preserved some understanding of what Christian faith means. What interests the Church and the believer is Jesus *Christ*—the Jesus in whom God speaks to us His Word. The "historical Jesus" is a corpse, a scientific abstraction which is of no value to us. . . .' I am told that in his larger and later book, *The Mediator*, he pours bitter scorn on all modern attempts to describe the Jesus of history.

*P*. That doesn't seem at all right.

*I*. Certainly not: but it is the position in which, for many people, the traditional Christology enshrined in the Creeds has in point of fact eventuated.

*P*. Tell me now something about the Creeds.

*I*. You won't want me to give you a full history; but I will try to make the main stages clear. As against Arius, the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 declared Christ to be of the same 'essence' as the Father, and therefore co-eternal with Him. The view of Apollinaris that Christ's 'spirit' or 'mind' or 'reasonable soul' was not human, but was simply the Divine Logos, was repudiated at Constantinople in A.D. 381. Nestorius, who belonged to the School of Antioch (which tried to preserve some recognition of Jesus' true humanity), emphasized the distinction between His Divine and human 'natures' so far as to seem to be in danger of positing two 'persons' in Him. This was adjudged heretical at the disorderly Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431. The opposite error of asserting that Christ possessed only one 'nature' was rejected at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. Christ was then affirmed to be one (Divine) 'person' in two 'natures'. As this was naturally understood to imply that His human nature was not personal at all, a certain Leontius of Byzantium in the sixth century evolved a highly-abstruse theory to the effect that Jesus' human nature was neither personal nor impersonal, but something in-between the two. This was accepted as satisfactory; and there—except for some mediaeval discussions on quite-minor points—the matter rested. I ought perhaps to add that what is to-day commonly called 'the Nicene Creed' is not that actually adopted at Nicaea in A.D. 325: its precise origin is uncertain; but at Chalcedon in A.D. 451 it was adopted as orthodox. Like the real Creed of Nicaea, it asserted that Christ was co-essential with the Father.

*P*. I don't think you have told me anything yet about the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed.

*I*. The so-called 'Apostles' Creed' was in use in the West from an early period; but it does not greatly concern us at the moment, as it simply describes 'Christ Jesus our Lord' as 'the unique Son' of God the Father, 'begotten of the Holy Spirit', without further metaphysical elaboration. The so-called 'Athanasian Creed' may have been the work of Ambrose, bishop of Milan (who died in A.D. 397): but, however that may be, it was never authoritatively enacted by a Church-Council. It elaborates a doctrine identical with that of Chalcedon, and says that whoever does not accept it 'will without doubt perish eternally'.

*P.* Apart from that last threat, which I am glad to learn has no official authority, do you regard the resultant doctrine of the Creeds as quite satisfactory?

*I.* No; I regard it as in many respects unsatisfactory—though I ought in fairness to add (1) that the Creeds did good work in asserting and securing a central place for Jesus in Christian regard and devotion; (2) that they were the best statements producible by their framers, having regard to their mental conditions and equipment; and (3) that Jesus is so great that, even when He is set forth in imperfect theological statements, His power to bless still makes itself felt. Yet, as Dr. Oman wrote in this connexion in his last book, 'the greatest utility for the time does nothing to prove eternal validity'.

*P.* Will you tell me, then, why you do not find the credal Christology entirely satisfying?

*I.* Certainly, if you will have the patience to listen to a rather-long series of objections.

*P.* I will do my best to last out. What is your first objection?

*I.* My first is that the whole speculative process starts with a wrong approach and takes place in a wrong atmosphere. The atmosphere is that of metaphysical abstractions ('substances', 'hypostases', 'natures', and 'essences') rather than that of the realities of moral personality. This was one of the results of that transfer of Christian thought from Palestine to the Graeco-Roman world of which we spoke just now. The inevitable result was that, although men sincerely desired to be loyal to historical truth and to safeguard the Christian Gospel, they lost interest in the *quality* of the Saviour's life and, concentrating attention on the precise method of His 'Incarnation', they not only distorted the historical evidence regarding Him, but represented His salvation as a largely non-moral 'transaction' set forth in a series of highly-abstruse propositions. At the same time, the Fatherhood of God, which Jesus Himself had represented as God's essential attitude to believing man, came to be viewed mainly as the relation of the First Person of the Trinity to the Second. On the unquestioning acceptance of these doctrinal propositions (rather than on the possession of a Christlike spirit), they contended, the Christian's eternal destiny hung. Thus it comes about that we find the late Dr. Forsyth, though he sat loose to the Formula of Chalcedon, and insisted that our doctrine of the Incarnation must be 'moral', yet saying of Jesus, 'It is what he did in becoming man, more even than what he did as man, that makes the glory of his achievement so divine. . . .' Dr. Forsyth even contends that the world's 'spiritual perception is dimmed by the keenness of its ethical sense'. How, I ask you, is that sort of thing to be squared with Jesus' limitation of the vision of God to the pure in heart, or the assurance that only he who willeth to do God's Will shall know of the teaching?

*P.* I don't see how it can be squared. But what is your next objection?

*I.* My next objection is that the credal construction is *ultra vires*. It presumes that the mind of man is capable of fathoming the mysteries of the inner nature of God's being—of which, in point of fact, it can necessarily know very little. The strange thing is that several of the orthodox Fathers (men like Hilary of Poitiers and Augustine) frankly acknowledged this incapacity of the human mind; but they did not seem to think that it constituted any reason why elaborate creeds should not be drawn up and enacted, and those who could not accept them punished. It is quite true that we are under a moral obligation to think out the intellectual implications of our experience up to the very limit of our power. But when it becomes clear to us that we are getting beyond that limit, it is surely time to refrain from dogmatizing, and especially to refrain from that type of dogmatizing which implies that he who differs from our speculative findings is a heretic and an unbeliever.

*P.* And the third?

*I.* The third difficulty is that the Christ portrayed in the Creeds, as understood by those who compiled, defended, and explained them, presents several features which are incongruous with the truth of history.

*P.* Will you specify?

*I.* Certainly. In the first place, the Formula of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) is generally understood to imply that, of Christ's two 'natures', only the Divine was personal. His human 'nature' was therefore not personal; that means that we must not speak of Him as 'a human person'. Or, as some prefer to put it, though He was 'man', He was not 'a man'—a contention directly contradicted in the New Testament (see Luke xxiv. 19, Acts ii. 22, John i. 30, viii. 40). The tendency is well illustrated by Athanasius' account of Christ in his important treatise, *Concerning the Humanization of the Word* (commonly referred to as *De Incarnatione*). The Christ there depicted is simply the Divine Logos in a fleshly body. Psychologically, morally, and religiously, there is simply nothing human about Him. Would you not call that a distortion of history?

*P.* Yes, I should. But are there any other indications of this sort?

*I.* O yes. If Christ was a Divine and therefore not a human person, clearly He must have known all things. And so the Fathers declare. In the teeth of the Gospel-evidence that Jesus' knowledge was limited, John of Damascus for the Eastern Church and Anselm and Aquinas for the Catholic West ascribed omniscience to Him, and explained that His 'increase in wisdom' (spoken of in Luke ii. 52) and His admission of ignorance as to the time of His future Coming (Mark xiii. 32) were only exhibitive, not real. Luther's view was similar. How's that for the falsification of history?

*P.* Pretty bad, certainly. But what more?

*I.* Just as the Christ of the Creeds cannot be ignorant of anything, neither can He be really tempted, as the Synoptic Gospels tell us Jesus was; nor of course can He have any need to pray. So Thomas Aquinas teaches that Jesus was willing to be tempted only in order to provide an example and help to men. You remember, I expect, my pointing out to you just now that in the Fourth Gospel Jesus' temptation is not mentioned, and that He prays only in order to give the bystanders an object-lesson. Thomas Aquinas takes over the same view quite explicitly. Jesus prayed, says he, 'non quasi ipse esset impotens, sed propter nostram instructionem. Primo quidem, ut ostenderet se esse a Patre. . . . Secundo, ut nobis exemplum daret. . . .' Incidentally he holds that Christ, because from the moment of His conception He fully saw and enjoyed God, could not have exercised either faith or hope (except hope in the sense of expecting such future glories as He had not yet acquired).

*P.* But surely our modern scholarly theologians, who retain the credal definition of Christ's Divinity, do not accept these absurdities, do they?

*I.* Most of them avoid doing so either by tacitly evading the whole difficulty, or else by some form of the theory of Kenosis.

*P.* What is that?

*I.* The theory of Kenosis is a comparatively-modern device, framed by non-Romanist theologians on the basis of Philippians ii. 7, to the effect that, at the Incarnation, Jesus 'emptied Himself' ('kenosis' means 'emptying') of the physical and metaphysical attributes of Deity, retaining only the religious and ethical.

*P.* Do you consider that a satisfactory solution?

*I.* No. I respect it as arising from a determination not to falsify the statements of our historical records about Jesus' life on earth. But it is extremely doubtful whether a true exegesis of Philippians ii. 7 furnishes any support for it; and there is certainly no other Scriptural or indeed any early non-Scriptural passage to warrant it. It wears too much the appearance of a dubious after-thought forced on the mind as a result of the premature acceptance of doctrinal conclusions, which are, after acceptance, found to necessitate it as the only means of meeting the charge of palpable untenability.

*P.* Is there anything more to come under your third complaint of the perversion of history?

*I.* No; so I will pass to my fourth. It is somewhat similar to the third, yet really distinct. In building mainly on the Epistles and the Fourth Gospel rather than on the Synoptic Gospels, and concluding (often with vehemence) that Christianity is the worship of Jesus rather than either the imitation of His own religion or obedience to His teaching, theologians presuppose that Jesus' own most emphatic words are not to be given any great weight, and that He Himself was somehow incapable of saying what mattered most in His own Gospel. This last could be done for Him only after His death by the Apostles, principally of course by Paul.

*P.* Why do you not share their view?

*I.* Because it seems to me to be inherently so weak. I admit that the experiences and thoughts of the early Christians demand our reverent and sympathetic study. I also acknowledge that the historical Jesus claimed to be recognized as the rightful Lord of men and the unique Son of God: such recognition must therefore be an integral part of Christianity. But I cannot see that we are justified, out of regard for Paul and John, in tacitly setting aside most solemn utterances of Jesus Himself, like those recorded in Matthew vii. 21, 24-27. Nor can I see any reason for supposing that Jesus was either unable or unwilling to expound His own Gospel. It is not as if He ever indicated that He was obliged to hold the essence of it back (for John xvi. 12 cannot be depended upon as an actual saying of His), nor as if He showed any reluctance to speak to the disciples about His death. To urge these points is not, of course, to deny that Jesus' death constituted the indispensable and potent climax of His mission.

*P.* But you would surely admit, wouldn't you?, that for a full and proper explication of the Gospel, we cannot be tied down to the recorded words and example of Jesus?

*I.* Of course I should. And I should not only admit, but insist, that the Epistles and the Fourth Gospel must be taken into consideration as part of the facts to be accounted for. But as a test of the soundness of any interpretation of the Gospel derived from them, I should demand as indispensable a conformity with at least the main characteristic ideas of Jesus Himself. When, for instance, I find evangelical theologians saying that any imitation on our part of Jesus' own religion is apostasy, and vigorously striving to minimize the importance of His teaching, I infer at once that they are misrepresenting, not expounding, the Gospel. Nor is it enough to try to vindicate such misrepresentations by saying that 'the whole New Testament' supports them. *Religiously*, indeed, the New Testament is a unity; but *theologically* it is not. The possibility of theological imperfection in its writers and their contemporaries must therefore be allowed for. Even Dr. Forsyth admits that Arianism may possibly be found in the immature theology of the New Testament. What would Athanasius have said to that?

*P.* But is there not a real value in the Christology of the Creeds in that they assert so definitely that in Christ God Himself really did enter into human life—break into world-affairs, so to speak—for man's salvation?

*I.* I should cling as strongly as any one to the belief that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself'; but I rather demur to the idea of Him 'breaking in', or 'entering', human life for the first time, as it were, at a particular date in history. I do not believe that God has ever been absent or remote from His world: and that being so, I cannot accept as satisfactory any account of Christ which implies that God was not really and personally present with, say, the Old-Testament saints. Doubtless God did something new in and through Jesus; and we are right in trying to see and state what it was. But we have no right to insist on stating it in a form which contradicts our other evidence. Was God 'remote' from the authors of Psalm xxiii, li, ciii, and cxxxix? There is the further difficulty that the Creeds, by defining the Person of Christ as they do, presuppose that God's life and man's are two mutually-exclusive spheres, miraculously linked in the one Person of Christ. When pressed, their apologists usually admit that God is 'in some sense' present in the lives of other good men also; but they immediately go on to explain that His presence in Jesus is different in kind, because in Him God is present 'personally' or 'Himself'. The one thing they can never do is to explain how God can be present anywhere, without being 'personally' present there—or present 'Himself'.

*P.* How would you yourself express that uniqueness of God's presence in Jesus, which you admit?

*I.* Not only admitting, but emphasizing this uniqueness as vital, I should stipulate at the outset that, owing to the limitation of our minds (well recognized, you remember, by several of the early Fathers), we must be prepared to content ourselves with a partial and imperfect statement. We may acclaim Him as 'the chief among ten thousand' and the 'altogether lovely', as 'the firstborn among many brothers', as One in Whom 'God was reconciling the world to Himself'. But as to the *ultimate* reason why Jesus was this, we may find it best to confess our ignorance. The one thing I want to insist on is that to express dissatisfaction with the traditional ways of *accounting for* His uniqueness ought not to be construed (as it often is) as if it were tantamount to a *denial* of that uniqueness.

*P.* But would you not recognize that it makes a lot of difference whether we regard the 'Divinity' of Christ as a downward condescension of God towards men, or as an up-reaching of man towards God? If Jesus was a mere man, our salvation through Him would seem to lack any Divine guarantee in the full sense.

*I.* I want to warn you against copying the popular and quite-superficial use of that question-begging adjective 'mere'. I have never said, nor do I believe, that Jesus was a 'mere' man. Our ignorance regarding the precise nature of the Divine indwelling in man should warn us against so describing any person, most of all against so describing our Lord. But when you draw a sharp distinction between the downward-reaching of God and the up-reaching of man, I am disposed to query the validity of the contrast. Are you not the victim there of a spatial metaphor? I am not forgetting the otherness and transcendence of God: but even remembering it, may we not truly say that every genuine human up-reaching is but the complement of a Divine down-reaching—that without being exactly identical, they belong inseparably to one another, like the concave and convex sides of the same vessel? I suggest that we may.

*P.* Do you think that way of looking at it would have commended itself to the converts who flocked into the Church in the first few centuries? Were they not one and all drawn in, not by the example of Jesus' beautiful life and His sublime teaching, but by the Incarnation, atoning Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of the Saviour-God?

*I.* I daresay that was to some extent the case. But it is important to remember that not one only but several different factors contributed to the spread of the Church. Among these were (1) the immense stimulus imparted to the first disciples, and through them transmitted to other converts, by the sheer weight of Jesus' moral personality and the quality of His life; the very composition of the Synoptic Gospels and of a Pauline passage like 1 Corinthians xiii is evidence of the deep impression which His example and teaching had made: (2) the direct appeal addressed to pagans by Christian kindness, purity, and patience —and especially Christian courage under persecution: and (3) the experience of the continued and lasting power of the Risen Christ operating in and through the Church. Moreover, we need to be careful not to rush to the conclusion that those aspects of Christianity, whatever they were, which most attracted the early converts are *ipso facto* the most vital aspects for ourselves. A good many of the converts were of a not very satisfactory calibre: and there was furthermore a gradual declension through the first centuries in the quality of the average Christian's life. This declension runs parallel to the growing stress on doctrinal exactitude: and it is by no means impossible that the two may be causally connected. Christians of conservative doctrinal views are very fond of taking it for granted that the so-called 'Synoptic

Christian' is religiously, if not morally, worse off than the Pauline and Johannine Christian. Doubtless the thought-content of the two types is different; and that which best meets the needs of one man does not necessarily best meet the needs of another. But looking away for a moment from such subjective theological considerations, and having regard to the religious foundation-realities of the two cases, we should be making a quite-unfounded assumption if we supposed that there was any great difference between the one type and the other.

*P.* How would you reply to the charge that your Christology is simply Unitarianism?

*I.* I should plead 'not guilty'. The proper time at which to discuss Unitarianism is when we are dealing with the doctrine of the Trinity. However, the question has at least a partial relevance here: and I would therefore say provisionally in reply to it that a 'Unitarian' view of Christ may mean anything between a crass denial of His uniqueness or supremacy and a perfectly whole-hearted, if non-Trinitarian, affirmation of His Divinity. The real dividing-line for Christians does not run, whatever my conservative friends may say, between Trinitarians and Unitarians, but between those for whom Jesus is the unique Saviour and Lord and those for whom He is not. In support of this statement, I appeal from these conservative friends to their great authority, Paul. Did he not in 1 Corinthians xii. 3 assure his converts that 'No man can say, "Jesus is Lord", except by the Holy Spirit'?

*P.* Is your view of the matter consistent with the *worship* of Jesus Christ by the Christian?

*I.* Certainly, provided you are not using the word 'worship' simply as a covert equivalent for the ascription of absolute Deity to Him, instead of designating thereby the outpouring of reverent love, gratitude, and praise. On the theological ascription of absolute Deity to Jesus, and the propriety of calling Him 'God', I have already fully explained myself. But in what I have said I can see no reason why Christians should not pour forth to Jesus in prayer their thankfulness and homage and love—always provided that they do so with genuine sincerity of heart, and not simply because they feel they are expected to do so. I am convinced that, if you will only analyse what you really mean by 'worship', instead of treating it as a virtual declaration that its recipient must necessarily be God Almighty, you will see that genuine worship may well be accorded to Christ even by those who feel bound to hold back from a complete acceptance of the credal definitions, but who are none the less 'sealed His own'. I should not, however, agree that such direct worship of Christ, as distinct from the worship of God in Christ's name, can rightly be demanded of all His disciples as the one and indispensable proof of real Christianity.

## III (*continued*)

# THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

### SECTION 5

### *THE RESULTANT DOCTRINE OF HIS WORK*

*Pilgrim.* I suppose there is almost as much perplexity and divergence of opinion about the doctrine of the Atonement as there is about the Person of Jesus Christ. Is that so?

*Interpreter.* It is—so much so that many well-meaning Christians, though they know in a vague way that the Christian Gospel centres in the Cross, are so perplexed about the meaning of the Cross that, being at a loss to know what to think, they have ceased thinking about it at all. This necessarily results in religious and moral, as well as doctrinal, impoverishment.

*P.* What do you think is the cause of this bewilderment? Is it uncertainty in regard to the doctrine of Christ's Person?

*I.* In part, yes—for the two doctrines are interdependent. But I think another great hindrance is the slowness of people to realize that the fundamental categories under which salvation has to be viewed and interpreted must be personal and moral, not commercial or judicial or sacrificial. No doubt the holy majesty of God must always be remembered: but we are not necessarily more loyal to it when we treat His severity and His love as pure co-ordinates, than when we insist (as I do) on interpreting His severity through His love, and not *vice versa.*

*P.* What follows from this slowness or failure to see that the personal and moral categories are fundamental?

*I.* A purely-'transactional' view of Jesus' death. The saving power of the Cross is represented as resulting from its having been a mysterious but Divinely-ordained transaction, by virtue of which God was enabled to forgive sin. In the classic phrase, Christ's death is regarded as 'a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world'. The category of thought, you see, is judicial and sacrificial; and words and phrases like 'propitiation', 'atonement', and the washing-away of sins in Jesus' blood, are frequently used in order to set forth the true character of the Saviour's work.

*P.* Is that view very widely held?

*I.* Certainly, though one must recognize that not all forms of it are equally crude. But it does represent one of the two main directions to which Christians who take any position at all on the problem usually incline.

*P.* What is the other direction?

*I.* That towards a simply-moral view—one which treats the death of Jesus as a purely-human martyrdom and nothing more, an ennobling and inspiring example, likely to improve and uplift those who are willing to be influenced by it.

*P.* Is that in your opinion a satisfactory view?

*I.* In the sense that what it *asserts* is true and important—yes. For Jesus' life *was* a human life of sublime moral grandeur; and He did die a martyr's death. (If any one tells you—by the way—that it is a mistake to call Jesus a 'martyr', tell them you are basing yourself on Scripture, and refer them to Revelation i. 5 and iii. 14 in the Greek. You might also quote to them W. H. Moberly's words, printed on p. 312 of *Foundations*: 'The death of Jesus is the most conspicuous martyrdom in history'). Moreover, His death *is* an inspiring and ennobling example, purifying and strengthening those who gaze on it receptively. But to say only that is not to say nearly enough.

*P.* What does it lack?

*I.* It makes no room for what I would call 'the evangelical experience'. I mean by that the realization that, through the death of Christ, there comes to us the consciousness of God's forgiveness of our sin. You will remember that, two days ago, we defined sin as fundamentally that which breaks or hinders the intimate personal fellowship between God and ourselves, and forgiveness as that act of God which—if desired and accepted by us—restores it. Thousands of Christians have in various ways received this forgiveness, and therewith new moral power, at the foot of the Cross, like Bunyan's 'Christian', whose bundle of sins was there cut off from his shoulders and disappeared. It is that experience which is often closely linked with some transactional theory of the Atonement.

*P*. But how can this evangelical experience be related to what you have called 'the moral view' of the Atonement?

*I*. It arises very naturally from it, if the results of teachably 'surveying' the Cross are carefully studied.

*P*. What are these results?

*I*. Well, firstly, there is the opening of the eyes to the reality and hideousness of sin, and to the suffering which it must needs cost God. Looking at the Cross, we are first struck by the sin and folly which put Christ upon it; and then we are made aware of our own sin and folly. From that we are led on to see that Christ's agony is the revelation, in time and space, of the sorrow laid on God's heart by the alienation of His children from Him. I know many Christians shrink from ascribing suffering to God, on the ground that He is above and outside time, sees the end from the beginning, and so does not pass through an interval of pain as a man would. But I find this a very difficult conception; and it is perhaps better for us, despite the intellectual difficulty, to speak and think of God's suffering as a necessary implicate of His love. Of course, the suffering we speak of arises from limitations which *God has imposed upon Himself* in order that we may be free and real persons: it does not arise from any limitation imposed on Him *against* His permission.

*P*. What is the second result?

*I*. The earnest wish to be rid of our sin, which cannot but follow on our realization of it. That is to say, the Cross moves us to repentance. You have a clear manifestation of this in the great Servant-poem in Isaiah liii, where the sufferings of God's righteous Servant (whoever the prophet intends that Servant to be) move the callous onlookers to own themselves guilty, and to see in those sufferings a way of healing for themselves. The same great thought is echoed in the Epistle of Clement of Rome, written about A.D. 95, when he says in vii. 4: 'The blood of Christ, . . . being poured out for the sake of our salvation, held out to the whole world *the grace of repentance*'.

*P*. And the third result?

*I*. The third result is the realization that the forgiving spirit in which Jesus suffered, expressed in His prayer, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do', truly reflects God's own willingness to forgive, and His readiness to be reconciled to us, if only we, by repentance, show a longing to receive His forgiveness. Man's repentance is followed immediately by God's forgiveness—a forgiveness which means, not only a restored fellowship with God, but (through severance from sin) an enhanced moral power. You remember how the hymn puts it:

> Gazing thus, our sin we see;
>   Learn Thy love while gazing thus—
> Sin, which laid the Cross on Thee,
>   Love, which bore the Cross for us.
>
> Here we learn to serve and give,
>   And, rejoicing, self deny;
> Here we gather love to live;
>   Here we gather faith to die.

In the attainment of that climax you have the full essence of the evangelical experience.

*P.* You say that all this arises naturally from the moral view. But does it not at least involve the doctrine of the Incarnation as its presupposition?

*I.* It certainly involves the conviction that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself'. But you must remember that it was the experience of salvation that led to the doctrine of the Incarnation, and not *vice versa*. I know there are those who say of Jesus, like the writer quoted on p. 315 of *Foundations*: 'If He were not God, the fact that He was good . . . would be a fact of no more moment to me than the fact that Samson was strong, or Solomon wise, or St. Paul intrepid, or St. John beloved. They are, but I am not; and that is the difference between them and me; and that is all'. But I hold that this way of reasoning is fundamentally mistaken. Solomon's wisdom (for I cannot undertake to tackle Samson), Paul's courage, and John's dearness to Christ, if I let them move me as they may, do *not* leave me just as I was: they cause me too, if I am willing, to be wiser, braver, nearer to Christ than I should otherwise be. In the same way, the sheer goodness of Jesus Himself in suffering as He did —altogether apart from His being regarded as God—will effect in me, if I am willing, docile, and obedient, those saving changes I have just described. It was the experience of those marvellous saving changes that led on to a special doctrine of His Person: it was not the developed doctrine of His Person which preceded and conditioned the saving changes. That is why I say that the attainment of the full evangelical experience can be shown to follow quite naturally from the reverent contemplation of the death of Jesus as a supremely-noble human act, that is to say, from what I have called the moral view of His death as a martyrdom.

*P.* But in locating the saving virtue of Christ's death in its power to awaken man's repentance, are you not advancing a purely-subjective view of the Atonement?

*I.* Certainly not: and it is a real mystery to me that so many otherwise sound and sensible thinkers continually call the sort of view I advocate 'subjective', as if it were only that. Of course, it has its subjective side, and rightly so: any view of the Atonement in which the subjective response of man is relegated to a position of no importance is *ipso facto* deficient, if not positively false. But seeing that I recognize the foundation of the whole saving process to be laid in the forth-going love of God and in the sublime self-sacrifice of Jesus—for it was while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us—I totally fail to see how the view I am stating can be described as 'subjective' in any exclusive or objectionable sense.

*P.* But you are at least reducing the Atonement to a mere revelation of the love of God, are you not?

*I.* By no means. Behind the revelation is the active love itself which is revealed: clearly both that love and the penitent response we make to it constitute something more than the mere giving and receiving of a revelation. Once more, as I think I warned you earlier, the word 'mere' in these discussions is apt to be badly misleading.

*P.* How would you say the Resurrection of Christ is related to His saving death on the Cross?

*I.* The Resurrection is the needful demonstration that what looked like total defeat (namely, the Crucifixion), though a great act of self-sacrifice, was in truth not defeat, but victory. *In form* it was adapted to the minds of the earliest disciples; but, in whatever form it be accepted, the eternal essence of it remains—namely, the demonstration that sin, though it can pain God grievously, cannot cancel the efficacy of His reconciling love, and that His Son's death is the prelude to a risen life of power.

*P.* I noticed that you claimed just now that this extension you give to the moral view finds a proper place for the evangelical experience. But how do your findings bear on the older transactional type of theory, which one is always told alone safeguards that experience?

*I.* I should not only insist on the claim you mention: but I should urge that my view has, over and above that, three distinct advantages over views of the more-purely transactional type.

*P.* What are these advantages?

*I.* Well, the first is that it enables us to put in its right place the sacrificial language which has been used from the earliest times to describe Christ's saving work.

*P.* Why was this language ever used?

*I.* Because for the first disciples, with the sacrificial worship of the Temple and the Old-Testament sacrificial Law before their eyes, it was psychologically inevitable that, when they realized that Jesus' death was somehow or other a means of freeing them from the sense of alienation from God, they should liken it to, and speak of it as, a propitiatory sacrifice. And it is only fair to remember that sacrificial worship, despite the crudity of its form, was originally the vehicle of certain quite-worthy ideas, such as the offering of a precious and sacred gift to God. And even later, when its original significance had long been forgotten, it was still thought of as a costly act of obedience to God—a gift which God would bless. The use of sacrificial language in the interpretation of Christ's death, therefore, had at least the advantage of forcibly impressing on Christian minds the seriousness of sin, the costliness of forgiveness, and the virtue of obedience to God.

*P.* What then do you mean by 'putting this sacrificial language in its right place'? Do you object to its long-familiar use being continued?

*I.* Yes, I object to its being used except as a metaphorical or symbolic or illustrative designation of the sorrow which human sin necessarily costs a loving God, and which man must share, through penitence, if he is to receive the personal reconciliation which God offers.

*P.* What are the reasons for your objection?

*I.* Chiefly this—that repentance and forgiveness are connected with the *personal* relations between God and ourselves, whereas a sacrifice on our behalf is in the nature of things a non-personal 'transaction'. As such it is at the best not necessary to the personal change; and at the worst it may well be a non-moral concealment of or substitute for it. Add to this that its form was cradled in the ignorance and superstition of an ancient and semi-civilized people, that the most far-sighted of Old-Testament thinkers saw its needlessness (see, for example, Amos v. 25; Hosea vi. 6; Jeremiah vii. 22-23; Psalm xl. 6, l. 7-15, li. 16-17), and that, in the light of Jesus' own revelation of God's nature, such a form of observance is seen to be utterly unfitting.

*P.* But has not an eminent modern theologian recently explained that, by 'the sacrificial principle', which he insists on embodying in his theory of the Atonement, he does not mean the Jewish idea of sacrifice at all, but the perfect offering which Christ in His death made to God, and with which the Christian through faith and the sacraments identifies himself?

*I.* That is so; and his theory deserves to be considered on its merits. But to speak of its main element as 'the sacrificial principle' is in my judgment an unfortunate use of words. For while the imaginary identification of the worshipper with the victim he offered was a feature of very *primitive* sacrificial worship, this identification had been almost forgotten in the late-Jewish period (when the *raison-d'être* of sacrifice was thought to reside in the simple bidding of God). Nor was it the reason why early Christian authors spoke of Christ's death in sacrificial terms: they were usually thinking of it along very-different lines, namely, as a propitiatory or expiatory offering. In the sense in which Christians have customarily meant the word 'sacrifice', the unsuitability of the word as a serious doctrinal explanation of Jesus' death becomes increasingly clear in proportion as we realize that our most fundamental relationship with God is personal, not legal or judicial.

*P.* What is the second advantage you claim for your doctrine?

*I.* This—that it establishes a real and vital relation between the moral grandeur of Jesus' human life and character on the one hand, and the saving power of His death on the other. This grandeur is a direct revelation of the love and holiness of God; and that is why Jesus' death speaks to us so clearly of the cost of sin to God, the urgent need for penitence, and God's willingness and power to forgive and restore. Herein lies its saving efficacy.

*P.* But does not the transactional view do virtually the same for you?

*I.* O no. Its upholders, of course, believe that Jesus was morally perfect, and that His perfection was shown in His dying for men. But, for them, His goodness as man did not stand in any close or positive relationship to the peculiar efficacy of His death, other than entitling us to describe Him as a sacrificial lamb without spot or blemish. The efficacious redemption wrought on the Cross was, on the transactional view, not primarily an appeal to man as a moral person at all, but a mysterious and enigmatic *transaction* in a realm which, whatever else it was, was not that of personal relations. It is interesting to note that Abelard's theory of the Atonememt, which treated Christ's death as a demonstration of God's love, was rejected by Bernard of Clairvaux as heretical, on the very ground that it included no 'transaction'.

*P.* But is the sacrificial and transactional view necessarily non-personal?

*I.* Yes. 'Sacrifice', in the Jewish sense of the term (and that is the sense under discussion), has no place in personal friendship. Moreover, a transaction, in this connexion, is a legal or judicial adjustment, which, while it *may* take place between friends, is never central or fundamental to their friendship. Fatherhood is a more-fundamental relation than judgeship or sovereignty.

*P.* Who is responsible for the predominance of legal categories in the thought of Christians regarding Christ's death?

*I.* I think it really goes back to Paul. I do not mean that he did not get far beyond the categories of the Mosaic Law: it is clear that he saw the deepest ground of salvation through Jesus' death in the fatherly love of God. But he was so concerned to make sure that in his system the just demands of the Law had been properly satisfied, that he felt compelled to expound the death of Christ largely in legal terms (see, for instance, Galatians iii. 13 and Romans iii. 25). The other New-Testament writers seem to use sacrificial language mainly in a metaphorical way. But the Pauline expressions, understood in a strictly-doctrinal sense, set the pace for most later Christian thought.

*P.* What resulted from this general adoption of a judicial interpretation of Jesus' death?

*I.* All sorts of strange ideas were entertained regarding it—ideas inconsistent with any real belief in the love of God, unrelated to the goodness of Jesus' life, and calculated to draw the Christian mind further and further away from the central issue. One of the most popular of these ideas was the belief that Jesus' death was a ransom paid to the Devil, to whom sinners' lives were in strict justice forfeit. A by-form of this theory was the weird notion that Jesus' human body was a deceptive bait which the Devil greedily seized, only to find himself (owing to his ignorance of Jesus' real Divinity) grossly deceived: his legal debt had been paid to him, but his Divine foe was none the less triumphant. In the eleventh century Anselm saw that this sort of thing wouldn't do: and he substituted for it the less-bizarre but equally-legal view that Jesus' death was a satisfaction paid to God's honour, which had been outraged by human sin. Most of the more-recent transactional theories are variants in some form of this legal view; thus—that Jesus in dying accepted God's judgment on human sin (hence the Cry of Dereliction on the Cross), that He suffered as man's representative (since He alone was good enough to offer to God on their behalf a perfect repentance), and so on. But much better means than these can be found for expressing the truth at the heart of them, namely, that the Passion of Christ reflects the sorrow necessarily laid on a loving God by man's sin and lovingly borne by God in the interests of man's salvation. The 'representative' idea in particular is, I hold, untrue to the facts of the situation: personal friends deal directly with one another, not with one another's 'representatives'.

*P.* How, on the 'representative' view, is man supposed to appropriate the benefits of salvation?

*I.* By 'identifying himself', through faith, the sacraments, and consecrated living, with the perfect obedience and vicarious penitence of Christ. The value of this way of putting it, as contrasted with the theory I have myself been putting forward, is said to be that the Christian's response is unmeritorious; that is, it does not depend on any meritorious act of his own. I cannot myself see what we gain in this way. The view, which I hold, that Christ's death moves the sinner to repent, does not ascribe to him any more 'merit' than the view that he has to 'identify himself' with Christ's perfect obedience. In both cases alike there is grateful dependence on God's love: in both alike there is also the need for a receptive act on man's part. As between the two views, I should claim that my own deserves preference as being the simpler and more intelligible.

*P.* On your own theory, how is Jesus' Cry of Dereliction on the Cross to be explained?

*I.* I should deprecate making it the basis for any profound theological conclusions. Even supposing its exact wording were certain (which it is not), allowance must be made for the facts:—

(1) that, in quoting familiar scriptural words, one would, even under *normal* circumstances, be liable to say a little more than one strictly means;

(2) that, under conditions of extreme physical agony and mental desolation, Jesus would be still more prone to utter words which do not lend themselves to an exact and literal interpretation; and

(3) that, if God be what Jesus believed and revealed Him to be, it is simply unthinkable that He should have actually 'forsaken' or 'been wroth with' Jesus, at the very time when He was suffering at God's bidding on behalf of man's redemption.

*P.* What do you make of the idea of a 'victory over sin and death' as the cardinal truth of Christ's atoning work?

*I.* As a permissible rhetorical or metaphorical expression for the work of Christ in enabling the convert to live free from sin and to be unafraid at the prospect of death, I see no objection to it. But as a fundamental explanation I regard it as faulty. It is drawn from the category of military force, such as overcomes an unwilling and hostile opponent, instead of from the category of the reconciliation of personal friends.

*P.* What is the third advantage you claim for your view?

*I.* This—that it enables us to see a positive relation between the redemptive sufferings of Jesus and the redemptive sufferings of His followers.

*P.* But has not that relation always been recognized?

*I.* In a partial way, yes. That is to say, the Christian has always felt free, on the strength of certain sayings of Jesus, to speak about 'bearing his cross'. But conservative theologians are always eager to insist that this simply means exercising self-denial in a meek and patient spirit, and certainly does not mean that his self-denial shares at all in the peculiar 'atoning' power of Christ's death. I could quote you several emphatic repudiations of any such idea. But, animated though they are by a worthy desire to safeguard the unique honour of Christ, these theologians are really flying in the face of the New-Testament scriptures.

*P.* Where do you find their view contradicted in the New Testament?

*I.* Firstly, in the Gospels themselves. Do you not remember that, when in Mark x. 45 Jesus spoke of 'giving His life as a ransom for many', He was setting Himself before His disciples *as an example for them to follow*? Furthermore, His numerous declarations that the disciple must 'take up his cross and follow Him' certainly suggest that what He expected to do with His own Cross, He expected His disciples to do, in some lesser measure and as it were derivatively, with theirs.

*P.* Is there anything in the Epistles to confirm your exegesis here?

*I.* Certainly there is. When Paul was undergoing persecution on behalf of the Church, he said: 'I fill up in my flesh the deficiencies of the sufferings of the Christ, on behalf of His body, which is the Church' —Colossians i. 24. Peter, when encouraging Christian slaves to be patient under harsh treatment, said: '. . . for Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you an example, that ye should follow His footprints'—1 Peter ii. 21. And John, expounding the true meaning of love, said: 'He laid down His life on our behalf, and we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers'—1 John iii. 16. Could anything be plainer?

*P.* Does that line of interpretation find any acceptance in early Christian thought?

*I.* I should say that the propaganda-value of martyrdom, often seen in experience and asserted in the proverbial saying that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church, is a half-conscious recognition of it. For the rest, I think only the great Origen ventures to ascribe explicitly to the martyrs a redemptive function and power similar though inferior to that of the crucified Jesus. But I would like to draw your attention to the inherent reasonableness of that conclusion. As I have urged, the redemptive power of Jesus' death as a revelation of how God's love reacts to human sin lies in the impression it makes on the inmost heart of the sinner by its moral nobility and grandeur: it is therefore only what one ought to expect, that *all* self-sacrificing acts of moral grandeur and nobility should bring something of the same kind of pressure to bear on sinners.

*P.* Is there, then, no distinction at all to be drawn between the Cross of Christ and the cross of the Christian?

*I.* Yes. For though akin in method and principle, these two are distinguished by the priority, clarity, and purity of the former, as contrasted with the derivative, unclear, and imperfect nature of the latter. What is in the abstract a possible or potential or occasional achievement for man, one realized only under the rarest conditions, becomes as a result of the Work of Christ a familiar and oft-repeated experience. You remember perhaps how well Tennyson puts it—

> Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,
> Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
> We yield all blessing to the name
> Of Him that made them current coin.

*P.* What would you say to the charge that the Liberal view you have been advocating presumes to strip Christ's atoning work of all mystery, and does so because in the nature of things the Liberal feels no need for salvation?

*I.* I should say that both statements are quite false. I should readily acknowledge the element of mystery—in connexion with the ultimate unravelling of the doctrines both of the Person and of the Work of Christ, and also in connexion with the underlying reality of God's being and His love for man. But for us to tolerate and retain mystery where God has enabled us to see clearly is surely to sin against the light: and you will recall, I expect, how Scripture condemns those who love darkness rather than light. As for the statement that the Liberal feels no need for salvation, I should repudiate it as a gratuitous libel. It would be true only if 'salvation' necessarily meant the acceptance of one particular and hyper-conservative version of atonement. The tacit assumption that that is so is probably the misunderstanding from which the erroneous accusation arises. But if salvation means, as I have urged, the fulfilment of God's loving purpose that His child should live on a footing of glad, filial trust in and obedience towards Him, then the Liberal is quite as much aware of his need for salvation as is the evangelical who is closely wedded to the traditional terminology.

*P.* Do you consider that the Liberal view, to call yours by that name, has the same practical efficacy in saving souls as the older versions of the Gospel?

*I.* I should certainly say so: though it must be remembered (1) that as between the consecrated personality of the evangelist and the intellectual content or version of his message, it is certain that much of his effectiveness depends on the former; the older form of the Gospel, when preached by certain well-meaning but meagrely-endowed persons, totally fails to grip their audience: (2) that it is, *at bottom*, the same Gospel that is preached in both versions, namely, the reconciliation of sinful man to God through God's loving and costly gift; and that such evidence as we have goes to show that, whatever be the thought-forms in which it is presented, it is—if delivered by men possessing the needful conviction and capacity—a Divine word of power. I have already observed that the saving power of Christ makes itself felt, in spite of the varying intellectual limitations of the medium through which it is conveyed. (3) Nor must we forget that, *however* the Christian Gospel may be preached, it is always open to any particular man or group of men to reject it. There is nothing mechanically necessary about the acceptance of it. Unfortunately, within the ordinary limitations of space and time, it is not true that 'we needs must love the highest when we see it'.

*P.* But do you not feel that in departing thus widely (as many would measure it) from the traditional forms of Christian teaching on the subject, you are in danger of cutting yourself off from the Church as the community of the Redeemed? I fear that some of your critics will say so.

*I.* Possibly they will: but they will be wrong. In the first place, I think you tend to exaggerate the extent of my divergence from traditional Christian teaching. If we look at the matter in its religious, as distinct from its theological, aspect, there is no divergence at all. Theologically, no doubt, there is some, but not as much as might at first be supposed. For example, on the point we discussed a moment ago—I mean the redeeming virtue of Christian martyrdom and self-sacrifice—I have proved to you that Scripture is clearly on my side as against that of the conservatives who would be disposed at first sight to repudiate my view. They ought in fairness to admit its scripturality and therefore its truth. As for putting myself outside the Church as the great society of the Redeemed, I do not see how any exclusion of that kind can very well be anticipated, feared, or threatened, seeing that, in company with the Redeemed of every age and clime, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord'.

## IV

## THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

*Pilgrim.* I do wish you would tell me what theologians mean when they talk about the Holy Spirit. I understand that they intend to stick loyally to the belief in *one* God. Of Him we read in the New Testament, 'God is a Spirit'. What need is there then to have yet another 'Holy Spirit' beside Him?

*Interpreter.* I think the best way of putting it is to say that God the Father is God transcendent, and that the Holy Spirit is God immanent.

*P.* Would you mind explaining that a little more fully?

*I.* Well, though we believe in only one God, we sometimes want to think of Him as above and over-against the world and mankind, as Creator, Controller, Law-giver, King, Father, or Friend, and sometimes as indwelling, pervading, or animating the world and mankind, energizing the growth of plants and the instinct of animals, guiding and enlightening the intelligence of man, and making His voice heard in conscience as 'the Dweller in the Innermost'. In the former of these aspects, He is transcendent; in the latter, immanent. Yet though the distinction is a legitimate one, it does not mean that we believe in two Gods, does it?

*P.* No, I suppose that's all right. I never thought of it in that way before. But it's very mysterious, isn't it?, how one and the same God can be both immanent within us, and transcendent over us.

*I.* No doubt it *is* mysterious. But if you try, you'll find that you can't dispense with either of these two distinct aspects without fatal loss to your religion.

*P.* What would happen if I tried to content myself with only one—say, the immanent God?

*I.* If you tried to content yourself with belief in a purely-immanent God, you would lapse into pantheism—or rather, let me say, into the wrong sort of pantheism, the sort namely which (by dispensing with the sovereignty and Fatherhood of God) obliterates the real distinction between God and man, and also ultimately the distinction between good and evil.

*P.* And suppose I were to try to dispense with immanence, and content myself with the transcendental idea?

*I.* In that case you would virtually exclude God from His world. You would have to deny that men are made in His image, that He can dwell with them and inspire them, and that He can kindle in them the spark of His own life, and make His voice heard in their consciences. You would make it incredible that man could ever know God, have fellowship with Him, or be conscious of His presence.

*P.* But should we not still have the Bible and Christ to guide us?

*I.* Even so, how, without the enlightenment of God's Spirit within you, could you ever feel satisfied that the Bible contains God's Word any more than one of Edgar Wallace's novels contains it, or that Jesus Christ has a better claim to be accepted as the image of God than has Heydrich or Goering or the Führer?

*P.* We should know that, surely, by the testimony of others.

*I.* But that only pushes the question one stage further back. For how could you know for a certainty (as you do) that this testimony of others was not a lot of nonsense, unless you had something of God in yourself to start with?

*P.* Yes, I see. But whose idea was it that, in order to do justice to this two-sidedness in our apprehension of God, we must say that in the one God there are three distinct, co-eternal, co-equal Divine 'Persons'—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

*I.* The traditional Trinitarian doctrine was the consummation of a long process of development. The necessity of modifying the older idea of God as a simple unity was first felt as a result of the ascription of full Deity to Jesus Christ. If the Father was truly God, and His Son also was truly God, and yet there were not to be two Gods but only one, there was no alternative left but to posit some sort of distinction *within* the being of this one God. Thus it was that the development of the doctrine of the Person of Christ, which we discussed two days ago, involved the abandonment of an absolutely simple or unitary view of God, and forced men to make room for distinctions within the one Divine Being. These distinctions were called 'Persons', though this term then meant not quite what we mean by 'different personal beings', but something between that and 'phases' or 'aspects'.

*P.* That process would surely have resulted in a *duality* in the Godhead—in what we might call a 'binitarian' doctrine. But how did the idea of *three* Persons arise?

*I.* The introduction of the third Person into the Godhead was due, in the first place, not to a clear awareness of the distinction between God immanent and God transcendent, but to the fact that the Holy Spirit is so frequently mentioned in the New Testament in conjunction with the Father and the Son, that it could not fittingly be omitted.

*P.* But what does the Holy Spirit mean in the New Testament, and how comes it to be there?

*I.* The custom of speaking about the Spirit of God arose in late Judaism, when men had got accustomed, from motives of reverence, to shrinking from speaking of God as in direct contact with the world. The gradual abandonment (visible in the Psalms) of the personal name 'Yahweh' (translated in our Bibles 'the LORD') in favour of the general appellation 'God' (in Hebrew, 'Elohim') was the first manifestation of this feeling of reverence. Then the habit grew up of picturing all sorts of intermediate entities as the media of God's dealings with the world and with men. Some of these, like 'the Word' so often substituted for 'Yahweh' or 'God' in the Jewish Targums (late Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament for synagogue-use) were not personifications of intermediate beings so much as reverent circumlocutions, like 'Heaven' or 'Power' as equivalents for 'God' in Luke xv. 18, 21, xx. 4 (compare John iii. 27), and Mark xiv. 62. On the other hand, in Proverbs viii. 22-36 'the Wisdom' of God appears as His personal agent and helper in creation and in the guidance of men. In somewhat the same way, but speaking poetically, the author of Psalm xliii. 3 begs God to send forth His 'light' and His 'truth' that they may lead him. One of the most frequent of these semi-personal intermediaries is 'the Spirit' (literally 'the Breath') of God. Like other entities, the Spirit was at times simply an alternative name for God Himself, as in Isaiah lxiii. 10; but its etymological meaning fitted it still better to designate God as present and active within men, as in Psalm li. 10-12. In all the allusions Jesus makes to it it is in that sense that it is introduced. The marvellous outbursts of enthusiasm and power seen in the early days of the Church were viewed as special 'outpourings' of the Spirit—a view which Paul wisely generalized in order to ascribe to it *all* consecrated Christian ability and activity.

Hence the prominence of the idea of God's Holy Spirit in the writings of the early Church, and the frequency with which it was mentioned.

*P.* But what do the Creeds and the Fathers say about it?

*I.* All the Creeds affirm belief in the Holy Spirit, alongside of the Father and the Son; and the word for 'Trinity' was already in use among some Church-writers by the end of the second century. But while certain Fathers were already speculating learnedly and abstrusely about the inter-relations of the Three, the Creed-makers preferred to say nothing precise about the Spirit. In all the early Creeds, some details are added about the Father and considerably more about the Son; but nothing whatever is said about the Holy Spirit, except that the Christian believes in it. It was commonly regarded as the impersonal and immanent energy of God or Christ. It was not till the fourth century that the question as to whether the Holy Spirit were truly God became prominent: and it was only after considerable discussion that this question was eventually decided in the affirmative. From about the middle of that century onwards, it became customary to append certain characteristics to the mention of the Holy Spirit in the Creeds. Thus the so-called Constantinopolitan Creed of A.D. 381 (the 'Nicene Creed' of the English Prayer-book) describes the Spirit as 'the Lord and the life-giving one, which proceeds from the Father, which together with Father and Son is jointly worshipped and jointly glorified, which spake by means of the prophets'. Henceforward, though the terms used were in the neuter gender, the Spirit was envisaged as equally 'personal' with the Father and the Son. Thus we arrive at the fixed and hallowed Christian belief in one God consisting in three 'Persons'—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

*P.* Was anything laid down as to the relations between these three?

*I.* Yes: while all three were co-eternal and in a sense co-equal, a certain non-temporal primacy was reckoned to belong to the Father. The Son was neither created, nor made, but 'begotten' by the Father. The Spirit was neither created, nor made, nor begotten; it 'proceeds' from the Father. These terminological distinctions were insisted on as of absolutely-vital importance. The Western Church from about A.D. 600 onward began to affirm that the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father—a view which the Eastern Church has never accepted, and to this day regards as heretical.

*P.* What is your view in regard to the necessity of accepting this doctrine of one God in three Persons?

*I.* Multitudes of earnest Christians do indeed regard belief in it as an absolutely-essential item in the Christian belief in God, and treat a refusal to accept it as virtually equivalent to a repudiation of Christianity. You will gather from what I have said earlier about the relation of the foundation-realities of Christianity to its doctrines that I do not share that view. I do not doubt that God co-operated with the Creed-makers in their prolonged attempts to do His being justice. But that is not to say that the product of their labours is free from the marks of human imperfection or ought to be forced on all Christian believers.

*P.* Suppose it were agreed that belief in the doctrine of the Trinity is not an absolute *sine-quâ-non* of Christian faith, what would be your view of its value?

*I.* Its value lies in the following facts: (1) that it synthetizes the unity of God with the unique manifestation of Him in Christ, and also synthetizes the transcendent sovereignty of God with His immanent presence and activity in the heart of man: (2) that it meets the objection that, if the Son were not co-eternal with the Father, then there must have been a time when God was not yet Father, when therefore His love, having no object to exercise itself upon, must have been imperfect: (3) in other words, that if God is truly personal, there must be distinctions within the unity of His being: (4) that the doctrine was slowly and carefully built up, by thinkers equipped with all the acumen of Greek wisdom, through a series of steps, each one of which they felt logically compelled to take because of the certainty of the steps that preceded it. (5) Finally, in view of the mystery of the Divine Being, the mere fact that the doctrine presents difficulties does not *necessarily* discredit it.

*P.* Are you then prepared to recommend the acceptance of it as a protective clarification of the fundamental Christian facts?

*I.* Not without grave qualification. For although the doctrine does safeguard certain essentials, it does so only at the cost of raising fresh difficulties of its own.

*P.* But you said just now that, in view of the mystery of the subject, difficulties did not necessarily discredit the doctrine.

*I.* So I did: and I can see that my remark calls for further elaboration. There are two inferences to be drawn from the fact that the *ultimate* truth regarding God's Being and His ways is shrouded from us in mystery. One is that this mystery must not be made an excuse for abandoning the quest for clarity and coherence so long as these are within our reach: you remember perhaps that yesterday I criticized the old transactional theory of the Atonement as transgressing this canon. The other is that it is *ultra vires* for us to expect and claim to be able to frame neat and compulsory formulae to convey the truth regarding matters which, because of their mystery and abstruseness, are admittedly beyond our grasp: my second objection to the Church's final doctrine of the Person of Christ was based on this principle.

*P.* And do you feel that the doctrine of the Trinity also lies open to this latter criticism?

*I.* Yes, I think it does. In point of fact, it was in connexion with the doctrine of the Trinity, rather than with that of the Person of Christ taken by itself, that the Fathers so wisely admitted their incompetence, yet so unwisely legislated and persecuted as if they were competent. How many carol-singers for instance can attach any meaning whatsoever to the line you hear them singing with such gusto at Christmas time—

> Son of the Father,
> *Begotten not created*?

Or how many worshippers have a ghost of an idea of what they mean when they sing—

> Teach us to know the Father, Son,
> And Thee, of Both, to be but One?

While therefore it is true that a doctrine of God's inner Being would not *necessarily* be discredited by difficulties due to the mystery of the subject, at the same time we cannot be happy with a doctrine—still less can we rightly insist on others accepting it—until we are clear that the difficulties inherent in it are not such as to make it less simple and credible than the data which it is intended to synthetize.

*P.* That means, I suppose, that we must consider in detail the difficulties inherent in the doctrine of the Trinity. What are they?

*I.* One is that neither the ancient nor the modern meaning of the word 'Person' is consistently and intelligibly applicable to the three Persons of the Godhead. Suppose we define 'Person' as 'phase' or 'aspect', rather than as what we to-day mean by the word 'person', we are faced with the fact that God the Father and Jesus Christ are both known to us as 'persons' in our modern sense, not as distinct 'phases' of some deeper unity. For if God were not a person (in the modern sense), how could we pray to Him as 'Our Father'? And if the pre-existence of Christ (one of the beliefs which forced Trinitarianism on the Christian mind) means anything, surely it means that He pre-existed as a personal being—in the sense in which Jesus of Nazareth was a personal being. Augustine tried to elucidate the Trinity by adducing as a parallel the three phases of the human mind, Memory, Intelligence, and Will, or alternatively, the distinction between the Self that knows, the Self that is known, and the Love which unites them both. Thomas Aquinas and certain modern theologians have thrown out similar analogies. But who does not see at a glance that that sort of exposition does not square at all with the facts before us, and does not contribute one iota towards their clarification?

*P.* Should we fare any better, do you think?, if we frankly gave the term 'Person' the same meaning as the word bears to-day?

*I.* Well, we should certainly do justice to what we believe about the 'personality' of God the Father and of Jesus Christ. But (1) we should be departing rather pointedly from the view of those who first worked out the doctrine; and it is doubtful if we are entitled to do that: (2) it would be difficult to defend ourselves against the serious charge of tritheism, that is, of affirming the existence of three Gods—though I note that certain modern Trinitarians don't mind speaking of the Godhead as 'a society'; yet it is almost as hard to think of God as a society as it is to think of Him as an undifferentiated unity: (3) it is not possible to think of God's immanent Spirit as a distinct person (in the modern sense) from the transcendent Father.

*P.* It seems then that neither of the two possible meanings of the word 'Person' can be satisfactorily applied to elucidate the meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity.

*I.* That is so. That is why we are bidden to interpret the word in this connexion as meaning something more than 'phase' or 'aspect', but something less than 'a personal being' in the modern sense. Such advice surely reveals the immense difficulty of the doctrine.

*P.* What other objection to it is there?

*I.* There is this: theologians have never been quite clear as to how the functions of the Son and the Spirit should be distributed between them. Both, you see, have to act as mediators between the Father and the world: both have been set forth as God's agents in creation: in certain passages in the Pauline and Johannine writings, the Spirit is represented as fulfilling precisely the same ministry as the risen and glorified Christ. Paul in fact says in 2 Corinthians iii. 17: 'Now the Lord' (that is, Jesus Christ) 'is the Spirit'. This fusion of functions, viewed in conjunction with the strikingly-undefined and impersonal character assigned to the Spirit during the first two or three centuries of the Church's thought, surely reveals the slenderness of the data as a justification for insisting that in the one Godhead there are three co-equal and co-eternal Divine Persons'.

*P.* How then would you sum up your view as to the value of the doctrine?

*I.* I should regard it with respect as an honest and devout attempt to give expression to two vital Christian convictions: (1) that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; and (2) that the same God Who is transcendentally over us as Creator, Ruler, and Father, also dwells and works immanently within nature and mankind as inward Guide, Light, and Comforter. I should agree with Trinitarians in regarding these convictions as integral to the Christian view of God. But I should deprecate any attempt to insist on the traditional Trinitarian formula as the one and only means of expressing and safeguarding them. I should deprecate it on the ground that the formula is emphatically a product of the Greek (as opposed to the Hebraic) spirit, and therefore suffers—as I have already argued—from the Greek tendency to speculate along impersonal and abstract lines, and so to do scant justice to the realities of personal life and experience. No doubt the Greek gift for clear and logical thinking was a valuable asset: but in this case, it seems to me, logic has forced her way into realms where her powers are insufficient for the matters that have to be dealt with, and where, in consequence, those who insist on use being made of her are involved in conclusions which they themselves find they must beg us not to judge too logically. While therefore I do not object to using Trinitarian language in joint devotions with others (because I know that *religiously* I am on common ground with Trinitarians), I should insist (1) that profession of belief in the doctrine ought not to be demanded of the Church-member or candidate for the ministry as an indispensable condition of acceptance, and (2) that it must not be used to block frank and honest investigation into the facts and conditions of Jesus' life on earth.

*P.* I expect you are aware that Liberal views like yours are widely criticized as being virtually unitarian.

*I.* O yes. That is one of those cheap labels which so many folk are in the habit of attaching to views they don't agree with, as an easy substitute for a reasoned criticism of them. However, I believe I did tell you, when you mentioned unitarianism before, that this would be the proper occasion for us to discuss it.

*P.* Well, *are* your views unitarian?

*I.* Neither theologically, nor ecclesiastically, would it be accurate so to label them. Mind you, I admit that theologically unitarianism has some points in its favour. Not only are very many Unitarians excellent and loyal Christians; but as a body they have led the way in helping Christians to discard quite a number of irrational and erroneous beliefs which in former times were taken for granted as indubitable implicates of orthodoxy. In view of the extensive changes which in recent centuries Trinitarians have found themselves compelled to make in their theology—changes often anticipated and advocated by Unitarians—some of them need to be reminded that a view is not necessarily wrong because Unitarians can accept it. In particular, unitarianism is of course free from the logical entanglements incidental to the doctrine of the Trinity: moreover, it allows its adherents to study quite fearlessly and frankly the records of Jesus' human life—records which Trinitarians also profess to be willing to treat honestly, but which are none the less not always safe in their hands. But unitarian theology pays too heavy a price for these advantages. It makes no attempt to recognize and meet the logical difficulties which undoubtedly beset the effort to think of God as an undifferentiated unity. It has no account to give of the undoubted uniqueness and Lordship of Christ as 'the firstborn among many brothers' and the supreme revelation of God, and indeed it can hardly be said to provide for an explicit and unambiguous recognition thereof. Neither can it provide properly for the duality shown in the co-existence of transcendence and immanence in the one God. Its horror of all formulations of doctrine (due to the wrong use so often made of them in the past) has kept it on the whole dumb on these great verities. I do not ask that they should necessarily be formulated in trinitarian terms: but I do think it is needful that they should be clearly recognized and asserted.

*P.* Yes, I see now why it would be incorrect to class you theologically as a Unitarian, despite your unwillingness to be absolutely pledged to the trinitarian formula. But what about Unitarians ecclesiastically?

*I.* My inability to be identified with them theologically would seem to carry with it a similar ecclesiastical inability. Despite the fact that as a denomination they developed out of Christian Protestantism, and that it is still widely assumed in their ranks that belief in God and a *de facto* recognition of the leadership of Christ are among the abiding characteristics of their body, yet their extreme antipathy to the formulation of doctrine leaves the Christian character of their teaching and worship very insecure, and even their theism not wholly immune from obscuration. I think I am right in saying that in the United States these dangers sometimes materialize in a very-noticeable way. The regrettably-negative character of their denominational witness comes out most clearly in the fact that the only condition of membership in their churches is the payment of a subscription to the church-funds! Now it is clear to me that, whatever be the defects of trinitarianism, you cannot properly organize the common life of the disciples of Jesus Christ on a basis so negative that it rules out as a test all profession of faith in God through Him and all promise to try to lead a Christian life, and is satisfied instead with the payment of a subscription.

*P.* What then is your resultant position?

*I.* As a Christian man, I must be in fellowship with other Christian men avowedly constituted as a local Christian church and so representing in that locality the one great Church of Christ. I am quite willing for this purpose to belong to a group or denomination which officially professes belief in the doctrine of the Trinity (for I know myself to be *religiously* on common ground with them), so long as I am not compelled to declare my own acceptance of the doctrine as a condition of being admitted to or retained in their fellowship. I find these conditions fully satisfied in my membership in a Congregational church. I doubt if I should find them satisfied so well anywhere else.

V

# THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

*Pilgrim.* I suppose the problems of Christian living, just like those of Christian belief, are attended by a certain amount of difficulty and consequent difference of opinion.

*Interpreter.* That is so. But we must not forget that, in both these fields, he who sincerely desires to take the right course—if he uses honestly and carefully such powers as he has—always receives sufficient guidance for his immediate needs, however small his attainments as a theorist may be.

*P.* Why should the theoretical difficulties of Christian conduct be so great?

*I.* I suppose it is because the ultimate mystery behind all things complicates and obscures for us all basic ethical problems: and besides that, the differences in the subjective powers of the seekers come in to add to the confusion here, just as they do in the field of doctrine. But we must not over-estimate the confusion. Not only are there certain great principles universally accepted as clear: but I venture to think that even in the more-disputed sections of the field, careful thinking can help us nearer to clarity than is generally recognized.

*P.* On what great principles would you say Christians were unanimous?

*I.* Well, I should say for one thing that they were all agreed on the indissoluble connexion and interdependence of the Christian religion as a faith and the Christian ethic as a way of life. It has been truly said that the test of every religion is its ethic, and the basis of every ethic is its religion. I am sure that is true of Christianity.

*P.* Do not some Christian teachers hold that it is a mistake to worry about the problems of Christian ethics at all? I remember your telling me some time ago that a senior theologian had once pointed out to you that 'duty' is not a New-Testament word. I suppose he meant that it is not a New-Testament concept either. I have heard it urged that all we need to do is to love God, that then we can do as we please, and that, if we go beyond that, we fall into 'legalism'.

*I.* Such teaching is astray in two directions—it misconstrues the psychology of moral conduct, and it misconstrues the nature of duty and law.

*P.* How does the psychology of moral conduct come into it?

*I.* In this way—unless we are clear about the true relation of the will to the instinctive emotions, we are bound to misinterpret the meaning of so important and so ambiguous a term as 'love', not to mention other relevant matters.

*P.* What *is* the relation between them?

*I.* Well, every human bosom is a place wherein numerous emotions or instinctive impulses make themselves felt and press to be indulged. Some of these arise from the physical needs and appetites of the body (for example, hunger, thirst, desire for rest, for fresh air, for release from pain, etc.); others are various forms of self-assertiveness (such as pride, ambition, envy, and the like); others are social (like friendliness, gratitude, family-affection, pity, anger, hatred, vindictiveness, and so on); others are aesthetic (the love of beauty in art, music, or poetry): one of the most important, and very much in a class by itself, is the sex-instinct. I have not attempted a complete list or an exact classification; but you will see that I have touched on the main emotions, and you will recognize the essentially-instinctive character of them all.

*P.* I imagine some of them are good and some bad. How do we tell the difference between them?

*I.* I am not sure that, in a sane and normal person, any one of them, taken by itself, can be described as inherently bad. The sex-instinct, for instance, from which so many evil deeds arise, is not *as an instinct* other than good. Even anger and vindictiveness are not necessarily evil: they are closely connected with a love for justice, which is good. Similarly, with those other self-regarding emotions, which we are accustomed to assume to be evil, the evil usually lies, not in the inherent character of the emotion, but in the use which the will makes of it. I do not want to deny that some impulses seem wholly evil—for instance, real hatred, and the love of inflicting pain (commonly, but not very correctly, called 'sadism'): but I incline to think that such feelings are in a measure pathological, and fall into a different category even from some of the normal instincts which we often regard as on the whole harmful.

*P.* But if all the normal instincts are inherently good, why is it so often evil to indulge them?

*I.* I think perhaps I ought to call them inherently useful and *potentially* good—because the question of moral goodness does not arise until the will comes on the scene. You see, it is for the will to decide which of the emotions is to be allowed to pass beyond the stage of a pure impulse, through that of a consciously-accepted desire, into those of an avowed intention and (later) a performed act. This is a most important fact, and must never be overlooked. No doubt, in the case of very simple people, the controlling exercise of the will is not very conscious: and yet the moral difference between unselfishly caring for one's child, and over-severely punishing it (both of them actions arising from natural and potentially-good impulses), illustrates the importance of the emotions not being just allowed a free hand.

*P.* But you still have not explained how it is that evil often results from indulging impulses not themselves inherently evil.

*I.* No, I am coming to that. The trouble is that these instinctive impulses get in one another's way. It is literally impossible to satisfy more than a small selection of them at a time. They are for ever cutting across one another. Illustrations abound. The well-known story of Sir Philip Sidney at Zutphen will do for one. But it must not be supposed that the only conflicts that can arise are conflicts between some self-regarding instinct and some altruistic instinct. Two of the former may be in conflict with one another—as with a youth's love of tobacco and his desire to win a race in the forthcoming sports; or two of the latter—as with a fireman unable to rescue more than one of two persons in danger.

*P.* Yes, but whence comes the evil?

*I.* The evil comes when the will, holding sway among the emotions, indulges the less-worthy of two conflicting emotions.

*P.* But how is he to know which is the less, and which is the more worthy, if they are all inherently innocent?

*I.* My answer to that question, if complete, would involve the whole theory of morals. But no one doubts that, as between conflicting impulses, some are unquestionably nobler and more-authoritative than others. In numerous cases, no sane man is in doubt for a moment. But in other cases, the pros and cons are more evenly balanced, and the decision consequently a matter of difficulty. In any case the grounds of our preference do need to be explored and clarified: and that is where the great problems of ethics arise. But before we go any further, I want you to note clearly where we have got to. The instinctive emotions, considered in the abstract, and speaking roughly, are morally colourless. Our personal responsibility in regard to them begins when our will (which is our real self) has to decide whether, and if so how far, this or that emotional impulse is to be indulged, or—out of deference to another impulse in conflict with it—held in check.

*P.* Yes, I see. But what light does this throw on the question as to whether duty, in distinction from love, is a Christian concept?

*I.* People who try to cut out the concept of duty as less worthy of the highest Christian life than love is, and as virtually incompatible with love, are picturing the ideal Christian as a person so overwhelmed with love for God (in grateful response to His redeeming love in Christ) that he will do all that God expects of him, not from any solemn sense of duty, but out of sheer spontaneous gratitude.

*P.* Well, what's wrong with that?

*I.* This—that love and gratitude do not so operate, unless the will decides that they are to do so. Quite often, of course, this decision is very easily made: but made it has to be, and that by an exercise of the will and from a sense of the fitness of things, in other words from a sense of duty. It is a complete mistake to assume that what is done as a duty is necessarily something which goes against the grain, or that emotions like love and gratitude will operate automatically. The fact that children under the care of good parents sometimes need to be told that they *ought* to feel grateful to them, that they *ought* to love one another, and that they *ought* not to 'hate' the little boy next door, is surely sufficient to explode the idea that love and gratitude enable us to dispense with the exercise of the will in obedience to a sense of duty. Ethical philosophers, to my great surprise, often speak as if it were beyond the power of the will to create or evoke in oneself a fitting emotion. Were the emotions beyond the control of the will, what would be the sense of the tenth commandment in the Decalogue, which bids men not to 'covet' their neighbours' possessions? I venture to maintain, at least as regards love, gratitude, hatred, and coveting, if not universally, that a man has the power, by the exercise of his will, to call forth within himself whatever emotional impulse he would regard as fitting, were he studying the position of another man placed exactly as he himself is placed.

*P.* Why is the view to the contrary so widely held?

*I.* Partly, I think, because the experience of 'falling in love' is imprudently taken as the model for all the emotions. A man cannot fall in love, we know, with any woman simply as a result of deciding from a sense of duty to do so. But the mistake here arises from disregarding the very-special character of the impulses from which falling in love arises—a character which renders the experience no close parallel to gratitude and love in general. Moreover, everybody knows that a man *has* the will-power, if from a sense of duty he decides to exercise it, at least to prevent himself falling in love (in the full sense of the words) with, let us say, a woman already married to another man, or a woman other than his own wife, even though he may feel a strong initial attraction to her. This shows that, negatively at least, the will has something to say to the most-powerful and most-arbitrary of the emotions. When we add to this that the Christian's love for God and for his fellows has to be primarily, not an emotional, but a volitional attitude, we see how misleading it is to set up a barrier between his love and his duty, as if one of them would or could cut the other out.

*P.* I quite agree. But if all is to depend on the selective and controlling functions of the will, we need to enquire next after the principles and standards on which it is to act. What is there to be said about that?

*I.* That, as I said, is the great problem of ethics. Among ethical philosophers I believe there is still very much difference of opinion. But, remembering what we said about the interdependence of the Christian faith and the Christian ethic, we can, at least as a first step, assert that the supreme standard must be the Will of God, and that as His children we *ought* to comply with it. But I rather doubt whether the philosophers among us will regard this as a satisfying solution of the problem.

*P.* Why?

*I.* Because as soon as we formulate such a principle, they will want to be told whether a thing is right because it is God's Will, or whether it is God's will because it is right.

*P.* And don't you feel you will be able to answer them?

*I.* I can answer them to my own satisfaction, but I don't know whether I can to theirs. I should say for myself that since God is to be thought of, not simply as another individual, but as 'the Lord of all being', His Will is a sufficiently-fundamental basis of rightness. I don't know that I can say more. I do not expect to be able to

> sink the string of thought
> Into the Fathomless,

least of all when I am contemplating the ultimate relations between myself and 'the abysmal deeps of Personality' in the Supreme Being.

*P.* I suggest that we assume that the philosophers will have to be satisfied with that. But in declaring that the will's main business in the conduct of life is to conform to or comply with or obey the Will of God, are you not introducing the principle of legalism, and making all depend on our subjection to an outwardly-imposed Law?

*I.* In a sense yes, except that I demur to your describing the Will of God as 'outwardly imposed'. I cannot see why any one should object to the idea of a Law of God—any more that than he should object to the idea of a Will of God. The idea seems to me to be not only legitimate, but helpful, and even necessary.

*P.* But I thought Paul and the Reformation had finally wiped out the idea that Christians were bound to a Law. Did not the Apostle say in Romans vi. 14-15 that we were not under Law, but under grace?

*I.* You evidently have in mind the great Pauline and Lutheran doctrine of salvation by faith in the grace of God through Christ, as distinct from the supposed Jewish and Roman-Catholic idea of salvation by works of the Law. But you need to be very clear as to precisely what that doctrine of theirs means: and if you are, you will, I believe, see that the acceptance of it does not emancipate us from the obligation of obeying the Law of God.

*P.* I should be glad if you would explain that a bit further.

*I.* The doctrine of salvation by faith arose as a reaction against a purely-judicial or commercial view of God's relations with men—so much reward for so much merit accumulated by so many good deeds, and so much punishment for so much demerit accumulated otherwise.

*P.* But you surely do not mean that that was the way the first-century Jews and the sixteenth-century Catholics thought of God?

*I.* Well, it got very near to being understood in that way—though of course there was no *intention* of denying or even forgetting the love of God.

*P.* What precisely then was the correction introduced and proclaimed by Paul and Luther?

*I.* In essence it was that we should take seriously the *Fatherhood* of God revealed and taught by Jesus. If through Jesus we really come to know God as our Father, then the stiff debtor- and creditor-relationship is transcended by the personal and filial. You remember how, even in the teaching of Jesus, the strictly commercial or judicial procedure is subordinated when personal forgiveness and reconciliation take place—as, for instance, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-collector in the Temple, and the promise of Paradise to the repentant Brigand on the cross. Clearly, however much a father may have to act judicially, in laying down the law, and in administering rewards and punishments, yet the personal relationships involved in his being a father and dealing with his children as a father, while not cancelling the judicial activity, do transcend and transfigure it. The parable of the Prodigal Son, if you fill out imaginatively the son's responsibilities of obedience after he was forgiven and received back, gives you the key to the whole situation. The obligation of obedience and the incidence of reward and punishment do not come to an end after reconciliation: being set within the context of a personal fellowship, reward and punishment cease to be judicial payment, and become respectively kindness and discipline. The new relationship depends more on repentance, gratitude, reverence, and sincerity, than on quantity of achievement, important as that is.

*P.* Do you not feel a certain sympathy with the Prodigal's elder brother? I think many people do.

*I.* It is very natural that one should do so. But the point to remember is that, despite his steadiness, he had never risen above viewing his relations with his father in a purely-commercial light. That was surely a very-serious defect.

*P.* I suppose it was. But is the interpretation you give to this parable what salvation by faith in the grace of God really means?

*I.* Yes, that is the essence of it—provided you include Christ Himself as the medium of this grace. 'Grace' means the forgiving and loving ministry which God as Father bestows on those of His children who will receive it. 'Faith' means the children's receptive reliance on or trust in this grace. 'Salvation' means the fulfilment of God's loving purpose for them. Clearly that purpose is not fulfilled so long as they remain in a purely commercial or judicial relation to Him: it requires the exercise of a personal and filial trust and loyalty.

*P.* I strongly suspect that many exponents of Paul and Luther would read a lot more into the doctrine than that.

*I.* I dare say they would. But we should have to scrutinize their exposition of it very carefully, even though they were able to quote Paul himself and Luther himself in their support. It must always be remembered that, under stress of controversy, the advocates of a new view are apt to overstate their case.

*P.* What, in your view, are the main misunderstandings to which this particular doctrine is liable?

*I.* One of the first that occurs to me is the denial of the freedom of the human will. This denial arises from the effort to emphasize man's indebtedness to the grace of God. So great was Paul's sense of indebtedness to God in Christ that he sometimes expressed himself in a purely-deterministic way, declaring that God redeems only those whom He elects, and 'whom He wishes to He hardens' (Romans ix. 10-23). The great Reformers took this over as literal truth; and Calvin systematized it into his doctrine of Predestination, teaching that God's grace was not accessible to all men, but only to those to whom (for good reasons of His own) He had previously decreed it should be accessible. Clearly, a sense of indebtedness to, and dependence upon, the grace of God in our moral and religious efforts does not require so appalling a conclusion: if it did, we should be, not persons at all, let alone children of God, but irresponsible marionnettes, or pawns moved over the board of life by the great Chess-player. We can feel quite safe in repudiating such a conclusion as that, whoever can be quoted as vouching for it, and however worthy may have been the lives of many who have accepted it. Incidentally, you have, in the human freedom involved in the existence of persons as distinct from animals and machines, the nearest you can ever get to an explanation of why God allows moral evil.

*P.* But there remains this difficulty—if, in order that he may be a responsible person, it has to be left to man to decide whether he will seek and accept the needed grace of God, what guarantee is there of the ultimate success of God's 'plan of salvation'? What is there to prevent Him having eventually to depart defeated from the world of men?

*I.* I'll answer that in a moment. But let me say first that, even supposing I couldn't answer it, I should be no worse off than my Calvinist friends, who secure God's triumph by assigning to His sovereign decree the decision as to who, out of the whole guilty race, are to be left to suffer in eternal torment the well-deserved punishment of their sins, and who, on the contrary, are to be saved. That sort of upshot can be viewed as a Divine triumph only because God's fatherly love for all men is tacitly left out of the picture. I deny therefore that there is in Calvinism any *real* vindication of the sovereignty of God—the feature for which it is often so highly praised. The final alienation and perpetual misery of a considerable percentage of his family is a poor sort of triumph for a father of any kind—most of all for Him from Whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named.

*P.* That certainly seems unanswerable. But does your view provide any ground for hoping for a worthier triumph of God, seeing that, by leaving it to man to apply for such grace as he needs, you virtually make him the real master of his fate?

*I.* Within any finite space of time, and as between two finite individuals, logic would certainly forbid us to be sure both of the freedom and of the reconciliation of the alienated one. But when we remember that with God the enterprise of redemption is transferred to the stage of the infinite and the eternal, I do not see why the same logical bar need necessarily hold. God's resources are infinite, and He has all eternity to work in: and that may make possible what otherwise would be impossible—the certainty both of the freedom of man and of his ultimate reconciliation with God.

*P.* That seems perhaps as far as thought can take us towards meeting this particular difficulty. What's another pitfall connected with salvation by faith?

*I.* A too hasty and short-sighted denial of the proper place of 'works' as distinct from filial faith and yet as needful for our salvation. The bald denial of 'salvation by works' arose in the first place, both with Paul and Luther, from the stress which their contemporaries were laying on morally-unessential works like circumcision, fasting, and other semi-ceremonial observances, rather than on the weightier matters of the Law. But this denial was further intended to emphasize the urgent necessity of looking upon God in Christ not simply as judge or paymaster, but as a Father Who longs for His children's love, Who is waiting to be gracious, and is willing to forgive and befriend and strengthen them, on the sole condition of their filial trust in Him. Possibly Paul and Luther at times overstated their case. But Paul's emphatic insistence at other times on the need for obedience to God's Law, as in Galatians vi. 2, 1 Corinthians vii. 19, ix. 21, 2 Corinthians v. 10, Romans ii. 6-13, 16 (see Moffatt), should safeguard us against inferring from his rejection of salvation by works that it is a matter of indifference to our salvation whether we set ourselves to obey the Law of God or not, or that we can be saved even if we do not set ourselves to obey it, or that we shall be neither rewarded if we do obey it nor punished if we do not. I was agreeably surprised to discover the other day that John Wesley warned his congregations against Luther's 'Commentary on Galatians', and wrote of its author: 'How blasphemously does he speak of good works and of the law of God—constantly coupling the law with sin, death, hell, or the devil; and teaching that Christ delivers us from them all alike. Whereas it can no more be proved by Scripture that Christ delivered us from the law of God than that He delivers us from holiness or from heaven'.

*P.* But when the Prodigal Son, the Brigand on the cross, and the Tax-Collector in the Temple, were forgiven, 'justified', or 'saved', they had done no works at all. So that it seems that salvation can be without works after all.

*I.* Salvation was without works in their case, only because as yet there had been no time for works. Salvation *turns* on the reconciliation of the child with the Father; but this could not take place unless the child seriously intended to obey the Father's Will from the moment of reconciliation onwards. If the lapse of time showed that this had not been the case, or had ceased to be the case, the salvation would inevitably lapse. Occasional shortcomings would not destroy it, but an abandonment of the serious intention to obey God's Law certainly would—though even so there would always remain the opportunity of a fresh reconciliation. But as illustrating the demand for 'works', and in paradoxical contrast to forgiveness independently of them (as in the three cases you quote), consider the teaching of Luke xvii. 7-10 (in Moffatt's translation). Jesus there uses the *legal* unlimitedness of a slave's obligations to his master, to illustrate the *moral* unlimitedness of the saved man's obligations to God. That's why it is that no Christian *can* ever be better than he ought to be.

*P.* Do you consider it possible for 'good works' to be done without faith?

*I.* Not if (1) they really are good works, that is, works done with an earnest desire to do the right thing because it is right, and if (2) the existence of implicit or unconscious faith be admitted as possible. A man can do an outwardly-good deed (say, giving money to a good cause) from some base or hypocritical motive—without any faith in the enabling grace of God. But he cannot act with true courage or charity, or practise any other virtue, without the Divine aid. You remember how the hymn about the Holy Spirit puts it—

> . . . every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness
> Are His alone.

The 'alone' may need qualifying: but clearly, as the creatures and children of God, we have His assisting presence whenever we set ourselves to do His Will. And I should hold that this is true even of the simple folk who unreflectively and automatically 'do Thy work and know it not'. Such folk are exercising an *implicit* or unconscious faith in the grace of God. By creating us, ruling us, and indwelling us, God shares in all right human living. The idea of grace as a sort of special gift, bestowed only here and there, not because men are needing and seeking it, but simply because God so chooses, seems to me quite inconsistent with a belief in His perfect goodness. If He is perfect, He must be giving His utmost help to everybody all the time.

*P.* Are there any other misunderstandings of salvation by faith, against which you think people need to be warned?

*I.* Yes, one of the commonest is an implicate or 'near relation' of that under-valuation of works of which we have just been speaking. It is the idea that, because our hearts are right with God, we have no *need* of any Law. Many worthy Christian thinkers are on this account up-in-arms against the supposed necessity of a Law for Christians to obey. But it seems to me to be obvious that, if the quality of our life depends on the control of our instinctive impulses by our will, and if it is our will's duty to obey the Divine Will, some enlightenment as to the content of that Divine Will is essential. I don't need to repeat the argument I used at the beginning of our talk to-day—to the effect that the Christian life cannot be lived on a purely-emotional basis. I hope I said enough to convince you that even love and gratitude to God need an act of the will to bring them into operation.

*P.* Why do you think so many Christians are prejudiced against the idea of our having to obey a Law?

*I.* Partly because they have not thought out clearly the real meaning of the doctrine of salvation by faith. They get hold of isolated or extreme statements in the writings of Paul or Augustine or Luther: and then they shut their eyes, and decry as legalistic or 'Pelagian' every common-sense suggestion that we must learn and do our duty. More than that, they often take it for granted that a Law must necessarily be mainly negative—a purely-gratuitous assumption. Or they imagine that it can deal only with *external* behaviour, as distinct from the management of one's inner life—forgetting that even one of the old Ten Commandments, in forbidding us to covet, deals directly and exclusively with the inner life. Or else they quite wrongly assume that a Law can contain only particular precepts such as deal with a set of special circumstances, and for some unexplained reason regard great imperatives like 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God', or 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', as not being really *laws* at all—whereas they are obviously just as much laws as are particular injunctions like 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy'. Whatever is known to be God's Will, whether it be general or special, positive or negative, concerned with the internal or with the external side of life, is a Law addressed to the will of man, constituting a duty which it is his business to perform. One of the unrealized reasons why so many moderns feel free to rail at the idea of a Law as 'legalism' is because the general content of the Christian way of life has already been for so long well-known in our midst. I fancy some of them would be quite glad to see the notion of a Christian Law reinstated in honour, if they were faced in their own churches, and still more in their own homes, with certain proposed modern innovations like the so-called 'new morality' in sex-conduct.

*P.* Supposing we can take it as now proved that the norm for right or Christian living is the Will or Law of God, the question arises as to *how* we are to learn its concrete content. What means have we of doing that?

*I.* There is no rule-of-thumb answer to that question. Rule-of-thumb answers have been given, and tried: but they have all shown themselves to be in some way incomplete or misleading. The early Hebrews tried this or that code of regulations now embodied in the Pentateuch; the Rabbis took the Pentateuch as a whole; the Roman Catholics took the official pronouncements of the Church; Zwingli and Calvin took the Scriptures *en masse*; Tolstoy took the ethical precepts in the Sermon on the Mount; and so on. But the discovery of it is not so simple a matter as the selection of this or that document. The Law or Will of God is a norm that has to be gradually and progressively learned: and the condition of learning it is the possession of a docile and obedient spirit, and a willingness and capacity to utilize *all* the means of insight open to us.

*P.* What are these means of insight?

*I.* Well, one of the first which comes to mind is the revelation of the character and Will of God given in the life and teaching of Jesus. You remember how constantly Jesus spoke in the tone and manner of a Divine Lawgiver, and what immense stress He laid on the need for compliance with His teaching—as in His picture, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, of the two houses built respectively on rock and on sand. You will also remember that, when He gave a reason in proof or support of His injunctions, it took the form either of some clear pronouncement of God's Will (as in His prohibition of divorce) or of an appeal that man should imitate God's own method (as in the matter of returning good for evil).

*P.* But how would you distinguish this from that Tolstoyan *imitatio Christi*, which I understood you to reject a moment ago as inadequate?

*I.* I should regard the Tolstoyan approach as inadequate, chiefly because it lacks any sufficiently-explicit religious basis, and is somewhat too-narrow in its range and too-mechanical in its application. But I do not want to press this criticism either against Tolstoy or against the analogous ideal of certain Catholic saints who have endeavoured to conform their lives closely to Christ's. There is much that is noble and right in both ideals. There are, however, clearly *some* respects in which we cannot, and ought not to try to, imitate

Jesus or comply *literally* with His imperatives (those, for instance, dealing with possessions, some of which may have been intended to be only temporarily, individually, or sectionally applicable). On the other hand, there are His great commandments like those bidding us love God and love one another and do to others as we should like them to do to us, which are clearly valid for always. Moreover, there is visible in Jesus' life and teaching a general type of character which is a permanent picture of the Christian way of life: its features are—love for one's fellows, utter devotion to God, regard for the individual, reverence for womanhood and childhood, courage, gentleness, sincerity, self-denial, and so on.

*P.* What other means have we of learning the content of the Divine Law?

*I.* The good or evil character of the *results* to which differing courses of action, or rather differing principles of conduct, lead.

*P.* Is not that a very dangerous doctrine? What becomes of the 'scorn of consequence', which we are taught to regard as, sometimes at least, essential to noble action? And are there not quite a number of simple obligations (keeping a promise, for instance), which are obligatory because of their inherent character, quite irrespective of any results they may lead to?

*I.* I believe that that 'scorn of consequence' is really a provisional measure sometimes necessitated by the limitations of our foreknowledge as to what the result will be *in a particular situation.* Because of these limitations, we all need to have at hand for immediate use a set of moral principles which we know to be obligatory upon us, however much or little we can foresee and assess their precise consequences in particular cases. Promise-keeping is quite a good example of such principles. But when I ask myself why at bottom promise-keeping is a morally-good practice, I cannot avoid the answer that it is morally good because of the excellent results to which the observance of it contributes, and the evil results to which a neglect of it would lead. I do not think this conclusion can be disproved by adducing possible situations in which the results of keeping a particular promise would be either indifferent or incalculable. And I have so far been unable to think of a morally-authoritative principle, in regard to which the same could not be held to be true.

*P.* I take it, then, that you would not accept the recently-advocated distinction between (1) the 'right' (as the particular *thing* which it is my duty to do), and (2) the 'good' (as a characteristic of my inner *motive*).

*I.* No, I don't feel at all happy about it. I realize, of course, that we must allow for possible differences between (1) the goodness of the motive, (2) the goodness of the anticipated results, and (3) the goodness of the actual results. But to contend that duty is independent of motive, and to make a clean cut in this way between rightness and goodness, introduces too far-reaching a dualism into my moral universe for me to feel at all satisfied about it. The complications I have just referred to must be described and allowed for in some other way. And in any case I cannot agree that results can be irrelevant either to rightness or to goodness.

*P.* Supposing I can agree so far, I am still faced with the serious question as to what makes the results of my actions good or bad, and therefore constitutes the actions themselves as right or wrong.

*I.* I wonder whether we must not say here, as we have had to elsewhere, that there is no cut-and-dried answer. The perception that the results of an act or an effort are good or bad must be to some extent immediate or intuitive. Many ethicists would hold that, since moral value cannot be expressed in any other terms, intuition is necessarily the only test, whether one judges by results or otherwise.

*P.* In that case, our decision to judge the rightness of actions or efforts by their results will not have taken us much for'arder.

*I.* I do not myself think that it is quite as bad as that. I hold that the maximum and ultimate happiness of man must be at least very closely related to the *summum bonum* towards which ethical effort should be directed—if not actually identical with it.

*P.* Do you mean the happiness of the doer, or that of his fellows?

*I.* For practical purposes I don't think these can be separated. We are so made that our own maximum and ultimate happiness and that of our fellows are inseparably interdependent—as the popular song has it: 'I want to be happy, but I can't be happy unless you're happy too'. It is only on that understanding that I should advance the principle that a desire for the supreme reward could be the true moral motive.

*P.* But does that not commit you to egoistic hedonism? I thought hedonism was dead and buried years ago, particularly egoistic hedonism.

*I.* Egoistic hedonism, as it used to be taught, may be; and I agree with most (though not all) of the criticisms levelled against it. I do not think 'pleasures' can be quantitatively calculated, added up, and subtracted from one another, as if they were so many lumps of sugar. And I fully realize—what indeed is obvious—that the morally-right course often involves for the doer serious and tragic self-sacrifice. Moreover, any tendency to concentrate consciously and habitually on the ultimately-happy results to oneself of one's own good conduct would lead to hypocrisy and unreality, and so prove destructive of true morality. On the other hand, pleasure—or, if you prefer, let us use the broader term 'self-satisfaction' or 'happiness'—is the experience which, in some measure, attends the indulgence of *every* emotional or instinctive impulse: and I do not think it is incorrect to say that the urge to indulge any particular instinct is the (perhaps unconscious or half-conscious) desire to enjoy that self-satisfaction. This is surely just as true of the beneficent instincts like pity, mother-love, etc., as it is of the ordinary physical appetites.

*P.* But isn't there a very big difference between 'pleasure' and that highest form of 'happiness' which in the Bible is called 'blessedness'?

*I.* There is a difference in value, of course: but all three words alike designate the satisfaction which accompanies the indulgence of an instinctive or emotional desire. It is true that the word 'blessedness' is usually applied to the condition of one enjoying the results of having indulged one of the worthier emotions, while 'pleasure' is now (though not in the Bible) usually reserved for the less-worthy. Such grades of worthiness we must of course recognize: but it is philologically and psychologically quite unwarrantable to try to separate off the gratification of the best as 'blessedness' (or perhaps 'happiness') from the gratification of the less-noble as 'pleasure'. I believe critics of hedonism are sometimes willing to admit the term 'satisfaction' as a designation of the ethical *summum bonum*: but I cannot for the life of me see why, if they can go as far as that, they should object to the word 'happiness', which at least has in its favour the support of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount.

*P.* But are we not told in Exodus xxxii. 32 that Moses asked God to blot him out of the Book of Life, if Israel could not be forgiven; and did not Paul in Romans ix. 3 utter the wish that he might be 'anathema from Christ' for his brethren's sake? That does not seem to fit in very well with your theory that the doer's maximum or ultimate happiness is integral to the fulfilment of his highest duty.

*I.* I agree that these cases illustrate the subtlety of the problem. But—confining ourselves to Paul as the clearer of these two similar instances—do you imagine that he could have spent his life preaching the Gospel as he did, if he had seriously believed that the salvation of any one could conceivably have been effected by some one else becoming 'anathema from Christ'? I cannot think so. I do not want to water down the magnificent spirit of self-sacrifice behind his words. But they seem to me to be better explained as the hyperbolical or paradoxical utterance of a fervent and passionate love, than as the cool anticipation of an actual possibility. At the back of his mind Paul surely knew that his own salvation and that of his fellow-Jews *could* not really come into conflict. Incidentally, the incident shows that it is a mistake to assume that a man's psychological consciousness at the moment of forming a moral decision necessarily gives you a complete and accurate account of the ultimate grounds of that decision.

*P.* Well, proceed. If the indulgence of every emotional desire brings happiness, and if happiness is our *summum bonum*, would it not follow that whatever we do will be, to some extent at least, morally right?

*I.* Provided the desire in question is a normal and not a morbid one, and considering it without reference to any other claims upon him, yes. It is morally right for a man to eat when he is healthily hungry, and to have a drink (of water) when he is healthily thirsty, and to rest when he is healthily weary—provided no higher claim takes precedence of the physical appetite. But since in practice our desires are in constant conflict with one another, the task of deciding between their several claims is a standing responsibility. Furthermore, not happiness as such, but maximum and ultimate happiness is the true objective. And while I recognize the hopelessness and undesirability of trying to apply a rule-of-thumb test to measure the comparative intensity, quantity, or duration of various conflicting pleasures, I cannot get away from the fact that, whenever a lower impulse has to be curbed in order that a higher one may be indulged, the indulgence of the higher is always found in experience to contribute more to our maximum and ultimate happiness than the indulgence of the lower would have done. Does not the poet tell us that the unworthy joys are the

> Joys which but lure to leave thee,
> And leave to grieve thee?

And is the Psalmist not right when he tells us that at God's right hand 'are pleasures *for evermore*'? These facts I find either directly denied, or at least unrecognized and unprovided-for, in the systems of most anti-hedonists. After all, in framing our ethical theories, we are entitled, nay bound, to avail ourselves of what we find to be the nature of the universe we live in. And if the affirmation I have advanced raises certain difficulties, we have to consider whether the denial of it does not raise other and more serious difficulties.

*P.* But does not the desire or quest for a reward deprive the noble deed of its nobility?

*I.* I agree that at first blush it may seem to. And yet I venture to think that, if the reward in question is really the highest, and if the paradoxical danger of over-concentration on the reward is avoided, this difficulty vanishes, and the true nobility of a noble deed remains unimpaired. We all know that a *narrow* self-interest is despicable: on the other hand, I do not believe that any responsible and conscientious conduct can be or even ought to be, in the strict sense, completely regardless of self. If that seems strange to you, let me remind you how constantly in the Bible is the hope of the truly-supreme reward put before men as an incentive to right conduct—in the New as well as in the Old Testament, and not least emphatically by our Saviour Himself. Remember too how in Hebrews xii. 2 the author of the epistle says of Him that 'for (ἀντὶ) the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising shame'. Dr. Moffatt says that ἀντὶ here means 'to secure', and translates the clause 'in order to reach His own appointed joy'. Recall also the words of Paul in Philippians iii. 13, 14: 'One thing I do—forgetting the things behind me, and straining forward to the things ahead, I press on towards the goal, unto the prize of God's upward calling in Christ Jesus'. Would you say that *such* a doctrine of reward debases the true nobility of noble living?

*P.* Certainly not—as you put it.

*I.* No, nor should I. Yet I find myself quite unable to harmonize it with that sweeping Kantian depreciation of every form of self-regard, which has been so widely accepted among modern ethicists.

*P.* Well now, where have we got to? We have defined the standard according to which the will has to control the emotions as obedience to the Will or Law of God: and we have agreed to seek for the content of that Law in (1) the example and teaching of Jesus, and (2) that which contributes to our own ultimate and maximum happiness; and we presume that, our universe being what it is, these two quasi-ultimates, properly understood, will necessarily give the same results. Is that right?

*I.* Yes, I think that sums it up very well.

*P.* Where do we go next?

*I.* You realize, I hope, that, valuable as these conclusions are, neither singly nor in combination do they enable us to settle right away whatever moral problem may present itself to us. There must therefore always remain a fair amount of responsibility to be taken by ourselves in dealing with these problems. But much may be learnt from the general sense of the Christian community as it has grown in purity down the ages, and has helped to shape our own moral natures. Finally, when use has been made of all the light derivable from these various sources, our decision must needs rest on the sentence which our own conscience utters, enlightened by intelligence, and clarified and sensitized by prayer.

*P.* We have spoken several times of 'moral problems'. But if we know, as I take it we do, which of our impulses are higher or worthier, and which lower or less worthy, why should there be any problems?

*I.* Because, despite our *general* knowledge of their comparative value, the situations with which we have to deal are often so complex, and the values attaching to the various emotions aroused are so evenly balanced, that it is a matter of perplexity to know which course of action we ought to select.

*P.* But can you view every moral dilemma as a conflict between two or more emotions in your own bosom?

*I.* I don't see why not. A dilemma is essentially a situation in which more than one moral interest is involved, yet no one course of action will serve them all. Take a simple case in which only two such incompatible moral interests are involved. To each of them will correspond an instinctive or emotional urge in the agent. A dilemma is often called 'a conflict of duties'; but it is not really that. We can give the name 'duty' only to the course seen to be incumbent upon us when the dilemma has been properly solved.

*P.* How does one go to work to solve a dilemma?

*I.* The process is essentially that of discovering which of the alternative courses open to us reflects most clearly the spirit of Jesus' example and teaching, and contributes most towards our ultimate and maximum happiness. But be the principles on which we choose what they may, I do not see how the task of rightly formulating them can be avoided. The formulation of them is what constitutes 'casuistry'. On account of the bad ways in which casuistry has often been practised, the word itself is anathema to many: but the thing can be avoided only by leaving the settlement of difficult situations to the casual impulse or insight of the moment. I cannot believe that that is really the best method.

*P.* By the way, speaking of dilemmas, does the end justify the means, or not?

*I.* Sometimes it does; sometimes it doesn't. To say the end *never* justifies the means is completely to reject results as a factor in settling the moral value of an action. Yet we all know that it is right at times, in order to serve certain ends, to do things which otherwise would not have been right (for example, to punish a child). On the other hand, to say the end *always* justifies the means would rule out that 'scorn of consequence' which I have already recognized as being, on some occasions at least, needful. As a matter of fact, cases in which justifying the means by the end seems most odious are nearly all of them situations in which lying and promise-breaking are excused by others as necessitated by some cause with which we do not ourselves sympathize. But I think the sharp distinction we draw between means and ends is not quite accurate. For the means will produce results over and above those for the sake of which they are employed: and a true moral estimate will have to include a comparative consideration of *all* these results. In a dilemma, therefore, the real clash is not between means and ends, but between one means (with all its results) and another means (with all *its* results). If our dilemmas are to be rightly solved, a careful comparison of the two sets of total results is absolutely indispensable.

*P.* It seems a great pity we should be faced with so many of these wretched dilemmas. The solutions of them, even when clear, often involve most painful moral sacrifices. I suppose it is one of the results of living in an evil world.

*I.* It is true that they sometimes involve, as you say, painful moral sacrifice—out of deference to something of still-higher moral value. It is also true that our own wrongdoing and that of others are fertile causes of such dilemmas. But do not make the common mistake of supposing that the acuteness of a dilemma varies in proportion to the sinfulness of the persons whose actions have given rise to it. That is an illusion, and ought to be scotched. Sin is so prevalent that it naturally enters to some extent into most dilemmas: but the real cause of them is not sinfulness, but the inevitable *complexity* of human situations as such. Be on your guard against this prevalent habit of referring all unpleasant choices to the sinfulness of mankind, and pleading that the right solution of them may still necessitate sin; for it is bound to falsify one's thinking. However sharp a dilemma may be, and however painful the moral sacrifice which, in loyalty to a higher principle, is asked of us, the right solution of it never requires a breach of our duty, and never involves us in the necessity of committing sin.

# VI

## PRAYER

*Pilgrim.* Well, we have covered an enormous field. If we are to deal on the same scale with all that comes under the heading of 'Christian teaching', we shall be kept at this business for a very long time to come.

*Interpreter.* That is so. I think we had better make a selection. Now that we have discussed what one might call the basic theological questions, it perhaps won't matter so much if we have to confine ourselves henceforward to a few of the topics that remain over. Furthermore, it would not be wise for us to try to deal fully with everything of interest and importance, because I doubt if there are more than two or three further questions on which I have anything worth saying to say.

*P.* There are indeed a few more matters I hope you will let me discuss with you. Two of them—prayer and the Church—are connected with the relations between ourselves and God.

*I.* Then we might select them as special examples of the general theme we were considering yesterday—Christian living as such.

*P.* Would they properly belong there? I notice that you spoke several times of 'ethics' and of 'moral problems'. Would not prayer and the Church fall within the province of religion rather than ethics or morals?

*I.* These two provinces are not mutually exclusive. Anything that concerns our duty, even in relation to God, can be rightly included in ethics. This does not mean that religion is to be regarded as a subdivision of ethics: for 'religion' involves the consideration of a lot more than what we ourselves have to *do* in connexion with it.

*P.* So be it, then. Well, may we talk about prayer? What *is* prayer, essentially?

*I.* I should describe prayer as consisting essentially of communion with God—and, for the Christian, of *personal* communion with God as his heavenly Father. There can therefore be for him no question as to the absolute necessity of it. The love and service of our fellows (which some breezy folk profess to regard as 'the whole duty of man') is no substitute for love to God—though doubtless a very important corollary of it—and therefore no excuse for neglecting prayer. It was a wise man ('Safed the Sage', I think) who coined the phrase, 'The fool-pretence of being too busy to pray'.

*P.* If I remember rightly, in our second talk, you included prayer among the foundation-realities of religion, as distinct from the doctrines which arise out of our reflexion on them.

*I.* Yes, it is very interesting and important to note that, however much Christians of various types differ in regard to their doctrines, even those connected with prayer, they never differ as regards the rightness and necessity and value of praying.

*P.* I can quite see the difference between (1) the experience of the value and power of prayer, and (2) its theoretical explanation. But surely there are certain very-patent presuppositions which we may fairly distinguish from the theories emerging from our subsequent reflexion, yet without which we should hardly feel inclined to start praying at all.

*I.* Certainly. There must, of course, be a belief in the objective existence of God, a recognition of His right to our complete obedience, a humble sense of our need for His help, and a trust in His power and willingness to give it. But I can see no need for accusing the present generation of Christians as a whole of having forgotten these truths, and so for reaffirming them in aggressive Barthian terms. Yet that is what is done in a 'Christian News Letter' on the subject of prayer, which was handed to me recently. The trouble over prayer, its author urges, is due, not to our lack of time or training, nor to the intellectual difficulties it involves, but to our 'subjectivism'. Each man, he complains, has the audacity to regard himself not only as the centre of his own universe, but as 'the being for whom it primarily exists'. We are, it seems, substituting 'experience' for meeting God face to face. The author sneers at our normal communion with the heavenly Father as 'talking with God', 'easy-going intercourse with an indulgent modern parent'. He tries to enforce the marvel and mystery of prayer by the categorical assertion that it is 'impossible', a foolish and dangerous mis-statement, which he has immediately to take back with the explanation that it is possible only by the grace of God (which we all knew already). He repeatedly uses the word 'miracle' in order to warn us against taking the normal condition prevailing between God and His children too much as a matter of course. He gravely informs us that prayer involves the 'acknowledgement of God as alone the Master of our lives'—as if we Liberals hadn't known that, ever since we were taught to pray at all. But apparently such acknowledgement is ungenuine unless it is accompanied by 'despair of self': without that, our praying is but 'a pathetic conversation with our own selves'. Just as your ancient Rabbi got his emphasis by means of absurd hyperbole, so your modern Barthian gets his by grossly caricaturing his contemporary fellow-Christians. Such a handling of the matter seems to me well-nigh to border on the preposterous.

*P.* Personally, I should be inclined to word my verdict on the style a little more strongly. However, we'll let it go at that. But I hear that you gave an address recently on 'Intelligence in Prayer'. What line did you take?

*I.* I emphasized the duty of bringing our practice of prayer into the closest possible harmony with our real beliefs about God and the world, and I made some suggestions as to what that would involve. I don't mean, of course, that one can expect to be able to give a complete rationale of prayer. That is not only in the nature of things beyond our power (for just as 'the peace of God surpasses all understanding', so does His way of hearing and answering prayer), but it is also unnecessary (for we are all accustomed to make use of instruments—human conversation, for example—which we can only very-partially understand). Moreover, experience warrants the belief that even a very-imperfect theory of prayer does not prevent the prayer itself being wonderfully effective, provided it is sincere, and is as intelligent as the powers of the offerer allow. Thomas Cartwright, in Elizabeth's time, said that prayer was 'as it were a bunch of keys whereby to go to all the treasures and storehouses of the Lord, His butteries, His pantries, His cellars, His wardrobes, and whatsoever is needful either for this or for the life to come'—an elementary way of describing it: yet there is no doubt that for him, as for the devout in every age, prayer was a great reality and a great power.

*P.* But doesn't what you have just been saying rather cut out the case for 'intelligence' in prayer? If unrationalized prayer is as effective as you say, why bother about rationalizing it?

*I.* I don't think there is any inconsistency in recognizing the validity and value of the simplest prayer, and yet at the same time insisting that we ought to make our prayers as intelligent as we can. The principle which I pleaded for (at the close of our second talk) as holding good in regard to doctrine generally, holds good with regard to our doctrine of prayer. Our obligations in the matter vary in proportion to our powers and opportunities. There are three good reasons why we ought to take these obligations seriously.

*P.* What are they?

*I.* Well, one is that intelligence is God's gift: and we dishonour Him if in shaping our religious beliefs and practices we do not use it as fully as we always do in all other serious concerns of life. That is the principle we have been going on throughout these talks. It has justified itself to the full in the Higher Criticism of the Bible: and while we must never lose a humble sense of the greatness and mystery of God, there is absolutely no reason why we should not use our intelligence on the deeper problems of religion, so far as it *is* able to help us to unravel them. Hence Paul's very sound resolution in 1 Corinthians xiv. 15: 'I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also'.

*P.* What's another reason?

*I.* As with human conversation, so with prayer—the more intelligent and reasonable we are in doing it, the greater and better will be the use we shall be able to make of it. And if we happen to be in doubt as to whether it is any use at all, an intelligent understanding of it will be a great help towards removing that doubt. I say this, though I realize that, however some people may talk, there are often *other* reasons for their not praying than honest perplexity as to the intellectual difficulties associated with it.

*P.* What is the third reason?

*I.* The third is in some ways the weightiest of all. It is that we have to develop the habit of prayer in a growing generation of young people who for various reasons have not accustomed themselves from their early years to praying. If we are to tell them (as a learned minister I knew used to say he was accustomed to tell people) that, when they pray, they must be prepared to split their logical universe in two, the only result will be that they will simply not pray. Young people's questions are often perverse and sometimes insincere; but it is always worth while giving them as full and reasonable an answer as one can. I respect their demand for an intelligent theory of prayer, as a condition of praying themselves. That, you may remember, was how Paul felt about it: If prayer and singing were done with the spirit only, and not with the mind, 'how', he asked, 'is he who occupies the position of an outsider to say "Amen" to thy thanksgiving?—for he knows not what thou meanest. . . .' (1 Corinthians xiv. 14-19).

*P.* It seems to me you have made out a very strong case.

*I.* There is only one further comment I want to add before we proceed to particulars. If we are under any obligation at all to apply intelligence to our method of praying, we must apply it quite boldly. Of course we must always be on our guard against being betrayed into explanations which, if accepted, would bring the actual practice of prayer—as personal communion with God—to a standstill. But it is no use our refusing to draw obvious inferences from our considered convictions, simply on the ground that these inferences would necessitate some drastic revision of our traditional formulae. I say this because so many moderns who write on the problems of prayer seem to suffer from a kind of panic or mental paralysis, as soon as they have taken a few tentative steps; and thus they never reach a true solution of the particular difficulties with which they have undertaken to deal.

*P.* Well now, are we ready to proceed to particulars, and discuss the actual ways in which we can better harmonize our methods of prayer with our beliefs about God?

*I.* I think so. The first change that I have to propose is that, instead of presenting petitions to God, we should devote the petitionary part of our prayer to making ourselves, by means of communion with Him, able to receive what He is already waiting and willing to grant.

*P.* But why on earth should you object to plain petitionary prayer?

*I.* Because petition, *in the normal sense of the word*, means expressing your desire or need to one who either does not yet know of it, or is, until he is otherwise persuaded, disinclined to grant it. Neither of these two conditions holds good in regard to God. 'Your heavenly Father knows what things ye need before ye ask Him'—knows them in fact far better than we know them ourselves. Moreover, being perfect, He is already willing to give us of His best, and does not need to be persuaded. This point was clearly seen by Jerome, who wrote: 'It is one thing to inform one who is ignorant; it is another thing to have recourse to One Who knows'. Yet we blandly ignore what we profess to believe, and go on solemnly chanting in our services, 'We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord', just as if the good Lord was not far readier to hear than we are to pray.

*P.* Why then don't we get all His best at once, and why should we have to pray about our needs at all?

*I.* Because, while there are some gifts (like sunshine and rain) which God gives to all men whether they think about Him or not, there are other gifts which we need at His hand, but which, like a friend's friendship, He cannot give unless and until we earnestly desire them, and are able to receive them. I take it that the true purpose of our praying is that, by personal communion with God, we may be brought to desire these deeper gifts and become able to receive them. I found a welcome recognition of this fact in the Roman Catholic *Tridentine Catechism* of 1566. It is there reckoned as the fifth fruit of prayer, that God 'wishes us to make use of this exercise of prayer in order that, being aflame with the zeal of seeking what we desire, we may, by that perseverance and longing, progress so far as to be worthy of having those benefits bestowed on us, which our elementary and narrow mind was (previously) not able to receive'.

*P.* I don't see how one can get away from that; and yet I must confess I don't feel quite happy about it.

*I.* Well, tell me where exactly the shoe pinches.

*P.* In the first place, petition has been an important part of prayer ever since men prayed at all. You have got it in the Psalms, our great devotional classic; it pervades both the Old and the New Testaments; it was practised and enjoined by Jesus Himself; and Christian prayers of every period give a large place to it. It strikes me as a little violent to propose cutting it out now.

*I.* We should not be cutting it out, but only changing its form. That is what a great many modern pleas for retaining petitionary prayer in its customary form do not seem to take sufficient account of. But as regards your objections, they really reduce themselves to the presence of direct petition in the Bible, the simple force of custom explaining the rest. The practice of Jesus Himself, of course, needs special consideration: but I suggest that we might go into that later. In regard to the Bible generally, I think we really must allow for the great change that has come over the doctrine of God since the period when the Old Testament was written. With all their marvellous religious sensitiveness, the ancient Hebrews certainly did not believe that, before He was asked, God was already longing to give men of His best in order to supply their need. There are swarms of passages in the Psalms and elsewhere, deprecating God's continued displeasure, and implying His unwillingness to answer prayer, without a great deal of pressing and urging. Does that square with our Christian faith that, being perfect, He is more willing to give than we to ask?

*P.* No, I suppose not.

*I.* Few people who blithely sing in church, 'Who is a pardoning God like Thee?', realize that the text from which the words are borrowed—Micah vii. 18—plainly implied, when first written, that several Gods existed, but that Yahweh was the most forgiving of them all. That is a good illustration of the extraordinary tenacity of Biblical phraseology, long after its *strict* sense has been forgotten. Don't you think cases like that lay on us the duty of drastically revising our prayer-language from time to time?

*P.* It certainly looks like it. But doesn't the analogy between Divine and human fatherhood (to which you have yourself so often appealed) justify our *asking* God for things?

*I.* No analogy can be expected to run on all fours. The human child asks his father for things, in nearly every case because the father doesn't know what the child wants, or else because he is thought to be possibly unwilling to grant it, or else for both reasons. Yet neither of them is applicable to God as our Father. I might turn the argument round and say: Every father wants his child to speak to him in a way that harmonizes with the child's ripest and most intelligent thought about him. We badly misapply the child-analogy if we speak to God in a way that clearly contradicts the best He has taught us about Himself. Of course there *are* human situations in which requests might be made in the way in which we ought rightly to present our needs to God—as, for instance, when a refractory patient comes to his senses, and 'asks' the doctor and the nurse to proceed with the treatment, or when an inhospitable person ceases to be inhospitable and 'asks' the visitor patiently waiting outside his door to enter. We can 'petition' God *in such a sense* if we choose: but the comparative rarity of such a situation renders it a not-very-suitable method of describing the real facts of the case.

*P.* What then do you propose should take the place of the old petitionary prayers?

*I.* Our true objective in so-called 'petitionary' prayer is neither to replace God's ignorance of our need by knowledge of it, nor to replace His unwillingness to supply it by willingness, but by means of humble personal communion with Him so to change *ourselves* that (1) we may desire that God's Will, whatever it be, may be done, (2) that we may discover the content of that Will for ourselves at the time of praying, and (3) that we may become capable of receiving it. And mind you, this cannot be effected by our simply asking once, and saying 'Thy Will be done'. Far-reaching changes in ourselves may be needed before God's Will *can* be fully done. That is why prayer, while in essence it always remains personal fellowship with God, can in some respects be rightly thought of as a discipline, similar to a course of medicine or physical exercise or to a series of intellectual studies. Clement of Alexandria has a good illustration in Book iv of his *Stromateis*. It runs: 'As men at sea, attached at the stretch to the anchor, tug indeed at the anchor, but do not draw it towards them, but (rather) draw themselves to the anchor, so those who according to the (truly) "Gnostic" life draw (as they think) God towards themselves, are without knowing it themselves brought nearer to God'.

*P.* Do you not believe then that man's prayer can change God?

*I.* Prayer certainly cannot make God better informed or more generous than He has been from all eternity. It can rightly be said to change Him only in the sense that, when, by means of our prayerfulness, we have become more capable of receiving His best gifts, He becomes able to do for us what previously He was unable to do for us.

*P.* In what form of words is a man to pray about his needs, if he is not to petition God directly for His gifts, but to use his prayer for the purpose of becoming desirous of them and able to receive them?

*I.* The needs we feel and the gifts we desire must of course be brought to mind and spoken of as we pray; and our longings thereby subordinated to God's Will and consecrated to Him. I have already granted that even direct petitionary prayer, if sincere, often brings the needed blessing. Indeed, the tendency to drop into the normal language of petition is with most of us so strong, that we shall probably find ourselves using it despite our theory. That will not perhaps greatly matter, so long as we remain sincere. But I believe our prayer is likely to be most fruitful if we keep clearly in mind what it is precisely that we are about, namely, endeavouring through communion with God to become receptive of His best gifts. And if we accustom ourselves to do that, the needful words will soon come of themselves.

*P.* Does your theory throw any light on the New-Testament commendation of *importunate* prayer? That has always been very puzzling to me.

*I.* Indeed it does. In fact, I should venture to claim that my theory, as you call it, gives us the one possible key to what is otherwise a quite-insoluble puzzle. Look: the practice of importunate and persistent prayer, which Jesus encouraged both by His teaching and by His own practice (of spending whole nights in prayer) is—if the prayer be petition *as normally understood*—inconsistent with our belief in God's love, as well as with Jesus' own prohibition of 'vain repetitions' and 'much speaking' (because God already knows all our need, and like any good human father willingly supplies it). The unfittingness of importunity, as customarily understood, was not at first felt. So in Isaiah lxii. 6 f. those who have to pray to God for Jerusalem are bidden not only to take no rest themselves, but to 'give Him no rest, till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth'. With their literal interpretation of Scripture, the Puritans used the same expression. Emigrants to America in 1635 promised, 'so far as God shall enable us, to give him no rest on behalf of' their brethren in England. A Puritan preacher in 1641 said, 'It is the work of the day to give God no rest till he sets up Jerusalem as the praise of the whole world'. A group of Methodists in 1762, praying for the sanctification of one of their number, reported that 'The Lord was *conquered* by our instant' (*i.e.*, pressing) 'prayer'. But is that the way in which we ought to describe the prayers we address to the God revealed to us in Christ?

*P.* Certainly not. But what is the right modern equivalent for it?

*I.* If, as I have already urged, so-called petitionary prayer is better thought of as the communion with God which leads us to long for and to be able to receive the Divine gifts we most need, so that it is comparable in some ways to a series of exercises or lessons, what is more likely than that, in view of our backward condition, psychologically, morally, and spiritually, the desired change should sometimes necessitate very prolonged effort? Just as physical healing often takes a considerable time, so too does psychological, moral, and spiritual healing. There are laws governing changes in these departments of life, just as there are laws governing physical changes. Hence the need for persistent prayer. Furthermore, if *fellowship* with God be our *summum bonum*, we shall naturally and frequently need and long just to spend our time with Him, not necessarily over some particular agenda, but 'enjoying each the other's good', as (*mutatis mutandis*) one does with a human friend. This explanation of importunity presents no such incongruities as does the idea of 'giving God no rest' or 'conquering' Him. It explains, as nothing else does, the need for importunity, without implicitly denying the generosity of God.

*P.* What about the idea of 'wrestling with God' in prayer?

*I.* That is a phrase drawn from the ancient story, told in Genesis xxxii. 24-32, about Jacob wrestling with an angel. The story is itself probably a modernized version of a still-more ancient and primitive legend about a struggle between Jacob and a local river-deity. For us moderns it is simply an antiquated illustration of intense and persistent prayer. It is true that some writers of our time not only use the phrase 'wrestling with God' (which is innocent enough by itself, if not over-pressed), but think of a real resistance to God's Will as called for on our part. Thus Dr. Forsyth wrote in *The London Quarterly Review* for July 1908, that prayer 'may, like other human energies of godly sort, take the form of resisting the will of God. Resisting His will may be doing His will'. The context shows that what he had in mind was, not of course rebellion against God, but the active exercise of the human will in prayer in its endeavour to overcome those limitations and difficulties (such, for instance, as illness) from which Providence allows men under certain conditions to suffer. But to describe these endeavours as 'resisting God's Will' seems to me to be needlessly paradoxical. We shall discuss in a moment in what sense such limiting conditions can be ascribed to God's Will: but the use of importunate prayer in encountering them is more accurately represented as a strenuous self-discipline through communion with Him than as a struggle against Him.

*P.* This brings us to the important question of what gifts of God we ought to pray for in this quasi-petitionary method, if I may call it that.

*I.* A natural answer is to say that we should pray for *anything* which we really desire, always subjecting it to the condition that it is in conformity with God's Will.

*P.* Do you yourself think that is a good rule?

*I.* It errs at any rate on the right side, because we naturally and rightly shrink from setting limits to the scope of prayer or to the power and willingness of God to help us in our need. At the same time, we can surely claim to know *some* things about God's Will; and I hold that, in framing our prayers, we ought not to disregard what we know, or even what we seriously believe, in that matter. I think we may claim to know, for instance, that it is not God's plan to interfere with the operation of the Laws of Nature, save through the normal agency of human beings. If that be so, the province of prayer should be limited to the sphere of happenings which are affected by the actions of ourselves or of others. I am inclined to think that that rubric is not only inherently reasonable, but is confirmed by the actual practice of Christian people.

*P.* Will you illustrate? and then perhaps I shall see more clearly what you mean.

*I.* Certainly. We surely desire very earnestly that the sun shall rise each morning and set each evening, and that the seasons shall follow one another in their familiar sequence. But have you ever heard of any devout Christian who thought it right to *ask* God that it might be so? I take it you haven't; and I imagine the reason to be that, as we know, these happenings fall entirely within that sphere providentially ruled by God through the machinery of Nature and unaffected by any human agency. We are right to *thank* God for them; but we do not need to *ask* Him for them.

*P.* But that would rule out praying for the weather, which is what quite a lot of good people do. How about that?

*I.* People pray about the weather because our comparative ignorance of its laws makes it *seem* less due to the necessary sequence of natural processes than it really is. So far as we know, no human activity makes any difference to the weather—except in such trifling ways as that furnaces and factories vitiate the purity of the air. The Jewish Rabbis were deeply interested in this question as to whether it was right to pray for one kind of weather rather than another. A story was told by one of them of a pious woman whose two sons were respectively a gardener and a potter. The gardener asked her to pray for rain to water his plants; the potter asked her to pray for sunshine to dry his pots. Which should she do? The Rabbinic answer was, She will do best to leave it in the hands of God.

*P.* But didn't Jesus virtually pray about the weather, when He calmed the storm?

*I.* The calming of the storm is, you remember, one of the 'Nature-miracles' ascribed to Jesus. When we were discussing the facts of Jesus' life, we were led, on quite-other grounds, to regard these Nature-miracle-stories as unhistorical. I cannot think of any other place in the Gospels where Jesus either practises or enjoins prayer about the weather.

*P.* But isn't the petition for daily bread in 'the Lord's Prayer' really on all fours with prayer about the weather?

*I.* No, because in the case of daily bread (unlike that of the weather) human co-operation with God is involved. That to my mind makes all the difference. A Christian friend once described this distinction of mine between weather and daily bread as 'a somewhat-unworthy evasion' on my part. I forgave him for it, as he was on the whole such a decent chap. Moreover, he had been good enough to say that he knew I was not conscious of it being an evasion. But I was entirely unconvinced by his criticism, I may tell you. For consider this: though Jesus did not lay down a theory of prayer for His twentieth-century followers, His own teaching and practice furnish us with materials for one; and if we find Him including prayer for daily bread and omitting prayer for the weather, I maintain that we have a perfect right to connect this distinction with the very-real difference between the two gifts (namely, that we have to work for the one, but cannot do so for the other), even although that difference is not *explicitly* mentioned in the Gospels. I completely fail to see why that should be called an evasion, still more an unworthy one.

*P.* Yes, I think you are right there. Is there anything else which our knowledge of God seems to exclude from our legitimate quests in prayer?

*I.* Well, I should not myself feel justified in seeking by means of prayer for any gift from God which would involve a violation of some really well-known Law of Nature, even though—unlike the weather—human agency *was* connected with it.

*P*. But isn't this idea of fixed and well-known Laws of Nature now given up?

*I*. I realize that our views in this matter must not be too rigid, though I see no reason for accepting the suggestion some scientists are now making that the behaviour of inorganic matter shows signs of lawlessness and indeterminacy. I believe that idea is due to a certain weakness in logic from which even tip-top experts in particular fields of enquiry now and then suffer. But let me ask you, What do you make of the fact that no Christian, however devout, and however fond of a sick friend or child, ever prays for the resurrection of such a sufferer to life, once death has taken place? He is deterred from doing so, not by the Christian hope of meeting the deceased in the next world—otherwise he would not grieve so bitterly—but surely by his belief that such an event would be contrary to God's regular way of working, as taught us in the scientific study of Nature. In short, however loose we may allow our talk about 'miracles' to get, we moderns cannot sincerely ask God to work stark physical miracles for our benefit.

*P*. I don't see how one can get away from that, though I expect you would grant that the boundary between the 'miraculous' and the possible cannot be very sharply drawn. But, after excluding the *starkly* miraculous and the *purely* physical, what remain as the proper gifts of God which we ought to seek for ourselves by means of prayer?

*I*. I should say there are two classes of them: (1) spiritual endowments, with the physical results dependent thereon, and (2) 'special providences'. Applicable to both are the words ascribed by Origen to Jesus: 'Ask for the great things, and the little things will be added unto you. Ask for the heavenly things, and the earthly things will be added unto you'.

*P*. Taking the spiritual endowments and their accompaniments first, what in your view do they cover?

*I*. They include forgiveness, strength against temptation, light and guidance in perplexity, intellectual and manual efficiency, insight into truth, freedom from worry, communion with God, the acquisition of 'daily bread', and the maintenance or recovery of bodily health. I believe we may quite confidently assume that it is God's Will that we should receive these gifts according to the measure of our need, and also that He fully knows our need of them. But we have to add that

He cannot and will not thrust them on us against our will or our capacity to receive. Hence the necessity for us to dwell, in His presence, on our need of them, to consecrate to Him our desire for them, and so to increase our faith by fellowship with Him in prayer, that we shall be able to receive what He Himself is already so eager to bestow. No question of any 'Law of Nature' having to be broken arises.

*P.* But are you not going a little too fast? I grant you, we can safely say that it is God's Will that we should successfully resist temptation, and so on. But are you sure that it is always God's Will that we should be physically well? What becomes of the traditional idea that God 'sends' illness upon us as a kind of chastisement?

*I.* That illness happens in conformity with the operation of Natural Laws, and therefore by God's permission, is true. But much the same has to be said of sin itself—which we are yet bound to believe is directly contrary to His Will. In a certain contingent sense, I suppose, we must grant that God 'wills' that, *if* a workman fall off a high scaffold, he shall get damaged: but that is because (1) He is the Lord of Nature, the laws of which must, for the good of mankind as a whole, be adhered to, and (2) the workman must be free to expose himself to the danger of falling; otherwise he will be, not a person, but a machine. Moreover, we may thankfully recognize that God is able to enter, along with those who trust Him, into such calamities, and overrule them to an ultimately-good end. And the same with illness. But I think we must say with equal emphasis that it is *not* God's direct and personal Will that such events should actually occur. I know there are many good people who would disagree with me here: but I am confident on two grounds of the truth of what I say: (1) the healing miracles of Jesus, Who would not have attributed illnesses to *demonic* agency, and done His best to heal them, and bidden His disciples also to heal them, had He believed that they were caused by the direct personal Will of God; (2) the strenuous efforts which no good Christian ever dreams of omitting in order to put an end to illness. The only persons who are known to have objected conscientiously to taking sanitary precautions against the spread of disease are certain eastern peoples, whose religion makes them real determinists, and teaches them that epidemics are 'Allah's will', and that it is therefore impious for them to try to stop them. But no Christian takes that view. To point to the good effects of having to combat illness is not to prove that God directly 'sends' the illness:

the same argument would make God the instigator (not simply the permitter) of human sin, in order that grace might abound.

*P.* But is there any definite evidence to the effect that recovery from illness is actually effected, or even hastened, by means of prayer?

*I.* I should say that there was overwhelming evidence—though, of course, each piece would need to be properly scrutinized. That the state of the mind makes a very real difference to the state of the body is a commonplace. A lady-doctor once told me that she was not disposed to lay down any hard-and-fast limits to the psychological possibilities here—though, of course, the laws governing physical occurrences do set limits to the difference the state of the mind can make. But the state of a sufferer's mind is the very field in which the effects of prayer are most unmistakably manifested; and when we add the effects of intercessory prayer (of which we have yet to speak), we see good ground for regarding prayer as a very powerful healing agency, reinforcing the normal and automatic working of God's immanental action in the body, which we call the *vis medicatrix naturae*. And there is abundant evidence in the hands of Christian scientists, the Guild of Health, and other persons, to prove that it is so.

*P.* What had you in mind when you spoke of 'special providences'?

*I.* By a 'special providence' I mean the occurrence in answer to prayer, not of a physical happening otherwise unconnected with any human action (like a sudden change in the weather), but of an event, involving some human behaviour in the physical realm, which meets the particular difficulty of the person who prays, or of him for whom he prays. An example would be an escape from serious unforeseen danger in the case of one whose safety had been prayed for, either by himself or some one who was concerned for him.

*P.* But do you believe that such incidents, when they occur, are to be regarded as providential answers to prayer, rather than put down as coincidences?

*I.* It is not very easy to answer that question properly, for this reason. Even when we have eliminated (on the grounds I have already given) purely-physical events like the state of the weather at any particular moment, allowance has to be made for (1) the element of coincidence which, whatever our theory of prayer, must be regarded as playing a large part in the determination of our daily experiences, and (2) the apparent unfairness, or at least arbitrariness, with which favours of this kind are distributed—befalling, as they do, one person, yet not another, when need, desert, and prayer would seem to have entitled both of them to like treatment. The difficulty is particularly acute in time of war, when most people are desperately anxious about the safety of relatives or friends in the forces, especially in the air and at sea. But of course it is the kind of condition that is always fairly prevalent. You remember Tennyson's bitter lines—

> O mother, praying God will save
> Thy sailor,—while thy head is bow'd,
> His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud
> Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

It is this apparent unfairness or arbitrariness that now and then raises loud protests when some favourable event is acclaimed as an answer to prayer. At the same time, there is a sufficient number of striking cases on record to render a theory of pure coincidence very unconvincing. And if we believe (as we do) that prayer deeply affects the mental state of him who prays, and (anticipating again) of him for whom he prays, it would seem more likely than not that prayer should make such a difference to the physical acts of these persons as to protect them noticeably from serious danger. Why it should sometimes protect, and sometimes not protect, we cannot say: the factors involved in any one instance are too complex and mysterious for our analysis. But I can see nothing inherently incredible in a special providence of the kind I have described: and while I should refrain from allowing my faith in prayer to depend in any way on such a prayer being answered according to my own desire, I should yet feel it quite right to offer the prayer, in humble trust and hope, praying at the same time that, *whatever* the issue, I might be enabled by God's grace to accept it as a child of His ought to accept it.

*P.* Can we pass on now to the subject of intercession as such? I believe it is here that theoretical difficulties are most acutely felt.

*I.* Yes, by all means. Every one to whom prayer means anything at all, prays on behalf of those he loves best: and however lacking he may be in any clear theory of the matter, his prayer, if sincere, cannot be wholly ineffective. At the same time, people whose minds have been really challenged by the intellectual difficulty will hardly be able to pray with the same fervour as they might, unless they really know what it is they are doing. I don't think it would be a bad plan for you to say now where you think the main difficulty lies.

*P.* Well, it has often seemed to me so unnecessary for us to remind God of the needs of those whose needs He knows perfectly well already, and requesting Him to bless them, when we profess to believe that in His perfect love He is already willing and waiting to bless them to the utmost of His power. The language of some of our intercessory hymns and prayers seems to me to border on the blasphemous. For instance, take this:

> *Forget them not*, O Christ, who stand
> Thy vanguard in the distant land.

The impudence of suggesting that He to Whom we pray needs to be told by us 'not to forget' His obligations. Really, it gives me a pain in the neck, that sort of thing.

*I.* Not unnaturally. Any faulty theory of prayer lands you sooner or later in an intellectual impasse—like the Puritan idea of praying so persistently as to 'give God no rest'. The absurdity of our telling God not to forget so-and-so, or of presuming to draw His attention, as it were, to the needs of so-and-so, as if He were liable otherwise to overlook them, is a special form of the irrationality which we saw to characterize normal petitionary prayer, *when interpreted at its face-value*.

*P.* What then is the way out?

*I.* It is closely analogous to our solution of the problem of petition. Just as what is commonly regarded as petition is really a disciplining of ourselves by close personal fellowship with God, for the purpose of bringing our wills into line with His and fitting ourselves to receive His gifts, so I understand intercessory prayer to be essentially a similar discipline for the purpose of learning His Will about those we love, and fitting ourselves to be His instruments on their behalf and in their service. You are never so likely to be tactful and helpful and sympathetic to others as when you have been genuinely praying for them. And that tact, help, and sympathy are God's answer to the prayer.

*P.* That seems all right for the persons you can meet or correspond with: but how about those with whom you can have no such normal communication?

*I.* What is called 'telepathy' would supply an intelligible means of influence, and is, I imagine, sufficiently well-attested by experiment to be reasonably credible. But even apart from actual scientific proof, I should think we are warranted in assuming its possibility.

*P.* There are two objections to that view. One of them I saw put in an essay in the book entitled *Concerning Prayer*. It amounts to this—that, if intercessory prayer works by means of telepathy, it involves influencing a man without his knowledge and perhaps against his will. This is underhand, and therefore wrong.

*I.* Yes, I remember that essay; and I am bound to say I cannot see the force of the argument. Does a man refrain from trying to influence his children or his friends for good, until he has got their permission to do so? Not for a moment. Who is there, knowing that his friend was facing some special temptation, would refrain from sending him a letter of warning and appeal, until he had ascertained that the friend was willing to be so influenced? The idea is surely absurd.

*P.* Ah, but I don't think you have quite got the point. If you directly try to influence a son or daughter or friend, it is at least open to them as free agents to decline to be influenced. But if you practise telepathy on them without their knowledge, they are as it were attacked unawares, and have no chance to escape you, even should they wish to do so.

*I.* I don't see that. My prayer on my friend's behalf would simply become one among many influences appealing to or moving his will in some way. He is quite as capable of resisting that influence as if it had been conveyed to him by my spoken or written words. But do you remember the alternative explanation of intercession put forward in *Concerning Prayer*?

*P.* Yes, the author brought in the immanent omnipresence of God's Holy Spirit, indwelling all men (or at least all Christians), and broached a theory on the strength of it, which represented intercession as a kind of co-operative reinforcement of the constant ministry of God's Spirit to men. I confess I found it a little hard to follow.

*I.* So did I. It seems to me a needlessly-elaborate explanation of the matter, which leaves it open to the same objection as was advanced against telepathy. But perhaps this will become clearer as we deal with your second objection to the telepathy-theory.

*P.* The second objection is that this theory seems to leave God out. Any one can send out helpful 'waves of influence' on behalf of a friend without praying at all. Telepathy is a purely-psychological activity; whereas true prayer for others seems to go much deeper than any merely-psychological performance, and indeed to be quite different from any such performance.

*I.* I quite agree that, even on the telepathy-theory, we must be careful to think of God throughout as at work all the time: otherwise our intercession would not be prayer at all. But why should the use of a psychological instrument like telepathy make that difficult? When a man prays for those living round him, those to whom he will have to speak, write, or preach, he is really offering himself to God on their behalf, and trusting that through his fellowship with God he will be enabled to speak or write or preach the most helpful words. But are not speaking and writing and preaching psychological processes, by which thoughts are conveyed from one mind to another?

*P.* Yes, certainly.

*I.* Well, then: if the psychological methods employed in speaking and writing do not prevent a man's message from being guided and blessed by God (as clearly they do not), why should the psychological character of telepathy do so? I cannot see the difficulty.

*P.* That seems all right. But while we are on the subject of psychology, do tell me how you would answer the man who puts down the whole of what *we* call 'answers to prayer' to auto-suggestion or (to word it less technically) to imagination.

*I.* If a man has no belief in the existence of a personal God with Whom he can communicate, I don't know that there *is* an answer. What I mean is that, since you cannot produce a logically-cogent demonstration of the existence of God from the *de facto* results of prayer, the objector must be referred to those more-basic grounds of belief of which we spoke in our very first talk. At the same time, it may be pointed out to him that the fact that imagination contributes much to the picture of God does not necessarily discredit that picture. True, in minor matters, imagination is clearly not a reliable key to reality. But in the greatest issues it may well be otherwise. Surely, imagination is at least *one* of the ways in which objective reality comes home to us. So great a mental picture as that of the heavenly Father may perhaps be describable as to some degree imaginary. But where did it come from? However imaginary it may be, it is at least a gift bestowed on us by the universe itself. Similarly, the comfort we receive through prayer may be psychologically describable as 'auto-suggestion': but after all, it comes to us from this same sum-total of things we call the universe. If we have grounds for believing that this universe is created and controlled by a single beneficent Spirit, Who is capable of entering into personal relations with us, I cannot see that the mere fact that our prayers to Him are followed by blessings mediated through psychological changes in ourselves or in others robs those blessings of their significance as His gracious answers to our prayers. We have already seen an illustration of this in the telepathic and other effects of intercession: we have another in the part played by the subconscious in psychotherapy. And while, of course, we must take account of the aberrations to which the mind of man is prone, we must not on that account regard its operations and experiences as beyond the reach of the controlling grace of God.

*P.* Thank you very much. If I may pass now to another division of the subject, can we take up the point we put on one side just now—I mean the apparent lack of support for your interpretation of petition and importunity and intercession in the teaching and practice of Jesus. I remember that another contributor to *Concerning Prayer* says that people who think that plain direct petition 'belongs only to a lower stage of spiritual advance find themselves in the questionable position of being superior to Christ'. What would be your reply to that?

*I.* I have already explained why I hold it to be unnecessary that our prayer-language should conform in every respect to that of the Bible generally. Broadly speaking the reason is that, while we owe an immense debt to the tradition of prayer and worship which comes down to us from our Biblical forefathers, it is our own prayers which we have to offer, not theirs; and because our views of God and the world are necessarily in some respects different from theirs, and we are faced with questions with which they were not faced, our prayer-language must necessarily be in some respects different from theirs, even although their religious attitudes and ours have much in common. The case is, broadly speaking, the same with the prayer-language used by our Lord Himself. Just as He used the Aramaic language of His people and His day, so also He used their idiom of thought. To say this is in no way to derogate from His supreme claims as Lord and Saviour. It was no part of His task on earth to settle for His followers theoretical questions regarding the form of their prayers, which had not yet occurred to their minds—probably not even to His. When He spoke, He employed the method of thought—as of language—customary in that day, albeit the spiritual power behind both words and thoughts was eternal and Divine. In view of His repeated demand for intelligence, in such phrases as 'Let him that hath ears to listen with, listen', I am confident that He would justify us in working-out fresh thought-forms and prayer-language for ourselves, adapted to meet the difficulties which have arisen since the time of His earthly ministry, and that He would regard our doing so as entirely in keeping with loyalty to His sovereignty.

*P.* Could you give an example, to make that point clearer?

*I.* Well, take the petition, 'Lead us not into temptation' ('temptation' here probably meaning 'trial' in the sense of 'affliction'). Who will undertake to prove that, taken literally, it is consistent with the belief in God which Jesus Himself has taught us? Does God lead us into trial, or does He not? If He does, what business have we got to ask Him not to? If He doesn't, what need for the petition? It seems clear that this intellectual difficulty was not consciously present to Jesus' own mind, or He would not have included the words in a model prayer. But it was not long before it *was* felt. I believe the Epistle of James i. 13-14 reflects the perplexity of some Christians over it, perhaps about A.D. 100; and from the second century onwards good Christians have been busy with suggestions for emending the text or improving the translation, so as by hook or crook to get some meaning that shall seem to us defensible, and yet shall not imply that the Lord's language was logically faulty. It is all quite useless. There is nothing wrong with the Greek text as we have it, or with our customary translation of it. The words mean 'Do not lead us into trial'.

*P.* Well, what is the true solution?

*I.* The simple fact of the matter is, in my judgment, that Jesus is here employing—perhaps half-consciously—that semi-deterministic way of speech, wherewith the ancient Jews frequently referred reverently to God as the sole cause of all things, including mishaps and even human wrong-doing—without of course meaning to accuse *Him* of doing wrong, and without meaning to exempt the human sinner from blame and punishment. The logical difficulties inherent in such language were hardly, if at all, felt in an age when nothing was known about the Laws of Nature (material and psychological), and when—without denying human responsibility—men had accustomed themselves to refer all happenings, good and bad alike, to Almighty God as their cause. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is the classical example. We to-day cannot properly employ such language, without mentally translating it into quite-other terms. Jesus' use of it was rare, and probably—as I have already suggested—only half-conscious. The real meaning of this particular petition is suggested to us by its parallel clause, 'Rescue us from the evil'. It is essentially a desire to be enabled by fellowship with God to steer clear of tribulation, with the further implied desire to receive Divine assistance in such tribulation as cannot be escaped.

*P.* I imagine that the test-question for any doctrine of prayer is whether it can really elucidate that one petition, 'Lead us not into temptation'. I can see in the solution you offer real difficulties for some people: but I must say it seems to me, despite its implications, far preferable to any of the alternatives I have heard. I am therefore disposed to accept it, and with it your general reply to the charge of trying to improve on Christ. I do not see how, as His disciples, we can do other than you urge that we should do.

*I.* I hope you don't feel, like the friend who accused me of 'evasion' regarding daily bread, that my theory of prayer is 'humanistic' and 'sub-Christian'. I had to forgive him for that too: but my protests extracted from him the comforting assurance that the humanism he had in mind was *Christian* humanism. So that was something.

*P.* As you have adhered throughout to the definition of prayer as personal communion with God, I fail to see how your theory could be stigmatized as 'humanistic' in any derogatory sense.

*I.* Nor do I. What the dear man meant was that it assigns too much of prayer's effectiveness to man, and not enough to God. But any theory which emphasizes the need for persistent prayer clearly ascribes great importance to man's part: while if it remains true prayer, according to our definition, it cannot fairly be said to underestimate the part assigned to God.

*P.* No, nor is it sub-Christian either, if we are entitled, as you have convinced me we are, to view the prayer-*language* of Jesus as not necessarily binding on all subsequent generations of His disciples. But this last point reminds me to ask you a further question: What does it mean to offer prayer 'in the name of Christ'?

*I*. There are, I should say, two possible meanings—one right, and one wrong. The meaning I regard as wrong is represented by the parallel and often-adjoined clause 'for Christ's sake'. It pictures Christ as intervening between us and God, and interceding with God on our behalf, and ourselves as asking God to grant our prayers because Christ Himself has, as it were, associated Himself with them, and presented them to God on our behalf. I realize that this is the belief of numerous devout Christians; and I do not want to speak of it without sympathy and respect. Worded in a totally-different way, it stands (as I hope to show you in a moment) for a real truth. But as normally stated, it seems to me quite erroneous. No interceder, in the usual sense of the word, is needed between man and God; nor is it the intervention of Christ which causes God to hear and answer our prayers. And it seems to me a grave error to teach simple people and little children to pray to God in terms which—in the only sense in which they can understand them—are so clearly and gravely misleading.

*P*. Well, what is the *right* meaning of praying 'in Christ's name'?

*I*. The right meaning is that, when we pray, we pray as Christ's trustful disciples, framing our prayers according to His Spirit, and addressing them to such a God as He has revealed to us. That seems to me the only right way for Christians to pray. Personally, I should advise them to discard altogether, as—in its customary connotation—unreal, the phrase 'for Christ's sake'.

*P*. Thanks. I think that pretty well exhausts the theoretical difficulties I was going to ask you about. But before we part, I should like to know if you have any practical suggestions to offer in regard to methods of praying.

*I*. That opens up a pretty-wide field. But there *are* one or two special points I might mention. The golden rule, of course, is that which enjoins serious and persistent practice. But alongsde of that, help *is* to be found in particular habits. For instance, the great hindrance of wandering thoughts may be in part overcome by praying aloud (this requiring continuous concentration), and, if one is stationary, with the eyes closed (thus cutting off one possible source of distraction)—though personally I find a walk in the country a very-helpful setting. Another practice which increasingly commends itself to me is this: when I am engaged in prayer, and have in mind some particular problem that happens to be facing me, I take very particular note of any suggestion connected therewith which comes with apparent spontaneity into my mind. It seems to me not improbable that such an occurrence may well be one of God's methods of guiding us.

> Have not we too?—yes, we have
>   Answers, and we know not whence;
> Echoes from beyond the grave,
>   Recognized intelligence!
>
> Such within ourselves we hear
>   Oft-times, ours though sent from far;
> Listen, ponder, hold them dear;
>   For of God,—of God they are!

*P.* That's rather like the method the Oxford Groupers are very addicted to.

*I.* Yes, and it's a very sound method, if not practised in too wooden a way, or to the exclusion of the careful *thinking-over* of one's problems. Another wise plan is this: when you are really worried about some difficulty, and prayer seems to give no immediate relief, go and throw yourself into some needful practical activity, especially (if circumstances are ripe for it) something connected with the very thing worrying you. You will probably find that, as you do so, the light and peace you were thirsting for seem to come to you automatically. I have never forgotten a sermon to that effect preached to me years ago, from the words written about the ten lepers in Luke xvii—'And it came to pass, *as they went*, they were cleansed'. I doubt if the moral drawn by the preacher was really intended by the Evangelist: but it was a good moral, all the same.

*P.* Yes, I'll bear that in mind. It must have been a great sermon if it commended itself to you despite its forced exegesis!

*I.* One last word before we finish. I hope I have made it clear that, while I believe it is up to us to be as intelligent in our theory and our method of prayer as we can, the real key to success lies elsewhere. What I mean is that no amount of clarity and intelligence will make prayer a means of blessing to you and me, unless we are prepared to continue the practice of it, trustfully, simply, and persistently, undeterred by any discouragement that may come to us because our thoughts wander, and because we seem to ourselves to be floundering so badly. I often remind myself of the counsel of Brother Lawrence, 'that we ought to act with God in the greatest simplicity, speaking to Him frankly and plainly, and imploring His assistance in our affairs, just as they happen' (interpreting 'imploring', of course, in my own way). And I would pass on to you what was once said to me by a great Indian Christian, who knew, if ever a man did, what prevailing prayer meant: 'The only way of learning how to pray', he said, 'is to pray'.

## VII

## THE ONE CHURCH

*Pilgrim.* Let me see, I think you were going to give me to-day the Liberal-Protestant view of the Church, weren't you?

*Interpreter.* I don't know about the Liberal-Protestant view. The phrase rather suggests that there are a number of equally-serviceable views, among which a man may make his choice. I would prefer to aim at giving you the *true* view. If that proves to be also the Liberal-Protestant view, so much the better.

*P.* By all means, if you wish to put it that way.

*I.* Good. But what particular aspect of the subject did you wish us to discuss?

*P.* I wanted you to tell me something about Reunion. I understand that is very much in the air at present.

*I.* In that case the distinction I made just now is all the more significant, for I want to advocate a solution of that problem which a man can adopt without necessarily being a Liberal-Protestant. And with good reason, surely. For no proposals about Reunion are likely to be much use, unless they undercut the differences that now divide Christians: and to do that they must be based on absolutely-first principles. We must in fact aim at framing what Kant would have called 'Prolegomena to every future Ecclesiology'.

*P.* Nothing like beginning at the beginning! But let me ask you first of all, are you really concerned about Reunion?

*I.* Deeply concerned. I cannot say I agree with all of my brethren or the ways they put it, or on the precise solutions they recommend. But I do share the widespread feeling of discontent at the present divided state of Christendom.

*P.* I suppose we must start by defining the Church.

*I.* In a way, yes. Though it is also true that the question as to how precisely it should be defined is the very issue on which Christians (including Reunionists) are divided. From that point of view, the definition ought to come at the close or in the course of the discussion rather than at its opening.

*P.* But surely we can at least say that the Church on earth is the (or a) society of Christian people?

*I.* That, we can assume, is a statement to which all persons interested would agree. And I think we can venture on the further affirmation that, when used in a non-local sense, the term 'the Church' can stand in the singular number only. I realize that the different Christian denominations are often spoken of as 'the Churches'. But all persons qualified to say anything about Reunion can be assumed to agree that, at least in the sense which matters most, there can be only one Church, as there is only one God, one Lord Jesus Christ, one Christian way of life, and one body of true doctrine.

*P.* What then is the main question at issue?

*I.* The main question at issue is, Who are they that have a right to be admitted to that one Church, or to be regarded and treated as belonging to it, and how ought they to treat one another?

*P.* But how is it that that question arises? Does not 'the Church' simply consist of all Christian people?

*I.* Ideally, perhaps, that ought to be so. But opinions differ in the first place as to what gives a man the title to be regarded as a Christian.

*P.* Well, what does?

*I.* The public profession of faith in God through Jesus Christ our Lord. That is the only definition broad enough to be applicable in practice. Many would try to lay down a *credal* test (thus, 'I call a Christian one who believes' so-and-so). But since there is no agreement as to what that test should include, and since not even Romanists insist on it, we may safely pass it by. Others think they can apply a test of character. But as no man's character attains perfection, and as we cannot tell exactly how much moral imperfection rules out a man's claim to the name of 'Christian', that test also breaks down. The usual Catholic definition is that a Christian is one who has been baptized with water in the name of the Trinity, and who has not expressly apostatized. When, however, in kindly deference to Quakers and Salvationists, Catholics grant that unbaptized persons may be deemed to have received 'the Baptism of Desire' or 'Spirit-Baptism', it becomes clear that that definition also is inadequate. Thus we are headed off to the conclusion that he who publicly avows faith in God through Christ, and makes it clear that he intends to take his discipleship seriously, ought to be recognized and treated by all as a Christian.

*P*. But if, as you say, even Catholics can be brought to concur in that, does not that solve our problem of definition—the Church to consist of all persons who make serious public profession of faith in God through Jesus Christ?

*I*. Unfortunately not. We do not get out of the wood quite so easily as that. In the first place, we have to take note of the existence of a group of sincere Christians who for one reason or another see no reason why they should desire or claim to belong to the Church. I believe such persons must be regarded either as not knowing their own business, or as neglecting their plain duty. There is at least this amount of truth in the old dogma, 'Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus', that a Christian who neglects membership in the Church is, whatever personal virtues he may possess, a very-defective Christian, and must—for the purpose of our present discussion—be regarded as an anomaly.

*P*. That sounds to me a little severe. I know quite a number of good Christians who won't be Church-members.

*I*. I can well believe that. But have you ever found one of them who could give a really-satisfactory reason for such an attitude?

*P*. The reason usually given is either discontent with the Church, or with some one in the Church, or else unwillingness to commit oneself to doing everything that Christianity demands of one.

*I*. Exactly. The social idealist won't join the Church, because the Church has been too backward in dealing with the problems of poverty, unemployment, war, etc.—not realizing apparently that in that case to stay outside the Church is to help to perpetuate this very shortcoming, and that the best way to cure it is to come in and help make the Church behave better. The person offended by some failure or fault on the part of a Church-member refuses to join the Church out of personal pique—forgetting that a Christian has no business to subordinate the broad demands of Christian loyalty to purely-personal considerations. The good-hearted man of the world refuses to join the Church because he fears that the requirements of Christianity may prove a little too much for his comfort and inclinations—not realizing that, if these requirements actually are the Will of God for man, he cannot contract out of them by simply saying, 'No thanks. I think

I'd rather not be an actual member'. Mind you, I know that in many such cases some measure of blame rests on those already in the Church, who do nothing to remove the 'hindrance'. But the fact remains that the man who has got so far as to acknowledge the claims of Christianity upon his allegiance can have no valid ground for refusing at least to desire and ask for admission to Christ's Church.

*P.* Yes, I suppose such isolationists must be regarded as anomalies, at least for the purpose of our present discussion. But assuming we have got them out of the way, what further obstacles remain to prevent us describing the Church as consisting of all Christians (in the sense in which we have defined that term) who claim to be members thereof?

*I.* There is this further obstacle. Most Christian groups hold that, over and above simply being a Christian, there are certain other conditions which must be fulfilled before they can recognize a man as entitled to be admitted to 'the Church'. As to what these additional conditions are, there is great difference of opinion. Some of them are held to be absolutely essential; but all of them in one way or another put obstacles in the way of real Reunion.

*P.* What are these conditions?

*I.* Well, one of the most widely held is the necessity of a prescribed minimum of credal commitments, with a view to preserving the purity of Church-doctrine. Another is the need of a ministry ordained by bishops, who themselves are directly connected with the first Apostles through an unbroken succession of official appointments. Hence the phrase 'Apostolic Succession'. Only such ministers, it is held, can rightly administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. A large sub-section of this group firmly maintains that it is also necessary to be in submission to and communion with the Bishop of Rome. Yet another theory is that baptism, in infancy if possible, is needed in order that the stain of original sin may be washed away, and the person in this way may be 'regenerated' and made eligible for entering on the path leading to the final bliss of heaven. Sharply repudiating this view as magical, the 'Baptists' insist that baptism is rightly administered only to avowed believers who have reached years of discretion. Another considerable group regards the presbyterian method of Church-government as necessary. Large numbers of Christians hold it to be essential that the Church should not be 'established'; that is, that it should not be legally under the control of the State. And so on.

*P.* Obviously, so long as any one such sectional conviction is regarded as absolutely necessary for valid Church-status, and so long as all are not in agreement regarding it, Reunion is a sheer impossibility.

*I.* There is, however, one factor, and one only, which bids fair to relieve the deadlock—I mean, the Christian duty of paying respect to one another's consciences. This is a duty of which Christians in the early centuries seem to have been hardly conscious. To-day, we take it as a matter of course, both in ethics and on doctrinal issues. In conferring, in writing, in conversing, and to some extent even in worshipping, we have learned to treat the convictions of our fellow-Christians, even when they differ sharply from our own, with toleration and deference. I want to emphasize that this attitude (in which even Romanists are prepared in some measure to join) is a wholly-new product of modern times, as contrasted with the uniform intolerance of earlier days. Thus, the author of the Athanasian Creed held that every one who did not adhere to 'the Catholic faith' as he propounded it would 'without doubt perish eternally'. Orosius took it for granted that Arians would be consumed in the eternal fire. Nestorius and Cyril did not make any attempt to understand one another. The great Reformers inherited the evil tradition: Luther felt warranted in saying of Zwingli, 'One or other of us must be the devil's minister'. The great majority of the members of the Westminster Assembly were bitterly opposed to the national toleration of those whose views were not Presbyterian and Calvinistic.

*P.* Things are certainly very different from that to-day. However cautious men of different schools may still be in expressing their acceptance of a generous *theory* of toleration, they are for the most part quite willing to act on it. But what does this modern willingness to be tolerant signify with reference to Reunion?

*I.* I think it implies a perhaps-unconscious admission that *all* theological views are in some measure conditioned and limited by the subjective element in the theologian. You may remember, perhaps, that in our second talk I pointed out to you that this subjective factor does make a difference, however unwilling many are even to-day to allow for it. In the earlier centuries, it was entirely unrecognized. As Alice Gardner has said, in the fifth century 'the mind of man had gone hopelessly astray as to its limitations'. But now, when at last convinced Christians find it possible and right to respect the convictions of fellow-Christians who differ from them, I take the liberty of inferring that they are, either consciously or else unconsciously, allowing for the presence of a limiting subjective factor in the minds of all, such as allows none of us to act as if we were endowed with infallibility.

*P.* Yes, but how can this recognition of our own and others' limitations help us with our practical problem?

*I.* In this way. If it is taken seriously, and its comparatively-late appearance in history is borne in mind, it puts within our reach a really-new solvent for the question as to how Christians who differ on what are to themselves essentials must regard and treat one another. It warns us against the plausible, natural, and apparently-obvious practice of simply denying that those who so differ from us are within the true Church at all. This means that no scheme of Reunion which demands from any group of Christians the abandonment of any of its conscientiously-held tenets as to essentials can be considered, if, that is, we are to talk practical politics. In other words, Christian Churchmen must be willing to allow their fellow-Churchmen to differ from them, even on points which seem to both parties essential. To ask for as much as that is simply asking them to carry to its logical conclusion the toleration they are already so willing to practise.

*P.* You would have your work cut out, wouldn't you?, to get some parties to agree to that.

*I.* Quite possibly. But I should hope to cut a little ice by drawing attention to the anomalies involved in refusing. For instance, it is illogical to maintain that a man may be a Christian, and may yet have no right to be admitted to the Church. It is not only illogical, but it is a clear departure from New-Testament procedure. The idea that a group of persons can exist who are qualified to be regarded as Christians, and yet not qualified to be admitted to the Christians' Church, is a modern anomaly which cannot, I believe, derive a scrap of warrant or authority from the early centuries of the Church's life. Why should it be so readily tolerated now? If a man is not fit to be admitted to the Church on applying for membership, he is not fit to be called a Christian. To affirm that, though a real Christian, he is unfit to enter the Church, is to put asunder what God hath joined together. And yet the whole ecclesiological theory and policy of certain great Christian groups to-day rests on this very severance.

*P.* What other anomalies are involved in excluding from the Church those who differ from ourselves on seemingly-essential points?

*I.* Well, look at what has happened as a result of this plan being pursued. Our Christian forefathers had indeed no scruples about it. They freely excommunicated and anathematized those whom they regarded as deficient on some point of doctrine which seemed to them essential, and proclaimed themselves as alone constituting the true Church. Now, their descendants are realizing that such action was, in the first place, a grave breach of Christian charity. Let me read you a line or two, written in the book *Christianity in History*, by my old friend and teacher, Dr. Vernon Bartlet. Of the post-Constantinian Church, he says: 'What made things worse was the dreadful lack of charity and good-feeling, even of fair-mindedness and honesty, shown by otherwise holy men in the doctrinal controversies of the fourth century, . . . Surely, too, there was something amiss with the ideal of religious truth and value lying behind such rancorous zeal, when the fruits were so bitter. Somehow or other the Church had here missed its Founder's way'. And later: 'What right had the majority at Nicaea—or at any of the councils where either side excommunicated a minority—to deny to others on the score of intellectual error all part or lot in Christ? What authority had they for so grave a judgment? When one compares the Nicene Creed with the conditions of true Christian discipleship in the New Testament, one cannot but ask whether the Church of the fourth century did not here exceed the commission given by Christ to His followers, and so unconsciously innovate in spirit as well as in letter'. And here, too, is the Roman Catholic Church-historian Duchesne saying, in the third volume of his *Histoire Ancienne de l'Église*, with reference to the Nestorian controversy: 'Since human curiosity had got to work on the mystery of Christ, since the misjudgment of the theologians kept upon the dissecting-table the gentle Saviour, who had offered himself for our love and our imitation much more than for our philosophical investigations, it was at least needful that these latter should be carried on peaceably, by men of acknowledged competence and wisdom, far from the crowd and from contention. It was the opposite of this that happened. A letting-loose of religious passions, conflicts between metropolitan sees, rivalries between Church-potentates, clamorous councils, imperial laws, deprivations, banishments, tumults, schisms —those were the conditions under which the Greek theologians studied the dogma of the Incarnation. And if one looks at what their contentions ended in, one sees at the end of the vista the Eastern Church irremediably divided, the Christian empire dismembered, and Mahomet's lieutenants trampling Syria and Egypt underfoot. Such was the cost of those exercises in metaphysics'.

*P.* A truly-remarkable verdict this last—especially coming from a Romanist historian. But what else are our fathers' descendants now realizing about that policy of excommunicating dissentients?

*I.* They are realizing that it has landed them in a number of awkward and self-contradictory situations, which reveal the incompatibility between their exclusive traditional theories and the present-day demands of common-sense and brotherly love.

*P.* Would you illustrate?

*I.* Well, take first the Roman Catholics. Their clear traditional interpretation of 'Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus' was this: If you are not a Roman Catholic, you'll go to hell!

*P.* Surely they were not quite so bad as that?

*I.* What then do you make of the solemn statement issued by Pope Boniface VIII in 1302, in the bull *Unam Sanctam*: 'Furthermore we declare, say, define, and pronounce, that to be subject to the Roman pontiff is for every human creature an absolute necessity of salvation'?

*P.* But would Catholics admit that that bull was infallible?

*I.* Any bull is *ex cathedra*, and therefore infallible, in which the Pope (if we may borrow the words of the Vatican Council of 1870), 'discharging his function as pastor and teacher of all Christians, defines, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the universal Church'. Is it not perfectly patent that that is exactly what Boniface VIII thought he was doing in *Unam Sanctam*? Besides, this bull was solemnly 'renewed and approved' by Pope Leo X in 1516 at the Lateran Council.

*P.* You surprise me. I didn't know they really took that view.

*I.* Perhaps, to make assurance doubly sure, you would like me to give one more item of evidence. Here it is. In 1441 Pope Eugenius IV issued a bull declaring, in terms so emphatic that they too must be held to be *ex cathedra*, that the Church of Rome 'firmly believes, professes, and preaches, that none who are not within the Catholic Church, not only (not) pagans, but neither Jews, nor heretics, nor schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life, but that they will go into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels, unless before the end of life they have been gathered into her; and that the unity of the churchly body is so important that the Church's sacraments avail for salvation, and the fasts, almsgivings, and other duties of piety and exercises of the Christian warfare produce eternal rewards, only for those who remain within her; and that no one, however great the almsgivings he has performed, and even if he has poured out his blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church'. You could hardly have anything clearer and more emphatic than that, could you?

*P.* Not very well. But I don't think they stick to that now. A friend of mine who has just decided to become a Catholic told me that his priest had assured him that Rome does not teach that all Protestants will go to hell.

*I.* That is true. Within the last century and a half, the idea of all non-Romanists being despatched to hell has been seen to be so absurd that an invisible 'Soul of the Church', as distinct from its visible Body, has been invented as a way out of the impasse. Non-Romanists, if sincere, can now be deemed to belong to that Soul, and therefore to be eligible for salvation, without infringing the dogma, 'Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus'. You may perhaps find a few adumbrations of this liberal doctrine in Augustine and others: but as an acknowledged belief it is quite modern, and I don't think has yet received any official sanction. Of course, it is a marvellous device for changing the Church's teaching without changing it!

*P.* But even so, that hardly meets the requirements of those three bulls you spoke of.

*I.* My dear sir, I fear you do not sufficiently appreciate the wonderful resources of Catholic ingenuity. I put that very question, with reference to the decree of 1441, to a well-known Catholic friend of mine. His explanation was that, even if it was *ex cathedra* and therefore infallible, *really-genuine* non-Catholics were clearly not meant to be included in its threats.

*P.* But if that were so, why ever didn't the Pope explicitly except them from his threats?

*I.* You may well ask. I asked my friend that; and his reply was that it was obvious, and that you can't be expected to say 'Two and two make four' every time you speak! But of course the real fact is that in 1441 the Pope did not mean to allow for *any* exceptions: his words make that perfectly plain. And the radical disagreement between the Catholic belief then and the Catholic belief now illustrates the very point I am making—namely, that the old policy of excommunicating dissenting Christians from 'the Church' has bequeathed to modern Catholics a decidedly-awkward incongruity in their position.

*P.* How do our Anglican friends stand in this matter?

*I.* The Church of England does not here speak with one voice. But in strict Anglican theory, a ministry ordained by and remaining in communion with bishops, who themselves stand in the Apostolic Succession, is essential to the Church's being, and therefore 'the Church' embraces the Eastern Orthodox, the Roman, and the Anglican groups only. That is to say, non-episcopal bodies are not really in the true Church at all. That conclusion many Anglicans have in the past drawn and quite-emphatically expressed; and many do the same to-day.

*P.* You say 'many'. What about the rest?

*I.* As with the Romanists, so with the Anglicans. The idea of barring out from 'the Church' all except episcopalians has in recent years proved too absurd for great numbers of loyal Anglicans. They see its real stupidity, while still feeling obliged to adhere to episcopacy for themselves.

*P.* What do they propose to do about it?

*I.* They react in various ways. Those who are not violently Anglo-Catholic find perhaps the least difficulty. Their view is represented by the 'Appeal' of the bishops assembled at Lambeth in 1920. This declared, 'We acknowledge all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity, as sharing with us membership in the Universal Church of Christ which is His Body'. Dr. A. C. Headlam, now Bishop of Gloucester, in his Bampton Lectures published the same year, argued learnedly for the same position.

*P.* But did that mean that they were prepared to abandon episcopacy as a *sine-quâ-non* for the Church?

*I.* Yes and no. To recognize non-episcopalians as belonging in any sense to the true Church meant some such abandonment: but their insistence on the retention of episcopacy, in a constitutionally-modified form, as one of the conditions in the scheme of Reunion which they advocated, meant that they did not propose to abandon it, as at least requisite *de facto* for the united Church. Note here again the same element of self-contradiction showing itself.

*P.* I observe too that, even despite their breadth of view, they still stipulated that all members of the Church must have been baptized.

*I.* Yes, but there is a way out of that too, as there is out of most difficulties. I remember attending a Conference on Reunion at Christ Church in 1920, at which the Anglican leaders tabled a list of points for agreement and/or discussion. One of these was the permissibility of 'Spirit-baptism' or 'the Baptism of Desire' in the case of those who conscientiously objected to water-baptism. I remember too Dr. Walter Lock, the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, explaining to us verbally that this clause had been inserted out of regard for the Quakers, who had done so much, during and after the war, in the spirit of Christ. They too, apparently, could not be excluded from 'the Church'.

*P.* But I suppose the strict Anglo-Catholics remain adamant against all such concessions.

*I.* O dear no. Here, for instance, is Dr. N. P. Williams, Dr. Lock's successor as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford—in an article on 'Anglo-Catholicism', printed in *The Expository Times* for November, 1927—saying: 'Episcopacy . . . is of the *bene esse* of "the Church" in the broader, and of the *esse* of "the Church" in the narrower, sense of the term'. This means of course that, though Anglo-Catholics intend to stick to episcopacy as for them essential to Church-life (which they have a perfect right to do), they acknowledge the existence of certain groups *within the Church* which, though they would be better if they had bishops, in point of fact are without them.

*P.* That is most interesting and significant.

*I.* It shows quite clearly, doesn't it?, that the exclusive doctrine putting all non-episcopalians outside 'the Church' engenders such serious logical deadlocks that it may well be said to have broken down.

It has broken down because of its incompatibility with the Christian spirit which cries out against the wrongness of denying the Churchmanship of one's fellow-Christians, simply because they hold different views from our own. I once asked an eminent Anglican scholar, who I knew believed that all real Christians belonged to the Church, why then he still disapproved of intercommunion and interchange of pulpits with Nonconformists. Was not that an anomaly?, I enquired. His answer was: 'Yes, the situation is full of anomalies, *because we are divided*'. It did not seem to occur to him that the essence of our 'division' consisted in this very refusal of intercommunion and interchange of pulpits, and could not possibly be cured unless and until it was withdrawn.

*P*. Are the Nonconformist bodies free from this sort of embarrassment?

*I*. Some of them are, like those Congregationalists who are still loyal to the true ethos of Puritanism. But not all Freechurchmen, nor even (I am sorry to say) all Congregationalists, seem to realize what that ethos is. There are those who wish to apply rigidly John Calvin's definition—to the effect that the true Church exists only where the Word of God is purely preached, and the Sacraments are rightly administered according to the institution of Christ.

*P*. Why won't that do?

*I*. Because, apart from the facts that it makes a *sine-quâ-non* of 'preaching', allows for no difference of opinion as to the precise content of 'the Word of God', and takes it for granted that Jesus did 'institute Sacraments', it implicitly excludes from the Church those groups like the Quakers and the Salvationists who, for reasons which commend themselves to them, administer no Sacraments. A few of the Barthian and semi-Barthian leaders of the so-called 'New Congregationalism' or the 'Modern Reformed Movement' may share this Calvinistic view: but they keep very quiet about its negative implications; and I am confident that the vast majority of Freechurchmen would disagree with them. To have a definition of the Church which puts Quakers and Salvationists outside it is, as our hearts and consciences unmistakably tell us, to have a *wrong* definition.

*P*. If only all sections could be prevailed on to acknowledge that the old excommunicating policy was discredited by the anomalies to which it has led and is bound to lead, we should surely have got not only the definition of the Church which we were seeking, but also the true solution of the Reunion-problem.

*I.* Yes. While maintaining the right of each group to adhere in theory and practice to its own conscientious tenets regarding the right way to organize Church-life, we appeal to all groups—out of respect for the dissentient Christian brother for whom Christ died—to recognize *con amore* his right to a place in the one Church, if he claims it. That is to say, the only sacrifice any group is asked to make is to forgo the contention which limits 'the Church' to those who, besides being Christians, agree with the group in question on all matters which it deems essential for itself. If they were only prepared to do that, we should have our agreed definition. Dr. A. E. J. Rawlinson, the present Bishop of Derby, wrote as follows, in his book *The Church of England and the Church of Christ*, published in 1930: '. . . Where is the true Church to be found? . . . The Church visible and militant, which *ought* to be one, in actual fact is divided. But schism is a division within the Body, and the Church visible on earth is to be identified not with the Church of Rome, or with any particular Christian denomination in isolation, but with *Christendom, taken in a broad sense as a whole*'. Later in the book he says: 'I should not myself be prepared to define with rigidity the limits of Christendom in any terms of exclusiveness. I should at least desire to include within the scope of the term all such persons as would be prepared, if it came to a question of martyrdom, to suffer martyrdom, side by side, for Christ's sake. And the "noble army of martyrs" has no denominational limits'. That is an admirable statement of the position to which we ourselves have been led (for readiness to suffer is an inseparable implicate of faith in Jesus Christ). It applies the only test which does not collapse under close examination. Incidentally, it points to the desirability of discontinuing the custom of calling any denomination 'a' (still more 'the') 'Church', and bids us confine that name to (1) the local group, and (2) the one Universal Christian society.

*P.* What would you say to an Anglican or a Catholic who should plead that, if consciences are to be respected, his own conscientious conviction that 'the Church' consists only of a certain group or groups would prevent him from accepting your proposals?

*I.* I should try to show him that, if (as he professed) he was sincerely basing himself on respect for Christian consciences, his exclusive position was self-contradictory. If he were a man of intelligence and charity, I should hope that he would see this. If he didn't see it, I should have to leave him as a hopeless obstacle to the real union of the Church, until he had been brought to a better mind.

*P.* Are there any other erroneous proposals for solving the problem created by Christian differences, which we must avoid?

*I.* Yes; there is the device of giving to the term 'the Church' (in the big sense) more than one meaning. We have already seen some examples of this. The Roman Catholic distinction between 'the Soul' of the Church and her visible 'Body' is one. Dr. N. P. Williams's distinction between 'the Church in the broader sense of the term' and 'the Church in the narrower sense' is another. While we cordially welcome the liberality of view which occasions the introduction of such distinctions, we must point out that the distinctions themselves are illicit. Of the Christian Church on earth we must insist that she can be only one. Her soul does not consist of a discernibly-different set of persons from her body: nor can she be legitimately spoken of in a 'broader' and in a 'narrower' sense. Anglican friends, when challenged, sometimes say, 'O yes, you are a genuine Christian all right, because (apart from anything else) you have been properly baptized, and have not apostatized: and *in a certain sense*, I suppose, you may be reckoned as being within the Church. But you are not a member of "the historic Church" or "the Apostolic Church" or "the Church Catholic", because you do not accept so-and-so'. But this will not do. If I am within the Church *at all*, then I am in the Catholic, Apostolic, historic, Universal Church, and (this for the Romanist) in her body as well as in her soul. I should have thought that Catholic-minded people would have been the last to want to duplicate or triplicate the connotation of the 'Una Sancta'. Is it to be left to Free-churchmen to insist that there can be only *one* Christian Church on earth?

*P.* It certainly ought not. But are there any more erroneous solutions to be avoided?

*I.* There is one more that must be mentioned: and I mention it only with some hesitation, because many dear friends of mine regard it as the right line to take, and for me to brand it as erroneous might seem unsympathetic and discouraging.

*P.* Well, what is it?

*I.* It is the method that has been most widely assumed to be obviously necessary, and is most frequently discussed in Reunionist gatherings—I mean the effort after what is called 'organic' (or better, 'organizational') 'union', that is to say, a series of interdenominational mergers, each brought about by a process of bargaining between the contracting parties in regard to a set of agreed minimum conditions. Free-churchmen, for example, would waive their objection to episcopacy if Anglicans would make episcopacy more constitutional, and not insist on the acceptance of the theory of Apostolic Succession: and so on.

*P.* I am bound to say that I have always taken it for granted that something of that sort would be inevitable if there is to be any Reunion at all. How is it possible otherwise?

*I.* Before I answer that, let me say that I have no objection whatever to steps being taken in the direction of organizational unity, wherever (1) palpable overlapping (local or denominational) needs to be corrected, and (2) can be corrected by means of amalgamation, without incurring more loss than gain.

*P.* Would there be any serious risk of loss?

*I.* Certainly there would. Enthusiasts for amalgamation (whether local or denominational) always need to bear in mind that any radical disturbance in the *conditions* of religious life and worship will always chill the spirit of a certain number of the more-elementary Christians affected. That is doubtless a weakness: but, as Christians, we must take care not to break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. Still, I would certainly not wish to condemn or oppose in advance and on principle all unions of this kind. I should stipulate only that due consideration must be given to the dangers as well as to the advantages thereof.

*P.* But why are you not more enthusiastic about them?

*I.* Because I think it is a mistake to regard the bare existence of separate denominations, so long as they do not unchurch one another either theoretically or practically, as necessarily harmful or sinful, and a mistake also to think that organizational mergers effect 'Reunion' in any radical way.

*P.* But are not our divisions rightly described as 'unhappy'; and is not schism sinful?

*I.* For a group of Christians to refuse to acknowledge that other groups are as truly within the Church as themselves, to refuse to admit members and ministers of other groups to their pulpits, and to refuse to associate with them as brethren round the Lord's Table—all that is indeed unhappy and sinful. But for such a group to organize its life and worship on its own lines, in order to cater for worshippers of its own particular kind, is certainly not sinful, and need not be unhappy or harmful, still less 'blasphemous', as some modern enthusiasts have described it.

*P.* But would you not agree that these numerous divisions are a fatal weakness in the Church, faced as she is with the growing strength and insolence of the anti-Christian powers abroad in the world to-day? Do they not prevent the Church speaking with one voice when her united testimony and guidance are urgently needed? And do they not deter a great many honest people from joining her ranks?

*I.* There is truth in your complaints; but we need to guard against over-statement. For instance, it is only fair to remember that, as Horace Bushnell once said, 'Most of what we call division in the Church of God is only distribution'. The Church to-day has to cater for a far-greater variety of spiritual, moral, and intellectual needs and capacities than was ever the case in New-Testament times. The lapse of the centuries has made the business of finding room for this immense variety of gifts an increasingly-complex task. Denominationalism provides such room: and in so far as it has done so, it is not to be decried as sinful or scandalous. Many people, particularly young people, are disposed to sneer and scoff at modern denominationalism, simply because they know nothing of its origin, take no account of the elbow-room we gain by means of it, and never envisage the bondage we should be in without it. Moreover, as it is, Christendom can and does already speak and act with a fair measure of unanimity when there is need. As for the folk who say they stay away from the Church because of her disgraceful divisions, I regard them as simply hard-up for a plausible excuse for neglecting their own duty to support her.

*P.* You gave as a second reason why you do not lay stress on organizational mergers, that they do not effect Reunion in any radical way. I should have thought that they were at least steps towards it.

*I*. I would grant that such a merger, if it made the work of the Church more efficient, would make some contribution indirectly to real Reunion, by the very fact that it fostered the Christian spirit, and so helped to correct that narrowness of sympathy which is the root-difficulty. But I feel that you can never get a real *solution* of the problem of disunion along this line, however far you try to go.

*P*. But why on earth not?

*I*. Because you can never be sufficiently inclusive. The individual Christian who, however wrongly, conscientiously dissents from something in the agreed minimum terms (and his name is 'Legion') will still have to be kept outside the Church. This, apart from the fact (which seems to me equally decisive) that no conceivable set of agreed terms can ever, in the nature of things, satisfy the widely-differing groups that have got to be 'reunited'.

*P*. Then are you proposing just to give up the whole problem in despair?

*I*. By no means. Let me remind you that, before we got on to the subject of organizational mergers, we had agreed that, under our great guiding principle of respect for each other's consciences, the needful conditions were (1) the adherence of each Christian group to its own conscientious convictions, and (2) the recognition by each group that all other Christian groups, even those differing from it on points which it believes to be essential, stand within the one, holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Christian Church on earth.

*P*. Yes, I remember.

*I*. Well then, if, in addition to that, without necessarily dissolving our denominational distinctness, we were all to give occasional expression to our sense of common Churchmanship by services of intercommunion and interchange of pulpits, we should have removed all that is really sinful in disunion. If, over and above that, organizational mergers are needed in the interests of practical efficiency, by all means let them be effected: but they must not be proclaimed as essential to Reunion, nor is Reunion effected without the mutual recognition of which I have spoken.

*P*. But how, on the lines we have followed, is the purity of Christian doctrine to be safeguarded from contamination and decay?

*I*. By the constant operation of the indwelling Spirit of God, in which all sections of the Church profess to believe, though some of them often seem so loth to place any practical reliance on it. The Spirit of God is said in the Bible to lead us into all the truth; and so it does. It does not indeed prevent us from making mistakes by the way, but—so long as we are sincere, diligent, and charitable—it will rectify our errors and safeguard us against fatal calamity, both in doctrine and in Church-polity. The objective facts, the truth-loving mind of man, the blessing and guidance of God through His Spirit—these three, as they are sufficient to preserve the human mind from fatal error in science, are sufficient also in theology. And any attempt to standardize results by acclaiming some external authority as absolutely final is as needless, and indeed as intolerable, in theology as it would be in science. Denominations, therefore, however much they may retain rules for their own domestic guidance, need have no fear that other Christians who do not observe the same rules as themselves are in danger of wrecking the orthodoxy of the Church.

*P.* Might we not have hoped, though, that the Spirit's guidance would have kept the Church together, instead of allowing her to drift apart in so many different directions?

*I.* To hope this would be quite natural; but it would indicate an error of judgment. For while the Spirit leads men into all the truth, it does not guarantee that they will not make mistakes on the way. But it is also important to remember that, despite her divisions, the Church is, on a number of basic issues, already united. She stands as one over against the non-Christian world in her fundamental belief in the existence and goodness of the One God, in acknowledging the Lordship and Saviourhood of Jesus Christ, in the reverence she holds to be due to every human being as a child of God made in His image, in her regard for the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God, and in her acceptance of the obligations of the Christian way of life. It is perfectly true that the unity of Christians on these issues is to some extent obscured, and that it urgently needs to be more-clearly expressed: but we must not forget the extent to which it actually exists.

*P.* Don't you think we lose a lot by being unable to agree more widely?

*I.* Yes, if we remain aloof from and ignorant of one another. But we are under no necessity to do that. Under our inclusive policy of mutual recognition (with occasional intercommunion and interchange of pulpits), there would be every incentive for differing Church-bodies to learn about and from one another. Provided that is done, it is better that the Church should comprise a number of distinctly-organized groups than that all her thought-life should be moulded on a single, so-called orthodox pattern. Truth is many-sided; and the freedom which denominationalism gives us will, provided we do not isolate ourselves, help and not hinder the enlargement and inclusiveness of our grasp of truth, and will tend to guard us against narrow and parochial views. In 1645 a certain Puritan published a treatise entitled *The Ancient Bounds, or Liberty of Conscience, tenderly stated, modestly asserted, and mildly vindicated.* In it he wrote: 'I contend not for variety of opinions: I know there is but one truth. But this truth cannot be so easily brought forth without this liberty; and a general restraint, though intended but for errors, yet through the unskilfulness of men, may fall upon the truth'.

*P.* I remember when we were talking some days ago about the different ways in which Christians of different types are able to appropriate devotionally the salvation brought to them by Christ, you said you would deal with the sacramental type when we came to discuss the Sacraments. Are we going to do that now?

*I.* Yes, though I think we have already talked so long about the Church that we have hardly left ourselves time in which to do it. But I am glad you have mentioned the matter, because it illustrates admirably the inability of all Christians to avail themselves of one kind of worship, and at the same time the urgent need of holding our neighbour's differing convictions and experience in real reverence. There are Christians who find that, at the observance of the Lord's Supper along the lines of the Catholic tradition, they experience the presence of Christ and therein the Divine blessing more vividly and helpfully than under any other conditions.

*P.* Whereas, I suppose, those of the non-Catholic persuasion, who view the sacramental rite quite differently, are inclined to regard the Catholic experience as illusory.

*I.* If they do, then I should say they are distinctly wrong. For to experience the Divine presence and blessing is to experience it: and *no one* has any right to call the experience illusory. It is, however, another question when we ask on what conditions this particular form of the experience depends. I imagine it necessarily presupposes a certain belief as to the actions, words, and intentions of our Lord at the Last Supper, as well as a certain interpretation both of the practice of the Church in early and in later times, and a certain conviction as to the Will of God to-day. Now on all these questions, as well as in the matter of practical experience, Christians of equal spirituality, intelligence, and sincerity, with the same historical evidence before them, find themselves differing in a variety of ways. Without attempting to reach a final explanation as to why these differences arise, I regard it as obvious that, pending fuller agreement as the result of mutual explanation and of greater enlightenment, all Christian groups should, while adhering to the theory that seems to them truest, and the practice which they find most helpful, revere the convictions and practices of those who think and act differently, and on no account unchurch them, that is, debar them from each other's communion-tables, on account of the differences. However precious one's own sacramental experience may be felt to be, a common love for and loyalty to the great Head of the Church, and the fellowship at His table which expresses that love and loyalty, ought to be more precious still, and ought not to be violated for the sake of what, however important, is *by comparison* of lesser moment.

*P.* I gather that you would regard occasional intercommunion and interchange of pulpits as real Reunion, without the abolition of denominational differences.

*I.* Yes; always on the understanding that the grounds of these differences should be from time to time subjected to critical scrutiny, and that such organizational changes, whether local or denominational, should be willingly made if and when the efficiency of Christian work can be thereby enhanced. At least, I would claim that such mutual drawing-together would leave no one the right to talk about 'the sin of disunion'.

*P.* But are not many Christian groups already practising Church-union on these lines?

*I.* Yes, many are—more than they did. Nearly all Free-church groups, for instance, allow interchange of pulpits between themselves; and a certain amount of it is authoritatively sanctioned between these groups and the Church of England. Much, but not complete, intercommunion prevails among the Free-churches: intercommunion between Anglicans and non-Anglicans, on the other hand, is rare, and almost entirely unilateral, non-Anglicans being sometimes welcomed to the Anglican table, but Anglicans hardly ever communicating at the Free-church table.

*P.* Both sides, then, share in 'the sin of disunion'?

*I.* Yes, but in very unequal proportions. For in the overwhelming majority of cases, the reason why unity can get no further is the unwillingness of the Anglican party despite the full willingness of the Freechurchmen. I should say that the *prevalent* Free-church doctrine would allow of unrestricted intercommunion and interchange of pulpits. If Roman Catholics seem to be excluded by Protestants from this openness, it is mainly because of the well-known fact that Roman Catholics are strictly forbidden to participate in any such doings. I am afraid, therefore, that any 'sin' that inheres in disunion must rest with those, whoever they are, whose principles do not allow them to associate with their fellow-Christians (whom, mind you, they nevertheless admit to be in some real sense their fellow-Churchmen), in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. I ought, perhaps, to add that many Anglican clergymen feel acutely the loss of fellowship which the rigour of their Church-rules lays upon them, and endeavour to compensate for it by displaying the most fraternal graciousness possible in their relations with their Nonconformist brethren.

*P.* Assuming there is a place for separately-organized denominations, is it possible to say which of them is the most innocuous?

*I.* No denomination which truly helps its members to lead the Christian life, and which—while maintaining its peculiar rules for its own members—does not forbid them to have occasional fellowship with members of other denominations in delivering and hearing the Word and administering and receiving the Lord's Supper, can easily be pronounced better or worse than any other that acts in the same way. At all events, there probably exists a considerable number of people who can be better cared for in each of them than they can in any other. But I suppose the denomination nearest in constitution to the ideal would be one which took as its own conditions of membership that one and only test which can settle whether a man is entitled to be regarded as a Christian and to be therefore considered eligible to belong to the Church Universal—without adding thereto extra and sectional conditions of its own.

*P.* What test is that?

*I.* Do you not remember what we said about it a little while ago—one who publicly professes faith in God through Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour?

*P.* Does any denomination adopt that test and that only as a condition of membership in its own churches?

*I.* The Congregationalists do. Some other Free-church bodies, like the Baptists and the Methodists, do the same—but with certain reservations, as regards either the ceremony of admission, or the functions and equipment of the ministry, or in some other way. But you see, the more completely a denomination takes that inclusive line, the less difficulty do its members and its churches find in connexion with those occasions of intercommunion and interchange of pulpits which, as we saw, are the most urgently-needed practical expressions of Christian unity. I would therefore claim with all tenderness, modesty, and mildness (like the Puritan of 1645), that Congregationalism is the most truly 'catholic' of all the denominations, because its churches can at any time without more ado invite any Christian brother or sister of whatever denomination, and whether ministerial or lay, to preach to them; its ministers regularly invite any Christian person present to remain and partake of the Lord's Supper; and any professing Christian who applies for membership is welcomed without the imposition of further conditions. I take it to be one of the special tasks and privileges of Congregationalism to keep the door into 'the Church' open for the individual dissenter who professes to love and follow Jesus Christ, but who (whether rightly or wrongly) cannot honestly accept one or other of the additional conditions regarded by other bodies as necessary.

*P.* But suppose a man gets into the Church in this way who really ought not to get in?

*I.* Congregationalists would leave it to the atmosphere of the community to prevail on such a man, if he really ought not to be in its midst, to depart of his own accord. They might even urge such a course upon him. But if he really desired to remain in communion, I think it would be foreign to the genius of Congregationalism to expel him against his will. Sir J. R. Seeley says in *Ecce Homo*, 'Without excluding any, Christ suffered the unworthy to exclude themselves'. In the long run that is the right method for His Church also.

*P*. How then do Congregationalists propose to guard the truth and purity of the Church's beliefs?

*I*. They rely on the objective fact and presence of Christ, the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and the conscience and intelligence of Christians. They study, discuss, teach, and proclaim doctrine; but they do not impose any set of doctrinal conclusions as a test with which applicants for Church-membership *must* comply. Their reason for so refraining is not, as is so often caricaturingly said, that they think it is unimportant what a man believes, but because they know that doctrine, as distinct from the foundation-realities of religion, is never absolute and infallible, that there is (among persons willingly recognizing each other as Christians) no agreement as to precisely what set of doctrines, if any, is absolutely indispensable, and that the result of trying to enforce any set of them as a credal condition of membership leads, and is bound to lead, to separating those whom God hath joined together in a common loyalty to Christ, or (what is perhaps even worse) compelling some of them to profess publicly to believe what they do not really believe.

*P*. But is not the profession of faith in God through Jesus Christ itself a credal test?

*I*. No, not in that sense. If the distinction between the foundation-realities and the doctrines founded on subsequent reflexion, which we discussed in our second talk, be admitted, faith in God through Christ belongs decidedly to the former group. It is a decision of heart, mind, and will, made when a man is face to face with Jesus Christ. It is not bound to any particular form of words. It is the foundation-reality without which there could be no *raison d'être* for a Christian Church at all. No doubt it has important doctrinal implications, and these need to be attended to. But it differs from them in being a decision of personal faith; and the demand for it is, therefore, no breach of the rule that a *doctrinal* test ought not to be enforced as a condition of membership.

*P*. In expounding Congregationalism as you do, would you be carrying all your fellow-Congregationalists with you?

*I*. Those who either do not know or who misinterpret our denominational history would disagree with me: and some of them are very busy just now, endeavouring in the interests of Barthianism, Calvinism, Thomism, or some other form of neo-'orthodoxy', to discredit the freedom wherewith Christ has set us free, and to bring us again under a yoke of bondage—in the form of some particular type of traditionalism which happens to prove itself most helpful to them. But the glorious thing is that they have no means of compelling the denomination—or indeed any particular church in it—to surrender its Congregational birthright, unless perchance here and there they care to take legal proceedings to enforce compliance with some trust-deed or other, drawn up by persons who, like themselves, lacked the wider Congregational vision. That, however, is not a line likely to meet with either general approval or general success.

*P*. But how can one tell what is, and what is not, the right interpretation of Congregational history, or the true differentia of its genius?

*I*. Certainly not by depending finally on Robert Browne, or John Owen, or R. W. Dale, or indeed any of its great figures, though there is much we can learn from them all. Nor by fastening exclusively on one or other important feature of its early polity—such as the absolute autonomy of the local church in its business-affairs (for that it has since been willing to modify), the insistence on all its members being real Christians (for other denominations do this, and no church can consist entirely of perfect Christians), or the belief in Christ's presence in the church-meeting (for that belief too is shared by others). The real differentia of the Congregational polity is a passionate trust in the Christian's freedom from external control and in the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all matters of religion, both for the individual and the group.

*P*. How would you propose to prove this affirmation of yours, against the criticism of those who would dissent?

*I*. I should ask them whether, with the facts of history before them, they can name another denomination more averse than Congregationalism from static fixity, more wedded to the great Protestant claim, 'The Priesthood of all Believers', or more loyal to John Robinson's historic utterance, 'The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth out of His holy Word'. There are indeed one or two other denominations which, like Congregationalism, came deliberately to discard credal tests as conditions of membership: but can my critics tell me of one (besides Congregationalism), which while doing this does not either add modifying demands, or else let its loyalty to Christ and its Church-sense fade? I venture to say that they cannot. And I should invite them to draw from their inability to do so the obvious inference that the genius of Congregationalism lies where I have said it does.

*P*. Do you think Barthianism has anything to teach us regarding the Church?

*I*. I reply with hesitation, as I have not read a lot of Barth. Moreover, as I am a busy man, and can hardly expect to retain my full mental vigour much beyond the age of 101, I am not undertaking to plough through those gigantic tomes of his, each of which dishearteningly resembles an unabridged one-volume 'Liddell-and-Scott'. However, I have carefully read his *Credo*, and quite a number of articles, reviews, and smaller books written by those who advocate his views or at least wish to explain them. So I have at least a rough idea of what it is all about.

*P*. And what are your reactions?

*I*. I believe Karl Barth himself, like many of his followers, to be a brave and sincere Christian man, who has served the Church of God well by laying needed stress on certain important aspects of our religion. And I should be genuinely sorry to do any injustice to one who has stirred so many Continental Christians to a new sense of the dignity of their faith. But the characteristic emphases of his teaching, given me in *Credo* and in the words, spoken and written, of his followers, nearly all contradict one or other of my firmest convictions: and I therefore do not feel that there is a *primâ-facie* case for devoting a large proportion of my limited time to an exhaustive study of him.

*P*. What particular elements in his teaching repel you in this way?

*I*. Well—to mention only a few—the complete otherness of God as over against man, the non-existence of any way from man to God, the futility of Natural Theology, the damnability of Liberal Modernism, and the contemptuous disregard for the quest of the historical Jesus. I find Barthians continually complaining that Barth has been grievously misunderstood; but when I look carefully at what they tell me his real meaning is, I find it just as impossible as what I previously thought it was. Moreover, they display a kind of evasive unwillingness really to listen to and to answer the arguments seriously advanced against them.

*P.* Yet they always speak with an air of tremendous conviction.

*I.* Exactly. They take it for granted that they are fully qualified and fully authorized to make the most emphatic statements about the deep mysteries of God's inner being and about His precise intentions in history. But even that would not matter so much, if they would only put their views a little more humbly and gently. For although a controversialist's manners ought not to prejudice others against his argument, it is a pity that men of this school allow themselves to be so truculent in their references to those who do not agree with them. If you do not pray in a mood of self-despair, they tell you your prayer is only a pathetic conversing of your soul with itself. I would have you reflect on the effrontery of that charge—as also of the aspersions they cast in the same interest on Quaker worship as often lapsing into 'a monologue of the soul with itself', or as resembling 'stony ground'. Or take again these words, which I came across in the church-newsletter of a young minister belonging to the neo-'orthodox' school (though whether he would call himself a Barthian I do not know). 'But this "modernism" ', he writes, 'always was weak and spineless, it could never bear hardship or stand up against anything. The trouble with it was that it didn't know what it stood for, because it "repudiated all credal texts" ' (probably meaning 'tests' —the good man hadn't corrected his proofs properly). 'These "modernists" pretended to stand for the truth, but they were all the time standing on ground they had no right to—they were standing. And wherever the spineless slug crawled it left a slimy trail, wobbling and uncertain. It is not just a coincidence that in the country where this "modernism" flourished most, Dr. Goebbles' (look how he spells the name!) 'now really does "set forth the truth as he sees it" . . .' What do you think of that?

*P.* It seems to me—to borrow your earlier phrase—almost to border on the preposterous.

*I.* The mention of Goebbels, by the way, reminds me of one of the most untruthful charges being made in certain quarters to-day, namely, that Liberal Protestantism is all of a piece with the travesty of Christianity now prevalent in Nazi-Germany, and that—as one writer has put it—Adolf Harnack was the natural precursor of Adolf Hitler.

*P.* But wherein would these Barthian friends differ essentially from yourself on the doctrine of the Church?

*I.* If I may judge from a small but vigorous Barthian treatise I was reading recently—though they have quite a number of good, healthy things to say, they vitiate their case by a blind insistence on their own narrow formulae. This man, for instance, though lashing out right and left in his criticism of others (including even our own Puritan forefathers), seems never to have examined the principles and conditions of Christian epistemology, for he makes no allowance for the possibility that the subjective element, either in Karl Barth or in himself, may have affected or deflected their theological judgment. He professes to base himself on 'the Scriptures' and 'the Apostles', as if each of these was an undifferentiated theological unity and identical in meaning with the other. At the same time, he has nothing but contempt for Liberalism, and disallows altogether, as 'a denial of the testimony of the Apostles' and, if you please, 'an attempt to disprove the Lordship of Jesus', the effort to get nearer to the historical Jesus by means of a careful scrutiny of the Gospel-documents! But surely it is perfectly futile to try to lay a kind of religious embargo like this on a particular field of enquiry: it results only in historical untruthfulness, and leads to the Church forfeiting much of the gracious personal ministry (through the story of His life on earth) of Him, Who is nevertheless always devoutly spoken of as 'her Lord'. The author seems unwilling to leave room for any variety within the Church—altogether apart from his well-justified disapproval of the inability of certain denominations to hold communion with one another. His own idea of catholicity is largely a paper-scheme, of which one may safely say that the rank-and-file of our churches will never be able to carry it out, and most of them never be able even to understand it.

*P.* Yet I suppose there is some advantage in having these various theories vigorously canvassed and discussed, isn't there?

*I.* O certainly: and I would go further still, and frankly admit that we all of us have a long lee-way to make up in the matter of personal religion and really-vigorous church-life. I suppose that is the sort of complaint which those who watch on behalf of the Church are at all times disposed to make. But I would not wish to use that tendency as in any way a consoling fact. As Margaret Harvey said in her recent Swarthmore Lecture, 'we belong to a spiritually shallow generation'. The condition of things in Christendom is exceedingly serious: and no sincere proposal in the interests of a revival of vigour in the Church —whether by means of an improvement in our theology or by means of a revision of our ecclesiastical machinery—is to be despised. On that ground, I would gladly recognize that Karl Barth and those men of various types who sympathize with him have done useful service in appealing for new ways and in challenging our thought. But it does not follow that the lapse we are mourning over is to be cured by means of an infusion of Barthianism. What *is* needed is that professing Christians should everywhere be more Christlike, more charitable, more spiritually-minded, more prayerful, and more zealous in their service of God.

# VIII

## SEX

*Pilgrim*. Over and above the interesting theological matters we have discussed, there are two questions of ethics in the narrower sense which I should like to ask you about: and one of them is sex.

*Interpreter*. I should be glad to have a chat with you about that, as I understand there is a very-widespread revolt going on against the domination of the hitherto-accepted Christian standards; that, in fact, many are proclaiming the near advent of a glad new day, when the tyranny of the old Puritan and Victorian taboos will be largely a thing of the past.

*P*. That is so, indeed: and, of course, war-time conditions accentuate the prevalence of the revolt, and multiply the evidences of it.

*I*. Quite. It is very nauseating to hear of contraceptives being exposed for sale in a slot-machine in the public road, and of soldiers being 'issued with them' (forgive the ungrammatical war-time jargon), and furthermore being instructed in their use in such a way as almost amounts to an encouragement to sin. I am told that, in areas where very many girls are congregated for war-work, an alarming number of illegitimate confinements occur, despite all the precautions taken. What one hears and reads about the extent and spread of venereal disease is also very disquieting. In the absence of statistics, it is impossible to speak precisely; and it may be that the prevalence of laxity is not so bad as we suppose. But all the indications go to show that, even apart from the war, the tendency to throw over the old restrictions has grown enormously in recent years.

*P*. Should not the churches, or, if you prefer, the Church, have done something to deal with the problem before this?

*I*. I often hear it said that the Church has 'failed' in this, as she is said to have 'failed' in so many other things. She is accused of leaving her young people without guidance, of avoiding the subject because it is difficult and unpleasant, and so on, and so forth. As the Church inevitably includes a large number of imperfect people, one can hardly be surprised that her record also is in some measure faulty. And I admit that the old-fashioned custom of barring conversation on the subject of sex, and of keeping children and young people in almost-complete ignorance of sex-facts, and suggesting to them that even curiosity on the subject was improper and unclean, was a bad mistake, and has been responsible for a great deal of needless suffering. It was an unfortunate by-product, I suppose, of the very-proper seriousness with which sex-matters were regarded. On the other hand, when I think of the well-known and clearly-defined traditional ethic of the Church on this particular matter, the enormous number of books produced in recent years giving Christian guidance regarding it, the evident influence hitherto of countless Christian homes, and so on, I am disposed to lay a larger percentage of the blame for the present situation on human iniquity generally and on the prevalent rebelliousness of the times, than on the Church. But anyhow, before the hitherto-accepted standards are set aside, I want to see something a little saner and more healthy than the 'new morality' which is now being advocated as an improvement on them.

*P.* What exactly do you understand this 'new morality' to be?

*I.* It begins with a caricature and repudiation of the Puritan and Victorian Christian ethic, blandly ignoring the immense amount of happy home-life which that ethic has created and protected, concentrating on the proportion of unhappy marriages as if they were in some way due to it, and misrepresenting as mere prudery the seriousness with which it treated sex-matters. It proposes to substitute for this ethic the theory that, if and when 'love' exists between any two persons, and both are willing that intercourse should take place, it is right that intercourse should take place, even if they are not married. In this latter case, however, some contraceptive means must be taken to prevent a child being born.

*P.* Promiscuity, in fact?

*I.* The advocates of the 'new morality' stoutly deny that they are sanctioning promiscuity, or that promiscuity will ensue from the adoption of their theory. They say they prefer and defend monogamy, disapprove of adultery, and so on. And it is, of course, only fair to keep in mind the very-great ethical distinction between real promiscuity (which means the casual satisfaction, if and when one feels so inclined, of a purely-physical impulse) and real love-unions consummated outside matrimony. But even so, what use will these pious wishes of the new-moralists be against the force of sex-appetite, when once people are assured that intercourse is justified if only the parties 'love' one another? Are they imbeciles that they do not know that nothing is easier than for a man and a woman to believe that they 'love' one another, when they are suffering simply from a passing infatuation? One author, while professing to disapprove of promiscuity, explicitly recognizes that the temporary infatuation is a justifiable ground for the love-intercourse he proclaims as the right thing. But even if he did not so recognize it, the danger would be just the same. Once give the erotic instinct a free hand, once remove the sacred responsibilities with which Christianity has invested it, and 'love' will readily and repeatedly assert itself in a multitude of directions. That surely comes very near promiscuity, doesn't it?

*P*. Yes, I can see the weakness of their case there. But tell me, do you feel able to answer them?

*I*. I cannot speak with the technical knowledge of a physician or of an analytical psychologist or even of a working pastor: but I am a family-man who has tried to keep his eyes, ears, and mind open; and I am at least prepared to offer you some thoughts for your consideration, if you wish it.

*P*. Certainly I do.

*I*. It is important for us to be clear from the outset what we are to discuss. I take it what we want to get at is the Christian ethic in the matter.

*P*. Well, of course. What else could it be?

*I*. The reason I put it in that specific way was in order to distinguish it from (1) what is customary, (2) what society in general approves, and (3) what the law allows in the sense that it does not punish it. Quite a lot of people think confusedly that, if only an action is widely practised, one cannot reasonably argue that it is ethically wrong. Others assume that, if society in general does not condemn a practice, society ought not to condemn it. Others again take it for granted that the State ought to enforce under penalty a complete obedience to the full Christian ideal. All these assumptions are incorrect. But I am anxious to guard myself in advance against the charge of ignoring custom, when what I am really trying to do is not to describe custom, but to clarify an ethical issue.

*P*. What sources of information have we for the purpose of settling this issue?

*I*. Broadly speaking, three—Nature, Custom, and Christ.

*P*. Can Nature tell us anything about the Will of God for us on this subject? I have heard it argued that Nature is quite amoral on the matter of sex, and simply aims at the reproduction of the species, without regard to anything else.

*I*. That is only a small fragment of the truth. A closer study of Nature shows that there is a lot more to it than that. The universality and strength of the sexual appetite, as well as its productivity and the personal and social experiences connected with it, prove clearly that it is meant by the Creator to play an important part in a full-orbed human life, ministering to its joy in love and beauty, and generally developing and enriching its capacities. But some of its most obvious characteristics serve to set it as an emotional impulse in a class by itself. Our emotional nature generally has taught us that most of our impulses need to be at least carefully controlled: and one which, like sex, clearly stands apart from the rest is likely to need special care. This preliminary suggestion is powerfully confirmed when we take note of some of the conditions which Nature has attached to the indulgence of this particular impulse. These conditions by no means prove the impulse to be evil in itself: on the contrary I want it to be clear to you that I hold man's sexual nature, if rightly controlled, to be one of his greatest blessings. But the conditions I speak of warn us that great caution is necessary, and that the *primâ-facie* rule, 'Indulge whenever you feel inclined', is almost certain to be badly wrong.

*P*. What conditions have you in mind?

*I*. Well, in the first place, take the fact that sexual intercourse is usually followed by some measure of physical exhaustion and emotional reaction. In extreme cases the physical consequences of too-frequent indulgence are not only serious, but fatal. In this respect, *uncontrolled* indulgence resembles, at least psychologically, certain forms of drug-taking—which induce a temporary spell of indescribable bliss, to be followed later on by misery and madness. Again, the overpowering beauty and attractiveness of the naked body, which so stimulates sexual desire, is closely neighboured by unpleasing and indeed repulsive qualities. It is literally skin-deep; that is to say, it pertains at most only to the healthy unbroken outer surface. Not only injury, illness, and old age, but some of the normal physical functions, render the body for a time extremely repellent: and strangely enough the very regions of which this is most true are those most provocative of sex-interest. I mention these points, not for the purpose of belittling or depreciating the physical delights of sex, but only in order to draw needed attention to the rather-rigid limits with which Nature warningly besets them.

*P*. Yes, I understand: and what about the production of offspring?

*I*. I was coming to that, as one of the gravest of all considerations under this heading. Unless Nature is artificially interfered with, she is apt at almost any time, and with normal persons certain at some time, to cause this simple act of pleasure and affection to involve the female in conception, pregnancy, and parturition. That the production of offspring is not Nature's *sole* reason for making the sexes mutually attractive is shown by the fact that it is less likely to occur at certain periods in a woman's month than at others, and by the further fact that the amount of sex-energy available is far in excess of what is needed to keep the world populated. On the other hand the apparent absence of any absolute fixity in Nature's proceedings in this matter, at least so far as hitherto discovered, points to the close link she has established between intercourse and pregnancy. Now the birth of a child is in several respects a tremendous event: besides temporarily suspending the sex-appetite, it calls forth the marvels of maternal love, and introduces a whole host of revolutionizing responsibilities.

*P*. But surely the discovery of contraceptive methods has made it easily possible to prevent conception ensuing on an act of intercourse, hasn't it?

*I*. That is broadly true: but it doesn't seem to me to justify the new-moralists' contention. I don't want to take a pig-headed view, and condemn the use of contraceptives for all persons under all circumstances. Under certain conditions it is perhaps right for married couples to use them. But for the purpose of learning what Nature has to teach us, consider this: the new-moralists, disapproving of children being born to the unmarried, must regard the availability of some absolutely-reliable and healthy contraceptive method (and by no means all methods are healthy) as a *sine-quâ-non* for a righteous life. But is it thinkable that men and women could not please God in their sex-behaviour before these means of preventing conception were known? And if there was a way of pleasing Him then, why should we not be content to practise it now? Has God changed His mind since men invented contraceptives?

*P.* Well, but you approve, don't you?, of modern methods and appliances being used to treat sickness and injuries. Would not the argument you have just employed make it wrong to use them?

*I.* No. To relieve the pain and cure the illness of injured and sick persons (thus assisting Nature to fight what is abnormal) is one thing: to make a regular practice of using a mechanical device in order to frustrate one main purpose of Nature in the normal sex-life of healthy human beings is quite another. I cannot therefore put contraceptives, as used by the unmarried, on the same level with modern surgical instruments, as used for the treatment of injury and disease. And what if you live in a place where contraceptive appliances are not available just when you want them? And what if, by accident, the device is ineffective? Similar mishaps, you may say, occur also in the treatment of illness and injury. But there is this difference: if they do so occur, the patients suffer, but no grave moral wrong is involved; but if a child is born to unmarried persons, a grave moral wrong *is* involved, for the child is denied the blessings of family-life.

*P.* But suppose it were discovered, as I am told it well may be, that there are comparatively-few days in every woman's month in which she *can* conceive, then frequent intercourse without fear of offspring and without the use of mechanical appliances and even without recourse to the unsatisfactory method of *coïtus interruptus*, would be possible, wouldn't it?

*I.* No, for the doctors tell us that conception can easily occur several days after intercourse has taken place. To make sure of being absolutely safe, therefore, additional precautions would still be needed.

*P.* Does that conclude the argument from Nature?

*I.* Yes: and I would sum it up by saying that, whatever questions it may leave unsettled, it at least (1) proves that great caution and self-restraint are needed if the goodly gift of sex is not to land us in misery, and (2) it warns us (if only in a qualified way) against regularly divorcing the enjoyment of full sexual pleasure from the possible responsibilities of producing and rearing children.

*P.* I think you said our next source of information was custom. I am eager to hear more about that, as you are the last person in the world I should have expected to advance such an argument. I can well picture the scorn with which you would repudiate an appeal to custom as a guide to rightness in certain other departments of enquiry.

*I.* My dear man, you would gravely misunderstand me if you thought that, because in certain departments of enquiry I reject the right of custom to settle the question, I think custom has nothing to teach us in any department. There is nearly always a case of some sort in favour of the customary; and that case must in all fairness be considered before it is (as occasionally, I admit, it has to be) thrust aside.

*P.* Why must we presume that it has some sort of a case?

*I.* Because, apart from the fact that to break with custom always lays a burden on our fellow-men, there is as often as not some very strong ground for a convention establishing itself, even though that ground may be unrealized or forgotten. Man learns *some* truth at least from experience, though not always as much as he might: and it would be sheer folly to throw away what he has secured, simply because he has not secured more. This is particularly true of *Christian* custom, which is, of course, what I have chiefly in view.

*P.* What then does Christian custom or convention teach us on this issue?

*I.* I hold that it confirms and vindicates the rightness of what Nature suggests to us and what Jesus Himself enjoins. We must remember that mankind has by now had a long and varied experience of different sex-policies. The state of things in the Graeco-Roman world in the first century suffices to prove that a system of free-and-easy indulgence, though superficially attractive and plausible, was fraught with moral disaster. The Christian ethic intervened, based, not on Oriental or Gnostic ideas of the evil of matter, but on the healthy Hebraic conception of the goodness of creation and the sacredness of personality. A horror of all fleshly life did indeed later affect the Church; but it did not capture it. The instinct of

Christendom clung to the sanctity of marriage, while strongly condemning fornication and adultery. Hence was derived that Puritan and Victorian standard which some to-day are in such a hurry to throw overboard. Their main ground is that this standard involves much self-denial and suffering. I'll say more about that later. But for the moment let me observe that this incidence of suffering proves nothing, unless you can show that *on a long view* the 'new morality' involves less suffering. Righteousness *always* exposes man to the risk of self-denial: yet it is righteousness none the less.

*P.* Your mention of Christianity brings us to our third source, doesn't it?—the teaching of Jesus.

*I.* Yes; and we shall find that, behind what Nature suggests and Puritanism demands, stands the supreme authority of the Master Himself. New-moralists, like Mr. Kenneth Ingram, would like to believe that this is not so. But they are wrong, demonstrably and hopelessly wrong, one-hundred per cent wrong. What they build on is His stern condemnation of a refusal to accept Him as a graver sin than harlotry (Matthew xxi. 31) or even sodomy (Luke x. 12, Matthew x. 15, xi. 24), and His unwillingness to condemn the adulteress (John viii. 11). But, apart from the fact that the former passages are strongly rhetorical, and therefore ought not to be pressed literally, to say that A is a worse sin that B does not imply that B is not a very-grievous sin: while, as for the adulteress, the words 'Go, and sin no more', surely prove that in His view she *had* sinned.

*P.* Is there anything in the Gospels that bears quite unambiguously on the question?

*I.* Certainly there is. We have Jesus' explicit inclusion of adultery and fornication among the evil things that issue from man's heart and defile him (Mark vii. 21): we have also His condemnation of the lustful intent concerning a married woman (Matthew v. 28).

*P.* But doesn't Mr. Ingram parry this argument with the plea that, as we are no longer fundamentalists and are not tied to verbal inspiration, we are no longer obliged to obey the letter of Scripture?

*I.* He does; but the plea is singularly inept, for our rejection of fundamentalism and of verbal inspiration simply means that a statement is not necessarily to be accepted as historically true because it is in the Bible. It does not mean (1) that there are not in the Bible many historically-true statements (like the Gospel-record of Jesus' teaching about sex, for instance); nor does it mean (2) that the ethical and religious teaching of Jesus is not entitled to the Christian's obedience.

*P.* Then there is also, isn't there?, His disapproval of divorce.

*I.* Yes; and there are two points about that which need special notice. The first is that, while words forbidding divorce (and remarriage) are found in all three Synoptic Gospels, it is only in Matthew v. 32 and xix. 9 that an exception is allowed if the wife has been unfaithful. And the Matthaean Gospel contains so many minor accommodations to later Christian thought, that we need have no hesitation in regarding the modifying words here inserted as later additions to the original tradition. It might, of course, be argued that Jesus, in categorically forbidding divorce, was overstating His point for the sake of emphasis: but the unlikelihood of this is seen when we turn to the second feature of His teaching.

*P.* What is that?

*I.* His words 'What God has yoked together, let not man separate'.

*P.* But you couldn't very well argue, could you?, that a man and wife who did not suit one another, and who led a cat-and-dog life, had been joined together by God. Surely that phrase can apply only to happily-married couples.

*I.* My dear man, have you asked yourself what point, if that were so, there would have been in Jesus uttering the words at all? Who on earth would *want* to separate the happily-married? Jesus is speaking with special reference to couples whose divorce is under consideration, and who therefore are presumably *not* happily married, though *à fortiori* His words apply to the happily-married also.

*P.* But in what sense can unhappily-married couples be described as joined together by God?

*I.* The only feasible interpretation of the words is that Jesus believed, and was here declaring in the manner of a devout Jew, that the sex-act, as the normal consummation of marriage, sets up between the two parties a special and deeply-sacred fellowship which carries with it life-long obligations. Without some supposition of this kind it is quite impossible to make any sense of the passage; and as there is no ground whatever to doubt the historical reliability of the report, we are faced with a choice between the acceptance of His own disinterested and quite-original guidance, based on His unique insight into reality, and a sheer defiance of it.

*P.* It is not quite clear to me why the union, though admittedly sacred, has to bind the parties for life. How about cases in which the mutual affection, genuine enough at the time, proves to be only temporary and evanescent?

*I.* You must remember that we are admittedly seeking to determine the Christian ethic, not what most persons will in point of fact feel they can do, or will even want to do. Bearing that distinction in mind, I should say that the permanence of the obligation is wrapt up in the exceeding sanctity of the bond. William de Morgan in his novel *Joseph Vance* makes one of his characters rightly ask, 'Do you not know that none can tamper safely with a plant whose roots are in the very depths of Nature, whose branches may shoot up into the highest Heaven?'

*P.* Yes, but is this ethical ideal possible of achievement?

*I.* Certainly, provided its sanctity is duly honoured, and its possibilities of true and lasting joy remembered. Not, of course, otherwise. I am told that unmarried missionaries serving in the Basle Missionary Society used in the old days to let headquarters know when they desired to marry, and paired off amicably with the ladies whom headquarters sent out for the purpose, and that such marriages normally turned out very happily. I realize that these matches must have often resembled colleagueships rather than love-unions: and I would certainly not advocate such a method of choosing one's life-mate to-day. But the custom is significant as at least showing that many supposedly-insurmountable obstacles to conjugal happiness will yield (or indeed fail to arise at all) if only the parties will face the situation with due reverence for their mutual obligations and with faith in the grace of God. Dr. Otto Piper, by the way, has been recently advocating a view of the marriage-bond similar to my own: and I see that *The Times Literary Supplement* admits that his conclusion 'may be irreproachable', but immediately proceeds to reproach it as being 'hardly constructive'. The good reviewer is confusing the ethically-right with what will probably be done. The Christian ideal is constructive enough: the only thing that is wrong with it is that so many persons won't pursue it. But that is *their* fault, not Christianity's, nor Dr. Piper's.

*P.* Does this Christian version tally with what we learn from the other two sources, Nature and Custom?

*I.* I should say that Jesus' interpretation of sex is the only version which accounts satisfactorily for the warnings and conditions revealed to us by Nature, and for the tenacity of the conventional morals of Christendom, and furthermore that it alone puts us in possession of the power to enjoy the blessings inherent in sex-life without the danger of inflicting wrong or incurring misery. That fact seems to me to confirm powerfully, if indirectly, the claim of Christianity to be the absolute religion.

*P.* But how far would you say that Christian convention really does agree with Jesus' own teaching?

*I.* Not perfectly perhaps, but very much more closely than the 'new morality' agrees with it. Mr. Kenneth Ingram's contention, for instance, that Paul departed from Jesus' teaching is mistaken. It is not true that 'the sex-act is branded as evil' by Paul. Paul's reason in 1 Corinthians vii for preferring celibacy is that the break-up of all things by the Lord's Return was thought to be imminent, and he did not wish his converts to be needlessly embarrassed with family-responsibilities. His allusions to divorce show that he accepted the Master's own ruling on the matter. In Ephesians v he speaks of the married state in terms of high honour, and takes it as an analogy of the relations between Christ and the Church. Such measure of celibacy as is commended in the example and teaching of Jesus (Matthew xix. 12) and of Paul does not arise from any conviction that sex-life is inherently evil or unclean, but from voluntary self-denial in the interests of a special vocation. It was only later that the idea of the inherent superiority of virginity and celibacy took hold. In the late first-century Gospel of Matthew we have, as I have already pointed out, an early Christian attempt to lighten the stringency of the Lord's demands in the matter of divorce. But apart from this relaxation, and apart from the special cult of celibacy in Romanism, the Church has remained fairly loyal to the standards commended to us by Christ. To regard the Puritan's reserve and stringency in dealing with sex-matters as betraying a sense of the uncleanness or inferiority of our sex-life is of course quite absurd.

*P.* I cannot see that there is any escape from your argument. But there are one or two objections on which I should like to hear you comment.

*I.* By all means. Only it is important, in discussions such as this, to bear in mind the rule we were taught in the logic-books, namely, that to regard an objection to a proposition as itself constituting a disproof of it is one of the formal fallacies. But what is your first objection?

*P.* Well, I have heard it urged that the Puritan ethic lays an artificial stress on the legal ceremony of marriage, whereas no ceremony or even vow, but love alone, is the proper basis for the bond between man and woman.

*I.* The legal ceremony is important because by it alone can society, which is rightly interested in the union, take note of it and express its recognition of it. But it is not fair to judge the stress laid on the legal ceremony without remembering that the Church always accompanies it with grave warning that it ought not to be carried out unless the parties genuinely love one another and fully realize the responsibilities which marriage involves. Conversely, if two persons privately decide to live together as man and wife, then—so long as they faithfully observe the conditions usually imposed at the marriage-service—they cannot be accused of fornication, but only of a foolishly anti-social and perhaps rightly-punishable act. But in either case it is the physical cohabitation which truly consummates their union and renders it binding for life. A marriage that is not or cannot be consummated is neither legally nor morally a binding union—for the promises exchanged in church or elsewhere are given and received on the definite if tacit understanding that it can and will be consummated.

*P.* I suppose the most serious difficulty felt by persons who desire some change in our sex-standards is the cost in pain and self-sacrifice necessitated by adherence to them as they are.

*I.* I suppose it is: and I don't want you to think that I take at all a light or unsympathetic view of this measure of suffering, or that I should regard *all* departures from normal standards so caused as equally blamable. Let us have a look at the chief forms of suffering involved. They are not all equally acute, and some of them can be fairly directly met. There is, for instance, the financial barrier to marriage.

*P.* Yes; why should not two young lovers who are sure of one another cohabit, even though owing to poverty they cannot marry and set up a home? Or why should not a man—or woman, for that matter—who forgoes marriage out of loyalty to an aged parent or for some other altruistic reason, occasionally satisfy the sexual urge?

*I.* It is, of course, impossible for us, talking like this, to prescribe in detail for every type of difficulty. But I find it hard to believe that sheer poverty ever makes it impossible for two lovers who are otherwise ready to unite to become legally man and wife. To set up a home of their own is, after all, not indispensable, however desirable. The person faced with a restrictive vocation must make up his mind whether or not he is called on to 'make himself' (as it says in Matthew xix. 12) 'a eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven'. If he is, he will be able to find grace empowering him to do so with success.

*P.* It is sometimes argued that it is better for unmarried men to indulge their sexual appetite occasionally than to allow their minds to be obsessed and polluted with sexual thoughts, while keeping their physical chastity intact.

*I.* If that is a sample of 'new-morality' logic, I don't think very much of it. For if the sexual thought be polluting, how can the act be any less so? Admittedly, sexual thoughts can be a cause of trouble, especially if they are unwisely allowed to become an obsession. But they are not necessarily polluting: for they are inseparable from sexuality; and sexuality is part of a normal man's make-up.

*P.* But did not Jesus say that the lustful look was as bad as the unclean act?

*I.* No. In Matthew v. 28 He is speaking in the first place of an *already-married* woman, as the word γυνὴ suggests and the word 'adultery' helps to prove. Moreover, the precise meaning of His Aramaic words which lie behind the Greek phrase 'to lust after her' is not certain. Allowing for the rhetorical style in which He was accustomed to frame His searching and emphatic injunctions, the passage is probably to be understood as a declaration of the grave sinfulness of intending to seduce a married woman, even if the intention is never carried out. If we insist on applying the words to all feeling of sexual attraction as such, they would mean that Jesus was condemning as adulterous all such normal falling-in-love as may issue in an honourable marriage: and in view of what He says about marriage elsewhere, this is in the last degree improbable.

*P.* Then you don't think sexual imaginings are necessarily harmful?

*I.* Certainly not *necessarily* so. Whether they are or not depends on whether a man allows his erotic impulses to dominate his mind. They are bound to make their presence felt; they are not bound to become an obsession. I venture to say that any man with Christian ideals, however much unrest and temptation he may undergo 'thro' all the years of April blood', if he will practise healthy habits of bodily life and make use of the means of grace, such as prayer, Christian friendships, and Christian work for others, will not need to let sex-fancies obsess him. And I am perfectly certain that, if he never lets temptation mislead him into touching a woman unlawfully, he will in after years thank God for it as infinitely preferable to having tried to still temptation by occasionally yielding do it.

*P.* What about the cost of self-control after marriage?

*I.* While the state of marriage presents us with a very-different situation, it would be a great mistake to suppose that its privileges do away with all need for resisting temptation. A man's sexual nature is usually so strong that, unless it is firmly and rightly controlled, it may threaten the peace and welfare of his home. Most wives lose their youthful attractiveness more quickly than husbands lose their virility: hence the innumerable cases of men either leaving their wives altogether, or else leading double lives, or else forcing intercourse on partners who loathe it. But once again, heavy as the burden of temptation is, there is nothing impossible about the cheerful bearing of it, provided that the marriage is looked at in its true light, and not thought of as established merely in order to provide physical pleasure.

*P.* I suppose the most serious suffering befalls the woman who, for whatever reason, is never given a chance of satisfying her sexual cravings—particularly her longing to bear a child—within the bonds of legal marriage.

*I.* That is, indeed, the hardest part of the problem. I have it on medical authority, and I suppose it is generally known, that such enforced virginity is a very serious affliction, and often gives rise to neuroses of various kinds. The loss of male life incidental to a world-war means, of course, that there will be more and more women so placed. I have been told of some such who declare that they have attained serenity of mind and release from trouble by sacrificing their chastity. A friend of mine has rebuked me indignantly for having nothing more comforting to say to women so tried than that they must bear their cross and sublimate their passion. He thinks such counsel is particularly nauseating when it comes from pastors, etc., who themselves have, as married men, no such trial to bear.

*P.* Well, what is your answer to that?

*I.* To deal with the last point first—it is absurd to demand that exhortation to bear a sorrow bravely can never be rightly given unless the giver is himself bearing the same sorrow. That would reduce most human consolation to an impossibility. There *is* a place for burden-bearing in life, and for consolation: but this latter does not require that the consoler's burden must be the same as that of the burden-bearer. But for the rest I would say that, grievous as the sorrow is in such cases as we are thinking of, there is nothing impossible—as we know from ample experience—about triumphing over it, if only full advantage is taken of the resources of God's grace.

*P.* But can you not see that not all persons are able to avail themselves of this grace of God? To do so is, as you know, quite a serious undertaking: at all events, multitudes do not, in point of fact, receive it. The burden which your ethic would impose on them means, therefore, unrelieved misery—a living death, in fact. I can understand people accusing you of being somewhat unfeeling for insisting on so ideal a standard.

*I.* You say that, my friend, because you have forgotten for the moment what it is we are discussing. We are not cabinet-ministers drafting a bill to be laid before Parliament; still less are we dictators presuming to decide for all and sundry what they are to do. We are not forcing on, or exacting from, any one an ethical standard of which he or she does not approve. We are seeking to determine what is the right thing for Christian people to do. That must necessarily be something widely different from what the law can enforce. But I would invite you to agree that the mere fact that in certain situations adherence to an ethical ideal involves acute suffering is no proof that that ideal is not truly Christian. To enunciate the Christian ideal is not to force it on any one: a person must decide for himself or herself whether it is to be undertaken. In any case they have no more right to complain of the cruelty of their informant than a sick or delicate person has to complain of the cruelty of his doctor, when the latter imposes tiresome restrictions on him.

*P.* Yet you will admit, won't you?, that it's very hard lines on some people.

*I.* O certainly. I cannot, however, help wondering whether some of the new-moralists do not exaggerate it. But without labouring that, we have of course no right to expect that the Christian life will contain no element of hardship. Recall those words in which Jesus, again with oriental vividness of expression, bade us pluck out the eye or cut off the hand or foot that should cause us to stumble, and made it clear that to do so would ensure a heavenly reward which otherwise would be forfeited. It seems to me that, when He so spoke, He probably had in mind the serious costliness of obedience to the law of God in one's sex-life. Doubtless it is a painful struggle to rein in the most turbulent of the passions, and to

> hold
> The proud jaws fast with grip of master-hand.

But those who with God's help do so shall by no means lose their reward—in the fuller development and enrichment of spirit and character, both in this life and in that which is to come. There are any number of cases of this kind in which women, availing themselves of the resources which complete self-surrender to God puts at their disposal, manage to sublimate their sex-instinct, and become able to lead fully-joyous as well as fully-useful lives.

*P.* But would you be prepared to allow no exceptions whatever to these lofty rules? Such rigidity strikes me as somewhat alien to the spirit of our Lord.

*I.* You *will* bear in mind, won't you?, that I am only urging the practical pursuit of an ideal, not compelling any one to pursue it, still less proposing to penalize any one for not pursuing it. Try to think of my argument as the elaboration of the standard which I am going to follow *myself.* So regarding it, I cannot readily envisage exceptions to it. It seems to me that, with an impulse as strong and erratic as the sexual impulse, to start allowing exceptions, on the ground of relieving hardship, at least threatens (I will not say necessarily ruins) the standard as a whole. Perhaps I may be wrong here: I do not want to dogmatize. But I cannot see my way clearly about any possibly-justifiable exceptions—and I am afraid I must leave it at that.

*P*. Yes, I see. If I may pass now to a different point—wouldn't the general adoption of your standard mean the reintroduction of prostitution? In other words, isn't the general maintenance of chastity among girls in moderately-decent families dependent on the existence of a class of women who are willing to sell the use of their bodies to men who insist on indulging their appetites somehow? Does not this inevitably cast rather a shadow on your scheme?

*I*. I agree that, human nature being what it is, the laws of chastity will, in point of fact, be infringed *either* by many girls from decent homes, *or* by many prostitutes. But I cannot see that the objection you have raised really affects the question. We 'accept' prostitution only because we have simply no option in the matter. And let me say, though I hope it is not necessary, that, in referring to prostitution, I am not tacitly condoning for men what I condemn and deplore in women. As a matter of fact, there are male as well as female prostitutes: and what is deplorable for the one sex is equally deplorable for the other. But no woman is compelled to become a prostitute against her will, just as no man is compelled to be incontinent. If there are social and economic conditions which virtually thrust women into prostitution, let us by all means agitate vigorously for them to be legally rectified. But looking at the social results objectively, I should regard prostitution, hideous as it is, as a lesser evil than the general surrender of chastity on the part of unmarried girls, because, if for no other reason, the former would involve the corruption of a smaller number of persons.

*P*. You have very handsomely admitted the drawbacks incidental to the pursuit of the Christian ideal as you see it. I suppose now you will have something to say about the calamities that must needs follow on any general abandonment of it.

*I*. Exactly. I know the new-moralists argue that it will not be so: but I affirm with the greatest confidence that any widespread acceptance of their tenets will inevitably result in an amount of misery and loss far exceeding anything incidental to Puritanism, and in a social degeneration and chaos similar to that of the early Roman Empire. How can it be otherwise? People point to a case of two persons known to them, in which the Christian law has been broken, and *so far* no outward or obvious calamity has resulted. As if that proved anything! Once get it generally believed that the old standards need not be regarded as binding, that intercourse is now permitted and justified (even by Christian teachers) whenever two persons 'love' one another and desire intercourse, and the results cannot fail to be what I have described.

*P.* How, may I ask, do you know that?

*I.* From the already-visible results of such partial success as this damnable 'new morality' has so far had. Thank God, its success has not been so widespread as its deluded advocates like to think. But these transgressions are no new thing in human history; and both history and experience, not to mention common sense, leave us in no doubt as to what the outcome must be.

*P.* You won't mind my asking you to condescend to particulars, will you?

*I.* Not the least. Let me begin with this point. The normal man, certainly the normal decent man, when he desires to wed, desires to wed a virgin. Having regard to the marriage-relationship in all its bearings, this is a very natural and right desire. If some would describe it as merely a conventional phase of man's possessiveness, I should answer that the wish has become conventional only because it is inherently healthy and good. And if the desire for a virgin-bride is to be set aside as mere possessiveness, how can the objection to adultery be ethically justified against the same charge? Now let me ask you—how, under 'new-morality' conditions, is our marriageable youth to know or even be reasonably confident that the girl he would like to marry is a virgin? I understand that the loss of chastity among unmarried girls is now so prevalent that it has virtually driven the prostitutes off the market. If our young friend's fiancée really wants him to marry her, she will of course want him to believe that she is chaste. Precisely similar conditions prevail with the pure girl who naturally desires that the man she accepts as her prospective husband should also be pure. Questions may be asked, or they may not. Chastity may have been lost on one side or the other, or it may not. But just picture in any case the amount of suspicion, distrust, and deceitfulness that may quite easily creep in under 'new-morality' conditions—more than enough, surely, to wreck the happiness of innumerable marriages. And don't forget that we must reckon, on the top of this, the unspeakable misery of the still fairly-numerous old-fashioned parents who will never be sure whether their beloved sons and daughters have committed the irrevocable sin of fornication or not.

*P.* I am bound to admit you score heavily there.

*I.* Of course I do: and I am going to score still more heavily. Venereal disease! It was of a case of syphilis that an American doctor once said to his students, 'Gentlemen, I would not have that sore on my body for the whole continent of America'. Now while it is true that one may become infected with venereal disease quite innocently, it would be absurd to deny that the risk of infection is enormously increased by any general increase in irregular intercourse. We have just been told this spring that the prevalence of such disease in this country has more than doubled since 1939. And this in spite of all the warnings and precautions the authorities have arranged for. The chaste bride, believing her husband to be also chaste, may more readily now than of yore get herself and her offspring infected. The upright husband, flattering himself that he has married a virgin, may contract this dreadful pollution through her pre-matrimonial folly. With such danger as this before you, my dear friend, you are welcome to take what comfort you can find in the new-moralists' charming assurance that, thanks to medical skill, the ghastly disease is not now quite so incurable as it was!

*P.* Is that the end of the indictment?

*I.* By no means. Look at what the 'new morality' involves for children and for family-life. The encouragement which it gives to a severance of intercourse from the responsibilities of parenthood means that even the legally-married will tend to avoid having children. 'A great gain, surely!', some will say. 'None of the discomfort, pain, and general upset incidental to child-bearing: none of the weariness and anxiety and expense incidental to rearing a family: and above all, enough money to buy a car, and enough leisure to run about in it!' What total folly! To say nothing of the dangerously-dropping birth-rate, consider the loss to themselves and the world of the love and joy and interest and fellowship and service which a family might have created. Later in life such couples often appear to be no happier than those ill-starred and frustrated souls who are debarred from all sex-life and have failed to find any compensation. Such are the blessings of contraceptives! At the same time, these blessings are not so secure but that, under 'new-morality' conditions, a number of illegitimate children will be born, who—whatever the state and charity may do for them—can never enjoy the privileges of a Christian home. And what is to happen to the children of legally-married parents when these latter, having fallen out or got sick of one another, are told by the new-moralists that they can rightly pair off with other more-attractive partners, provided only that they 'love' them? I know a case. But perhaps it is hardly necessary to labour this obvious point further.

*P.* No, I quite agree. Yet I believe that one advocate of the 'new morality' received hundreds of letters and other expressions of thanks from young men and women.

*I.* Does that surprise you? My only wonder is that he did not receive thousands. In one of Mr. Kenneth Ingram's earlier books, *The Modern Attitude to the Sex Problem* (1930), he very truly wrote: 'Nature has designed that the sex passion is so immense a force as to respond to any invitation, and rapidly to stimulate itself if no obstacle is placed in its way'. What more natural, therefore, than that, when an author tells his readers that they may rightly cohabit if only they 'love' one another, crowds of them should come tumbling over one another in their eagerness to thank him? They do not realize that they are selling their birthright for a mess of pottage—and poisonous pottage at that. They do not know the fatal drug's effect. They despise the joy of looking back from long afterwards at their escape from the peril of committing irrevocable sin. They disregard the poet's wise counsel to

> unmask those counterfeits of bliss,
> Which to believe thy deep undoing is—
> Joys which but lure to leave thee,
> And leave to grieve thee,
> Not of the fine-spun stuff
> That from the eternal spool
> My Hands would weave thee!
> Enough, enough!
> How long shall they deceive thee,
> And thou still dote
> Importuning high Heaven
> That more be given
> With cries monotonous as the wry-neck's note?

*P.* Well, what is your remedy?

*I.* The strategic centre of any campaign to stop the rot will be in those places in which Christian teaching on the subject can be imparted to adolescents — that is, the home, the day-and boarding-schools, and the Sunday-school. If youths and girls are launched on the world and hurry into marriage without the needful preparation of intellect and character, it is not to be expected that they will always steer a wise and right course. You and I, perhaps, cannot do much to meet the need directly, save within the limits of our own family-circles. But our example and influence and counsel will count for something at least; and even our present talk may possibly be not unfruitful.

*P.* You have not said anything yet about the divorce-laws.

*I.* No, because I think it is important not to confuse the problem of State-legislation by and for a largely-unChristian community with the question of defining the Christian-ethic. If these two tasks are not kept distinct, thought becomes badly confused. We have so far kept our discussion to the Christian ethic. Yet the Christian's attitude to the problem of State-legislation has also to be faced. It is a problem full of difficulties of its own. For the State must needs be interested in the sex-behaviour of its citizens; and the Christian citizen must take his share of responsibility for the legislation. On the other hand, it would clearly not be right for the State to try to force persons who are not convinced of the claim of Christianity on their obedience to comply with the full Christian ethic. What exactly the Christian voter or member of Parliament should do under these circumstances is, I confess, not quite clear to me. I doubt whether many people have even got so far as to see that there is a real problem here for citizens who are themselves personally committed to an ideal way of life. I am not at all sure that their right course, as a minority, would not be to vote for the observance of the full ideal every time, not with any wish to have it forcibly imposed on all, but to keep it well before the minds of the public. However, it is a difficult problem; and while we cannot solve it here, I am anxious that at any rate you should not feel that our settlement of the Christian ethical issue must wait for the final solution of the political problem.

*P.* What exactly would you say to folk who should reproach you with being old-fashioned and prudish on this issue?

*I.* I should describe the remark, in terms my old friend Bartlet once used, as a 'lapse from accuracy'. The frankness of our conversation surely acquits us of any charge of prudery; while as for being old-fashioned, you would hardly allow that reproach to be levelled at a man who advocated the maintenance of the ancient laws prohibiting theft and murder, would you? But even if by an old-fashioned person be meant one who opposes all changes, even in the less-vital conventions of polite society, I should still plead 'not guilty'. I think certain recent changes in the code governing the social relations between men and women have been distinctly advantageous. Full sexual intimacy is not the only form in which men and women can minister to each other's pleasure and enrichment: numerous opportunities of fellowship other than the special relationship of marriage are open to them. The rules governing dress, talk, and association generally, so long as they do not (for example, by the suddenness of the change) provoke illicit cohabitation, are matters which each generation is free to settle for itself. The increased frankness and freedom which has recently been imported into these departments of life are on the whole good. It would be only on detailed points that I should want to offer opposition. I think, for instance, that the custom of kissing between unrelated persons not contemplating marriage is to be deprecated, as cheapening one of the sacraments of conjugal affection, and so helping to spoil the romantic sweetness of a real betrothal. But on the whole I should favour the greater freedom of these days, as ministering to the fuller enrichment of life.

*P.* But do not some folk argue that the stress you lay on the actual committal of the sex-act is misplaced, that it does not possess that vital character which you assume it possesses, that there are many people to whom a casual act of intercourse means no more than a mild token of affection like a kiss, or a mild diversion like attending a concert, and that it is not followed by those terrific consequences which you envisage?

*I.* I have already set before you fully the reasons I have for being quite certain that such superficial Philistinism is fundamentally and tragically mistaken. And the production of a certain number, perhaps a very-large number, of cases in which no visible calamity befalls those who live more-or-less loosely, no more convinces me that such looseness is harmless than the existence of multitudes of people who never say their prayers and never seem outwardly to suffer from not saying them convinces me that the neglect of prayer is harmless. The fact of the matter is that it needs a longer time and finer instruments than our superficial and hasty inspection to enable us to observe the deterioration that is going on. We are not dependent on these for our certainty that harm is being done: we know it from history, from experience in the large, and from our personal contacts.

*P.* Is not the complaint often made that the Church is merciless to sex-offenders, while very willing to condone and forgive those guilty of other sins, like unkindness, pride, greed, and hypocrisy, which according to Jesus Himself are still more evil?

*I.* I do not doubt that it is wrong to be, as many Christians are, unconcerned about things like unkindness, pride, greed, and hypocrisy. But this does not prove that sex-offences are comparatively harmless. We are not in a position, not even with the teaching of Jesus before us, to determine quantitatively the amount or degree of sinfulness in each item in the catalogue of clear transgressions. Jesus' language, we must always remember, was shaped by the situations with which He was successively dealing: and when needing to denounce the characteristic sins of the religious leaders, He did not *at the same time* lay stress on the fleshly sins of the rank and file. Suffice it for us that He did condemn these latter, and quite unambiguously. The reason why sexual uncleanness receives special stress from Christian moralists is not because they think that other sins do not matter, but because sexual transgression has got a special character of its own, and is attended by consequences of a specially-tragic and irremediable nature. Moreover, the temptations to it are different from and stronger than those to other lapses. The Church does not whitewash or ignore other sins: but she is, I contend, right in regarding this sin as one requiring special attention.

*P.* I understand that in *The Congregational Quarterly* Mr. Kenneth Ingram complained that you had not freed yourself from the type of alarmism which orthodoxy has always employed in this connexion, and that it was precisely the falsity of this alarmism which undermined the validity of your case.

*I.* If Mr. Ingram could prove that my alarm was groundless, his argument would cut some ice. As however he has not done this, the mere fact of my being alarmed does not in any way show that I am wrong. It would not be difficult to quote cases of transgression which would make even the new-moralists rise up in over-boiling indignation—and rightly too. There is nothing necessarily incompatible between cogent argument and strong feeling. Throughout this talk of ours I have endeavoured to put forward my arguments temperately and in such a manner that they could be weighed on their merits. I should have defeated my own object if I had given rein too freely to my own feelings on this issue. But now that the argument is concluded, I hope I shall not impair the cogency of it by adding an expression of my belief that senior people who by their spoken or written word or by any other means inform their junior friends that they can commit fornication or adultery with innocence and impunity are guilty of an exceedingly-grave wrong. They are causing others to stumble; and we may remember what our Lord said of the man who does that. 'Whoever causes one of these little ones to stumble, it were better for him if a millstone were hung about his neck, and he were cast into the depths of the sea!'

## IX

## OUR WORLD AND THE FUTURE

*Pilgrim.* We have so far been discussing, for the most part, problems of personal belief and conduct. I want to suggest that, as we have now come to our last talk, we might look this time more at the collective side of things. I imagine Christian teaching has to concern itself with humanity at large and the way it is getting on, as well as with the business of the individual Christian.

*Interpreter.* Absolutely. Only I would just remark in passing that, in dealing with the principles of Christian belief and living, the great universal interests of life have not been absent from our thoughts; and of course in discussing the Church we were very-definitely studying Christianity in its collective aspect. However, I am quite willing to share with you my thoughts on the wider issues as such: only I must warn you that there is a great deal in this field I am not at all clear about. It is, you know, the best method for every wise theologian to remember that the field throughout which he can claim to have any clear theoretical vision is very limited, and is surrounded on all sides by boundless realms of mystery, concerning some parts of which he may perhaps have enough intelligence to ask sensible questions, but not enough to find answers to them. Moreover, the limits set are not quite the same for any two men. However, let us hear the particular questions you would like to ask; and then we can see how far it is within our power to answer them.

*P.* Well, do you consider that eschatology—I mean, the question as to what is going to happen in the future to the world in general and the individual in particular—is an integral part of Christian teaching?

*I.* Christians have, generally speaking, always had an eschatology of some sort: and although ancient beliefs on the subject were often very insufficiently grounded and very crudely shaped, I should hold that the instinctive assumption that the absolute religion must have something to say about human destiny is a thoroughly-sound one.

*P.* I remember what you said a few days ago about the eschatological teaching of Jesus. But what would you take to be its permanent significance for us to-day?

*I.* The essence or core of Jesus' eschatology was surely His confidence that the values for which He worked and taught and suffered, being those dearest to the heart of God Himself, were destined ultimately to prevail, even though men were free to hinder them by their sinful opposition. The particular form in which He pictured the victory of these values, if the records are to be trusted—I mean, a visible return of Himself to earth, with a great final Judgement, before that generation had passed away—was drawn from the contemporary system of Jewish thought, and, though long retained by Christian minds, is no longer really credible. Its untenability was clear to some by the end of the first century: hence the virtual abandonment of it in the Fourth Gospel. And it is only by a variety of forced interpretations that the predictions ascribed to our Lord in the Synoptic Gospels can be harmonized with what has happened (and has failed to happen) since. But the form is not the essence. The essence is that the Gospel brought by Jesus and embodied in His Person is the eternally-valid Gospel of God, and cannot therefore suffer ultimate defeat.

*P.* But is there not an incongruity in categorically predicting the final triumph of God as certain, unless you give up your belief that men must always remain free?

*I.* Don't you remember that we considered this when talking about 'The General Principles of Christian Living'? We concluded that, in view of the *infinite* character of God's resources, it *was* possible to believe both that man remains free and that God must ultimately succeed?

*P.* Ah yes, so we did. But that at least involves belief in a future life, doesn't it?

*I.* Certainly it does.

*P.* But have we adequate grounds for believing that there is such a thing?

*I.* Yes, we have adequate grounds, though their adequacy is relative to the special character of the belief. It is clear that in many respects appearances are against it; and some would say that there is no experiential evidence for it on which we can rely.

*P.* Is that last opinion right?

*I.* I don't think so. I am not a technical student of the occult, and I feel no great concern to become one. But, judging from what little I have heard and read, I should say that the individual's survival of death is a much more credible explanation of many recorded phenomena than any other of the theories advanced to explain it.

*P.* But don't many eminent teachers say that the communications reported by psychical research are of so trivial a nature that they are not interested to learn whether they are genuine or not?

*I.* That is so. But what these dear people overlook is that the question as to whether they themselves are interested or not is entirely irrelevant to the main issue. The only thing that really matters is whether the communications are or are not genuine. It seems to be impossible to prove, despite the large amount of fraud discovered in the course of the investigations, that there is any other feasible explanation of a good many incidents than that they are due to the real contact of the minds of deceased persons with our own. But important as that conclusion is, it is far from being our only ground for belief in human survival.

*P.* What other ground is there?

*I.* Belief in a life beyond bodily death would seem to be necessary in order to enable us to do justice to, and to be consistent with, our confident assurance of the goodness of God, of His great love for us, of His moral government of the world, and even of those supramundane ideals and blessings for which we know ourselves to be created. Jesus' answer to the sceptical Sadducees, when He quoted to them the words, 'I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob', was essentially of this order: God being, as He is, in real contact with man, man must needs be alive to receive and respond to that contact.

*P.* How much do you think we can know about the conditions of life after death?

*I.* Not a lot, and not nearly as much as our pre-Liberal ancestors imagined. It is perhaps in this region that the movement of human thought, under the guidance of God, has involved the most drastic of all changes in the content of Christian belief. We have come to see that much of the concrete detail contained in the Bible cannot rightly claim our acceptance, for it owes its origin not, as our forefathers thought, to specific Divine revelation, but to the devout imagination of late pre-Christian Judaism, when pious minds, demanding a future world to redress the balance of the present, projected their trust in the righteousness of God into a number of very-specific image-pictures of the future. The purely-subjective character of most of the details of these pictures, even of many that passed over into the imagery of the New Testament, is proved by the entire impossibility of weaving them into a single coherent picture or programme. Thus the ideas (1) of a resurrection of the flesh, (2) of a 'Last Judgment' (that is, as something destined to occur in time), and (3) of eternal fiery punishment, have all tacitly faded away from the real convictions of many modern believers. They are, of course, clung to by Fundamentalists and Roman Catholics, as bound up with their attitude to Scripture: but for the rest, they are treated as symbols and not accepted in their literal sense.

*P.* What would they be symbols of?

*I.* These three beliefs I have named might well symbolize respectively (1) the real survival of the human personality, (2) the dependability of God's justice, and (3) the reality, in the life to come, of punishment as well as reward.

*P.* Will you explain to me a little further about the resurrection of the flesh?

*I.* The resurrection of the flesh became an item in Christian belief because it had been so unquestioned a tenet among non-Sadducaic Jews. The only form of future life the normal Jew could envisage was life in a resuscitated human body. He had no idea of the survival of a disembodied soul, such as Plato had made familiar to Greek thinkers. The Jewish views on the subject naturally passed over into the minds of Jewish Christians: but it created difficulty among Gentile converts; and in 1 Corinthians xv you can see Paul, 'debtor' as he was both to the Jew and to the Greek, endeavouring to satisfy both wings of the Christian constituency. In doing this, he was able to avail himself of, and to carry further, the incipient tendency already visible in certain Jewish circles towards a rather less-materialistic and more-spiritual view of the future life than was customary in Judaism generally. On the one hand, as a Greek he declares that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; and on the other he insists as a Jew that the dead must rise, that is, bodily; but he adds—by way of reconciling the two views—that what rises will be 'a spiritual body'. Christians long professed to believe in the resurrection of the body, otherwise described as the resurrection of the flesh. To-day many repudiate the latter doctrine, but cling to the former as if it were something different. Despite Sir Frederic Leighton's famous circular picture, most of us have to-day abandoned the mediaeval notion that the physical bodies of the dead will ever leave the places where they lie decaying. Whether, in view of this change of belief, anything is gained by insisting on, or even asserting, a resurrection of 'the body', is to me very doubtful. With that, as with several other things which we naturally yearn to know, it seems to me wiser to rest content with a reverent agnosticism, remembering the goodness of Him beyond Whose care even death cannot take us, and Who is able to do for us far more than we can either ask or think.

*P*. And what about the Last Judgment?

*I*. The idea of a Last Judgment, as an event destined to occur in time, first established itself in Judaism when men were trying to envisage satisfactorily the decisive climax in store for the nation and the human race, as distinct from the human individual (interest in whom developed later). There are two reasons why the idea has since waned. (1) Men have never been able to relate it harmoniously to their belief in a future life for the individual. A study of the multifarious Christian ideas as to what happens to the departed between the moment of physical death and the Last Day, should suffice to make this clear. The Roman Catholics, of course, have made a shot at systematizing the traditional data: but the theory held by some of them (as recorded on p. 211 of the seventh volume of *The Catholic Encyclopedia*) that each demon has a little bit of hell-fire attached to him, so that he can suffer torment until at the Last Judgment he is *finally* consigned to hell, serves at least to illustrate the extreme difficulty involved in solving the problem. (2) All our experience of the ways of God in history discourages the notion that there is to be any 'Last Judgment' as an event in time. Some like to keep the term, while sublimating its meaning into something non-temporal and transcendent—something, that is, totally different from what the Church traditionally meant by it. I would observe incidentally that this way of demonstrating one's 'orthodoxy' by clinging like a leech to a traditional term or phrase, while giving it a meaning which the men who coined it would have emphatically repudiated, is not wholly satisfactory. It is as a general rule preferable to abandon the term if you mean to abandon the thing it stood for.

*P*. And now regarding eternal punishment?

*I*. The reason why belief in eternal punishment is not binding on us is that it sprang originally from a natural but uninformed desire to provide in the future an adequate penalty for those whose wrong-doings were felt to be unbearable outrages, but who could not be brought to justice in this life. We are bound now to reject it, because it contradicts the revelation of God's love represented in the teaching and example of Jesus. It is no reply to this to say that God's love is not a soft and indulgent sentiment. God certainly punishes, and punishes severely, both in this life and in the next. But if ever there should come a time when His punishments cease to be remedial in purpose and become purely retributive, a time after which He makes no further effort to reclaim and reconcile the rebellious, then His character, as depicted in the Parable of the Good Shepherd seeking for the Lost Sheep, would be falsified. That is unthinkable. The permanent value of the doctrine of eternal punishment lies in the white-hot moral intensity, the sense of the vital difference between right and wrong, out of which in the first place it arose. But there is no reason why we should not retain that moral seriousness to the full without necessarily retaining along with it our fathers' belief in the eternal fire. Nor is there any real ground for supposing that a soul's eternal destiny is irrevocably fixed at the moment of physical death. Probation continues. Hence the feeling of some that it is right for us to continue praying for our departed friends.

*P*. Don't you think, in view of the interest and importance of the subject, that a lot more time and trouble ought to be devoted to clearing up the problem of the future life as far as we can, especially as regards the possibility of communicating with those who have passed on?

*I*. On the whole, no—speaking, that is, for myself. I do not mean to deny that it is a legitimate subject for careful investigation: but, dearly as I should love to have some communication with, say, my Father, who died over forty years ago, I have never felt disposed to go seeking for it on psychical or mediumistic lines. Belief in a future life is, I hold, a needful and justifiable item of Christian belief: but the instinct which bids most of us leave it at that seems to me a sound instinct. I don't know that I can justify this attitude rationally: but perhaps it is comparable to an appreciation of the natural limitations of childhood (in contrast to manhood), which by no means rule out the child's quest for fuller knowledge, yet do enable him to live his childhood most wisely without getting unduly distracted by themes and interests really beyond his years.

*P.* In that case I suppose we have to turn next to what you have just compared to childhood—I mean his life on this earth.

*I.* On any showing, this earthly life demands our utmost care—all the more so if we appraise at their true value those heavenly and eternal things which constitute what Paul described as 'the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus'. Dr. A. E. Taylor has truly said: 'You cannot overvalue the highest temporal good, nor promote it for humanity too ardently, so long as you care more yourself, and labour as far as is in you that mankind shall care more, for something else'. And this something else comprises man's higher interests both in this life and throughout eternity also.

*P.* That leads us directly to the problem of the needs of society, doesn't it?

*I.* Yes; for although the appeal of Christianity comes in the first place to the individual, and in certain important respects must always remain a matter for the individual, the Christian cannot be indifferent to the religious and moral, or even to the physical, progress of society at large.

*P.* When you speak of progress, are you not resurrecting an outworn and discredited idea, which has now been abandoned along with the Liberalism that believed in it?

*I.* You are going ahead a little too fast for me now, my friend. I am aware that there are a certain number of prophets at large in these queer days, who delight to greet any mention of progress, as they greet any mention of Liberalism, with howls of derision and disparagement. For one thing it is an exaggeration to state that Liberals ever regarded progress as mechanically inevitable. But let me ask you, is not Christianity emphatically a missionary religion?

*P.* I have always understood so.

*I.* Well then, if as we hope Christian propaganda is in any measure successful, that will mean progress, will it not? And what other meaning can we give to the prayer we are taught to pray daily, 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth'?

*P*. But I thought New-Testament scholars were now telling us that the whole idea of the Kingdom of God in the Gospels is not of something to be 'built' or 'extended' by human effort, but of something 'given', at His own time and through His own sovereign power, by God Himself.

*I*. That is one of those half-truths which are apt every decade or so to obsess the minds of scholars. Its onesidedness is due to a very simple misunderstanding. It is quite true that in Luke xii. 32 and Matthew xxi. 43 Jesus is recorded to have spoken of God 'giving' men the Kingdom. But that does not mean that Jesus thought of its coming as independent of human effort. God also 'gave' the harvest: but did that mean that the farmer only sat and twiddled his thumbs until it came? God gave victory in battle: but it is only in the unhistorical legends of Chronicles, not in real life, that the host has but to look on, because forsooth 'the battle is not yours, but God's'. God also gave offspring: but had the parents no part to take in their production? The Lord had to 'build the house', according to Psalm cxxvii: but no house was built if human hands did not labour at erecting it. It is the same with God's Kingdom on earth. Our scholars have allowed themselves to be misled by overlooking a simple idiom of Jewish piety. When therefore the neo-'orthodox' preacher exclaims with dogmatic emphasis, 'The Kingdom is *not* built: it's given!', he is guilty of a false antithesis; for it is given only as men toil at building it. I find in Matthew vi. 33 that Jesus also bade men 'seek' the Kingdom. Now in what sense can you be intelligibly said to 'seek' something, which can come about simply and solely by the miraculous fiat of God? Besides, seeing that the *essence* of the Kingdom is the realization of a certain personal relation between man and God, its coming must in large measure depend on the willing co-operation of man, and not solely on the despotic fiat of God. I don't think any responsible New-Testament scholar could seriously deny my contention here. But the onesidedness of the prevailing exegesis has both encouraged, and been encouraged by, the modern anti-Pelagian craze (vigorously fostered by the Barthians) for simply blotting human responsibility out of the Christian view of God's world and God's purpose. I was greatly interested to hear a little while ago of two young clergymen who confessed to a senior ecclesiastic their perplexity over the element of Pelagianism in the Synoptic Gospels!

*P.* Suppose we give heed to your warning, and take care not to be so misled, where do we get to?

*I.* We get a rational Christian synthesis between (1) the Kingdom of God revealed in the teaching, work, and person of Jesus, as a Divinely-willed and Divinely-furthered fulfilment of God's purpose for men on earth, and (2) a spiritual, moral, and social progress of mankind effected by the consecrated efforts of a growing host of Christian citizens.

*P.* But this latter is the very idea that our neo-'orthodox' friends brand as the characteristic delusion of Liberalism.

*I.* I know they do: and that is just where they are wrong. But we must be patient with them, and try to understand their difficulty. I imagine, to begin with, that they would not object to a Christian at least *hoping* that there should be progress as the result of the Church's labours, or even to his *trying* to bring such progress about.

*P.* No, I don't think they would, though some of their extremer utterances seem almost to go as far as that. But I imagine their chief grounds for discontent are (1) the outbreak of two world-wars within a generation, the second far worse than the first, (2) the alleged assumption of Liberalism that man has the power to save himself, and (3) the alleged failure of Liberalism to take sin seriously.

*I.* I don't think it would be a bad plan for us to look at these three items separately, perhaps in the reverse order. Shall we?

*P.* Very well. Did Liberalism really fail to take sin seriously?

*I.* That is not an easy question to answer, because the answer must needs depend on how you define Liberalism. No doubt there have been preachers and writers who did not take sin seriously enough: and if you define Liberalism as the views of those particular people, you will have little difficulty in demonstrating the justice of this particular charge! But if by Liberalism you mean the type of Christianity represented by the best scholarship of the twenty years prior to 1914 and by the most forward and active Church-work and preaching of the same period, I should maintain that the charge is broadly speaking false. So far indeed as my own recollection and experience go, it is quite unjustified. True, I should distinguish between a serious view of sin and a morbid view of it. There is such a thing as a morbid view of sin; and some of our present-day teachers are veritably obsessed with it—what the late Dr. Percy Dearmer called 'the sin-obsession'. I am glad to think that Liberalism never succumbed to that. But that the reality and seriousness of sin were ever absent from the thought and teaching of Liberalism in the large is not the case. Liberals, so far as I know them, never made a habit of refusing to face unpleasant facts.

*P.* Well, did Liberalism teach that man has power to save himself?

*I.* That is another of those false charges which are being made to-day—often by people who have no knowledge of Liberalism at first hand, but simply repeat what they hear other people saying. It is not true that Liberalism denied, either implicitly or explicitly, man's need of the grace of God. Nor is it true that, in exhorting men to 'build the Kingdom', it regarded God as a 'silent partner' in the undertaking, and approximated to treating it as virtually 'the Kingdom of Man'.

*P.* But wouldn't these latter charges be true at least of humanism?

*I.* That depends again on what you mean by humanism. I do not deny that there exists a humanism which leaves God out of account: but that is not the position I am defending. I can see it to be distinctly defective, though—on the principle that even the devil must be given his due—I want to say two things about it in passing. Firstly, it is quite absurd to link it up or to identify it in any way with Nazism and Fascism: one of its essential tenets is the worth and dignity of man—the very thing which Fascism and Nazism delight to trample under foot. To say that Hitlerism is the final consequence of the Gospel of Humanism is the sheerest rubbish. Secondly, humanism points forward to and implies religion, however little some of its prophets may discern that fact or make it explicit, for, as Dr. Wheeler Robinson has said, 'its morality really involves the creed of the worth of human nature, the possibility of its redemption from evil, the confidence in winning a cosmic victory'—and no such victory is in the last analysis thinkable without recourse to God. Still, I agree that humanism with no explicit avowal of God's love and sovereignty is defective. But I emphatically deny that all humanism is thus defective, or that there is any reason why it needs to be. *Christian* humanism, which we can provisionally equate if you like with Liberalism, certainly teaches an exalted view of man, and is quite right to do so—for it remembers that man is made in the image of God and is destined for fellowship with Him. But for that very reason it constantly looks at human affairs and human problems in the light of the Divine purpose.

*P.* You would then, I take it, deny the prevalent view that Liberalism in religion is now a spent force?

*I.* That a lot of people are turning away from it in these days is obvious, but whether they *ought* to do so is quite another question. The abandonment of Christianity itself by many to-day is no proof that Christianity is untrue or deserves to be abandoned: I should like to see what a Barthian would say in reply to an argument along those lines. In the same way the abandonment of Liberalism can be accounted for by means of *other* hypotheses than that it has been discovered to be false. It is mildly amusing to note the patronizing tone of some modern speakers and writers, graciously admitting that not *all* that Liberalism stood for is wrong, that perhaps it is unkind to throw stones at its retreating figure, and so on—almost equally amusing, if it were not so pitiful, to note the language of others, who have told us with customary rhetorical emphasis that 'Liberalism in religion is dead for all time'. Well, well, we shall see. Mind you, I do not contend that the emphasis must always be distributed exactly as it was distributed in the first decade of this century. But I do contend that all the positive positions for which Liberalism stood were right and of permanent value: and although the special circumstances of these days naturally encourage many folk to turn away from them, the denial of those positions will in course of time prove to have been erroneous, and man's need of them will be again vindicated.

*P.* Well, that brings us to the third neo-'orthodox' count against Liberalism—the two world-wars. Oh, by the bye, do I gather that you have abandoned your long-held pacifism? You remember that before we began to discuss sex, I said there were *two* ethical questions I wanted to ask you about. Well, this is the other.

*I.* I remember. No, I have not abandoned my pacifism. What made you think I had?

*P.* Why, I was reading the other day a review of your book, *The*

*Historic Mission of Jesus*, in the Church-of-Scotland's monthly magazine called *Life and Work*. It said that you had given up the attempt to apply Christ's teaching directly to the problem of war, and to defend the pacifist solution, and that you stated that Jesus 'gave no ruling on the legitimacy or otherwise of war'. Not having seen your book, I naturally imagined that you had thrown up your pacifism. And yet I was puzzled, because it said in the same paragraph of the review that you still held that a 'true understanding of our Lord's mind involves pacifism'.

*I.* May the Lord protect us from our reviewers, even from the well-intentioned Christian ones! So many of them seem fated to misrepresent one's meaning. The dear man who reviewed my book in *Life and Work* (I don't know who he was) was drawing wrong inferences from two passages in it. One came in my Introduction, where I said, not that I had abandoned the attempt to apply Christ's teaching to the problem of war, but that I realized now more clearly than I had realized formerly the complexity and difficulty attending a direct application of His teaching to that and other modern social problems. The other passage was a verbatim quotation from a paragraph in which I was summing up, not my own view at all, but the view that Jesus was unconcerned with politics, with which view I disagreed, and which I was about to refute in the immediate sequel! Any one who had read at all carefully what immediately preceded and followed this sentence could hardly have failed to see that. Perhaps the reviewer was in rather a hurry. I asked the Editor of *Life and Work* to allow me to rectify the error in a letter: but he courteously explained that their pages were not open to correspondence. So I had to leave it. But—as one of Mr. Punch's British workmen once had occasion to remark to his mate—'It only shows yer, don't it?'

*P.* O well, it is at least satisfactory to know that you have not changed sides. I say that, not because I am a convinced pacifist myself—I feel very bewildered about it. But when a man has long defended a position, and then abandons it, even if he is right in doing so, it is often very disconcerting to his friends, especially when they don't feel quite sure themselves which position is really the right one.

*I.* Let me tell you, my friend, that I can very fully understand your uncertainty; and as for your bewilderment, I not only understand it, but in part share it. These are very-difficult days for pacifists—as they are for others: and the pacifist who hasn't felt upset by the searching challenge of them—so searching is it as to rob him of perhaps the majority of his former comrades-in-(pacifist) arms—must have failed to face all the relevant bearings of the problem. He may not be to blame for that, for not every one can face everything: but he cannot complain if his fellow-Christians refuse to agree with him.

*P.* But are you quite sure, if you won't mind my asking this, that your adherence to pacifism owes nothing to your natural unwillingness to admit publicly that all this time you have been wrong?

*I.* I don't object to your frankness at all, my dear man, even although, as in this case, it may border on the uncomplimentary—because your question touches on a very-real danger. I have done what I could to allow for the danger, and to steer clear of it. I cannot say more. But you are perfectly at liberty to test my mental integrity for yourself by looking at the arguments which have weighed most with me.

*P.* I should like to do so: but they will have to be fairly-strong ones if they are to carry conviction. You see, I suppose it is patent by now to everyone that the Nazi philosophy of life flouts every decent principle which Christianity teaches us to value; and if it is not defeated and discredited, Europe—and with it the world—will stagger back into a particularly-brutalized form of unregenerate heathenism.

*I.* I do not want you to think that I am blind to all that. I realize that it would be difficult to overstate the amount and intensity of the evil in Hitler's policy and proceedings; and I have no use for any pacifism which involves any attempt to deny or evade that fact. I'd like that much to be clear.

*P.* I am glad to hear you say that. But it seems to me that you will have your work cut out if you are going to try to harmonize your pacifism with the concession you have just made.

*I.* You will probably agree with me that the beginning of wisdom in facing any question on which we find ourselves disagreeing is for each side to be patient and charitable towards the other, and to be willing that *all* the cards on both sides should be laid on the table.

*P.* O certainly; I thought I *was* being patient and charitable towards you. And I am also very willing to see all your cards laid out.

*I.* I am sure you are—unlike, I may say, the majority of the non-pacifists I know. So I can go ahead. We Christians have to remember, haven't we?, that there is such a thing as the Christian way of life: and by every test we can reasonably apply, not to return evil for evil is an integral item in that way.

*P.* But isn't that legalism?

*I.* We discussed the problem of legalism when we were dealing with 'The General Principles of Christian Living'. As I then urged, it seems to me perfectly clear that our Lord Himself, while not enacting a detailed code, did indicate certain methods of conduct as incumbent upon His followers: and the onus of proving that this is a misinterpretation lies upon those who now argue that no such methods *are* incumbent. Ask any of these gentlemen whether, in view of their repudiation of legalism, they believe that the Christian law of sexual purity is no longer obligatory for Christians, and see what they say. If they admit, as most of them certainly will, that it *is* obligatory, let them explain why the law forbidding us to return evil for evil is not also obligatory. It is written as plainly as it could possibly be in the Gospels, the Epistles, and the early Fathers, in the example of Jesus Himself (especially in the vital sacrifice of the Cross), and in the sufferings of the early martyrs. If a Christian way of life exists at all (and let any Christian deny it who dares), returning evil for evil is certainly no part of it.

*P.* Yes, I see the force of that, so far.

*I.* One must not infer, however, that this negative principle of conduct is (as some overhastily conclude) *all* that the Christian ethic has to say on the matter. The Christian ethic is by no means so helpless as that. It includes a very-definite alternative policy for dealing with evil: '*Overcome evil with good*'. There is every bit as much authority for that positive plan as there is for the negative requirement to abstain from inflicting evil. In fact, it was mainly through their loyalty to those two complementary principles that the Christian Church overcame without violence so much of the hostility of the pagan world.

*P.* That, I think, must in fairness be admitted.

*I.* You will probably also agree that the things which in war-time men are called on in their thousands to do to others are not really reconcilable with those requirements of the Christian way of life, but are in fact the most violent and unmistakable infringement of them.

*P*. But what *is* one to do if those specifically-Christian methods are inapplicable or ineffective?

*I*. We must keep to one point at a time, or else we shall get mixed up. It has never been assumed in Christendom that returning good for evil is bound in all cases to be effective at once. On the contrary, distinct provision was made for the possibility that for the time being it might often *not* be effective. The Christian, just like the defeated soldier, had to be willing to suffer the consequences of his method, should it prove for the moment unsuccessful. The palmary instance of this is the death of Christ Himself; and its consequences—as well as those of Christian martyrdom generally—give us the true answer: the victory is an ultimate, not an immediate, certainty.

*P*. I suppose practically all responsible Christian leaders would agree with you so far at least as this: that war is in itself an unChristian thing.

*I*. The conviction that that is so was becoming more and more clear and explicit in the years between the wars. And the acceptance of it, even by non-pacifists, is something to be thankful for. It means, at least, that Christian opinion will never again sanction an aggressive war, as of old it was often willing to do. But the trouble is that, if you feel certain that war is unChristian, and you also feel certain that, although you are a Christian (perhaps just because you are a Christian), you ought to take part in one, you are committing yourself to a paradox, if not a contradiction; and it is up to you either to say something if you can to clarify it, or else to admit candidly that you are in the soup.

*P*. But has it not been clarified?

*I*. Not so far as I am aware. It is to a very large extent tacitly ignored. Some Christian leaders, when challenged, are content to waste their powder and shot over purely-secondary issues, such as trifling flaws in the apologetic methods of certain individual pacifists. I remember being painfully impressed by the ease with which the problem can be shelved, when I got the Christmas-number of *The Christian World*, published on the 3rd of December 1942. Among much other excellent matter it contained three articles bearing more-or-less directly on the War—one entitled 'The King in the Manger: an Advent Meditation', another, 'The Two Glories: Which Shall Be the World's Choice?', and the third, 'The Holy Alliance: God and Man Will Defeat the False Gods'. All three were by eminent Christian writers, and contained much sound teaching: but the question of the stark incongruity between even a just war and the characteristically-Christian method of dealing with evil was not so much as mentioned in any of them. The writers might well have been wholly unconscious that any such incongruity existed. Mind you, I am not blaming these men. Their own consciences were doubtless clear on the matter; writing to edify the average reader of *The Christian World*, they did not feel called upon to plunge into a difficult controversy. All the same, the incongruity is there, and will in the long run prove itself to be 'a Presence which is not to be put by'.

*P.* But surely some attempts *have* been made to clear it up.

*I.* Some have; but there is no agreement as to which of them, if any, has been really successful. Some suggestions are clearly superficial. The idea, for instance, that Jesus meant His teaching to be put into practice only when the Kingdom of God had fully come is obviously incorrect; for where would be the sense of instructing us how to treat our enemies when, the Kingdom being fully come, no enemies would remain to be dealt with? The objection that in any case Jesus did not prescribe a code we have already dealt with. The plea that love is not kindly emotion, but moral esteem, is of course true: but it does not show the method of war to be compatible with Christianity. The attempt to refute pacifism by urging that the Christian individual cannot contract out of the society in which he lives is vain: for not only does it offer us no synthesis of the incompatibles with which we are faced; but 'contracting out of the society in which he lives' is a very-inaccurate description of living in society according to the teaching of Jesus, even although that teaching may contain some negatives of which society disapproves. An eminent non-pacifist theologian, writing in 1921, said of the Christian churches, 'It may be necessary for them to appear unpatriotic that they may be Christian'.

*P.* But might it not be argued that, as we live in an imperfect world, to the sin of which we have ourselves contributed, we are condemned to find our duty in a line of action which is itself tainted by sin? We *must* discharge that duty; but we must also acknowledge that, while doing it, we are acting as sinful men, and we know that we shall need to be forgiven for it.

*I.* Yes, I have seen that position argued for by certain sincere Christians—one of whom I remember described it as 'really quite simple'. I am bound to say it strikes me as the reverse of simple, even as the reverse of arguable. However great our share of responsibility for the world's sin may be, and however sharp the dilemmas with which not its sin only, but its sheer complexity, may confront us, it can never be part of the Christian's duty to commit sin himself. Such an idea is wholly foreign to the spirit of the New Testament: and the fact that it has been seriously advanced as a solution of the difficulty does but indicate how grave the difficulty is.

*P.* There seems to be no means of getting through your barbed-wire entanglements, so far as the Christian ethic in the abstract is concerned. But when one comes to the practical application, you must admit that the argument goes all the other way.

*I.* Not entirely—because I want you to observe that, looking at history in the large, we cannot help seeing that one appeal to arms seems always to necessitate another and a more-serious appeal later on. The war of 1914-18 was sincerely acclaimed by many as 'a war to end war'; and it was won by the right side, hands down. Yet the victory has proved to be but the prelude to a still vaster and fiercer struggle.

*P.* But is not that simply due to the natural desire of the Germans to get their own back?

*I.* I have no doubt that factor has operated (though I do not see how it in any way meets the point I have just made). But clearly, if the sword is not to 'devour for ever', you must either annihilate your enemy, or sooner or later be reconciled with him. Even to annihilate him (supposing that were physically and morally possible) would not guarantee peace. Our treatment of Germany after the last war was such as to account for, if not to justify, her infatuation for the one man who bade fair to set her on her feet again.

*P.* But did she not deserve to be punished after all the atrocities she had committed?

*I.* No doubt she did. But there is punishment and punishment. Will you therefore try to bear in mind the following facts? (1) When

Germany surrendered, she had already deposed the Kaiser. (2) The Armistice-terms included a virtual promise, on the part of the Allies, to provision Germany (whose population was already starving) during the period of the Armistice, when—at the bidding of the military—the blockade was to be kept in force. The provisioning was only partially done, one of the reasons for the partial failure being, as apologists for Versailles now frankly admit, the Allies' fears that Germany might not have enough money left to pay the expected reparations. The result was a fearful and needless increase of illness and mortality in Germany; and a British general in the Army of Occupation vigorously protested to the Home-Government about it. (3) The French Government quartered *black* troops in the Rhineland as part of their Army of Occupation—with what results for the civilian population I need not tell you. (4) During the peace-negotiations 200 members of Parliament sent a joint telegram to Lloyd George at Paris, demanding the utmost severity against Germany: this very much tied Lloyd George's hands in his endeavours to moderate the extreme vindictiveness of 'the tiger' Clemenceau. (5) In December 1920—*two years* after the fight was all over—Lord Derby was declaring in public *à propos* of reparations: '. . . I would show no mercy whatever to Germany'. I adduce these unquestioned historical facts not as justifying Nazism—for I know nothing more detestable than its cruelties—but as helping to explain how it was that the spirit of revenge (though at the time revenge seemed so fully deserved) created conditions which were bound later on to provoke another war. Had a less-vindictive policy been followed, such as—while punishing Germany politically—did not involve widespread starvation and ruin for her civilian population, I do not say that the desire for self-rehabilitation would have immediately expired in Germany, but I do believe that Hitler's rise to irresponsible power would almost certainly not have occurred.

*P.* But we must bear in mind, mustn't we?, the brutal ruthlessness of Germany's behaviour during the War, and the kind of terms she would have imposed on us, had she won?

*I.* I cannot see that the cruelty of Germany's *army and fleet during* the combat constitutes any justification for starving and otherwise afflicting her *civilian population after* she had surrendered, especially seeing that her supreme War-Lord had already, despite his lineage, been deposed and discredited. And no hypothesis you may frame regarding Germany's probable treatment of us, had we been beaten, seems to me to have any bearing on the question as to our right treatment of her, except as helping to enforce the very point I am making—that war, by its psychological effects, seems fated to generate more and worse war. As a recent writer in *The Hibbert Journal* put it, 'The wicked are punished' (though even that is not always achieved), 'but the situation fails to improve'.

*P.* You will hardly get a hearing for this part of your argument while our country is still in the throes of this long-drawn-out struggle.

*I.* I know that it is very hard for British people just now to listen to the rehearsal of the unpleasant facts of which I have just reminded you. But you will, I know, agree that it is essential to all just judgments that all the facts relevant to the case should be borne in mind. And incidentally, please note that the hasty attempt to link up either of the two world-wars with 'Liberalism', whether political or theological, however valuable for purposes of rhetoric, has no justification whatever in fact.

*P.* But tell me, what do you think would happen if all of us were to be of the same opinion as yourself about war?

*I.* That is, I suppose, what seems to fair-minded non-pacifists the most fatal of all objections to pacifism. I admit its importance and its difficulty, and I have no wish to run away from it. When I wrote *Christian Pacifism Re-examined,* I did my best to consider and answer every sensible objection to pacifism I could think of; and on pages 107, 132-4, 157-8, 167-8 of that book, I devoted quite a lot of attention to this particular objection. My reviewer in *The British Weekly* accused me of 'evading the ultimate issues'. When I demurred in a letter to the charge of evasion, he explained that the thought of 'intentional omission' 'was not in (his) mind', and that he would substitute ' "does not face" or "refuses to entangle himself with" ultimate issues'. It appeared that one at least of the 'ultimate issues' he was thinking of was the very question you have just raised: but the Editor refused to print my further letter complaining that I could not see the difference between evading an issue and refusing to face it, and giving the pages of the book on which I had discussed the very question I was said to have avoided.

*P.* That was hard lines. But I am glad to learn that you do at least realize the great seriousness of the objection.

*I.* Of course I realize it. The need and the justice of defeating the Axis by whatever means are necessary to that end seems so unmistakable that I am not surprised that pacifists in large numbers have gone into the fighting forces. But no less unmistakable are the three considerations forbidding war—the negative Christian law of not returning evil (particularly bloodshed) for evil; the positive Christian law (and promise) that we should, despite temporary failures, overcome evil with good; and the observed fact of history that war seems inevitably to breed more and worse war. I don't know that the Christian conscience has ever found itself faced with so sharp an issue. The dilemma is as acute and painful as it could possibly be: 'on earth is not its fellow'.

*P.* It looks to me as if, despite what you have said about non-pacifist Christians, you are likely to land up in as bad a deadlock as they, only at a different point.

*I.* The least then that we can say in face of the problem is that neither side has any right to despise the other, or to say that the other has no case, as if the problem were quite a simple one. Even if the pacifist *cannot* see his way to any solution of the impasse, there is obviously enough Christian truth in his argument to justify his existence; and the last man in the world entitled to look down on him is the Christian who disagrees with him, and yet is unable to meet his arguments. The same is true of course the other way round. However, there *is* one line along which it seems possible for us to find a way out of the deadlock; and it consists in invoking the aid of the principle of relativity.

*P.* Will you explain just what that means?

*I.* Well, you know that most of us have at least got so far as to approve of each Christian being free to do without blame what he conscientiously feels he ought to do. The pacifist does not censure the soldier, though he disagrees with him. The soldier does not censure the pacifist, though he disagrees with him. May not both of them be right, relatively to their own respective insight (and consequent vocation), and yet without denying the existence of an absolute or ideal standard at which both of them are equally aiming, though with differing powers of vision? Differing degrees of equally-honest insight would thus justify differing modes of action for different people. The resulting provisional duality in human ethical conduct would, when looked at broadly, be seen to correspond to the presence in the ways of Providence of two apparently-incongruous motifs, (1) disciplinary severity, and (2) personal and self-sacrificing fellowship.

*P.* Wouldn't that mean an assumption on the pacifist's part that he is the superior person, earmarked for the genuine Christian service, while the non-pacifist gets on with the dirty and heathenish, but nevertheless admittedly-necessary, business of war?

*I.* I don't think such a reading of the facts would be either needful or just. The pacifist, provided he be (as he ought to be) ready and willing to take his full share of the danger and service incumbent on us all, is just as much entitled as the soldier is to follow his conscience, without incurring the charge of 'superiority' for wishing to do so. If the fighting Christian is satisfied that it is his duty to fight, he need fear no reproach from any one about being heathenish; and no worthy pacifist will cast any such reproach. As for the 'necessity' of what he is doing, that is dependent, isn't it?, on the fact that he constitutes the vast majority of the nation.

*P.* I don't see that. What could a nation consisting entirely or mainly of pacifists do with Hitler, except either fight him or let him have his own diabolical way?

*I.* I should feel tolerably sure that, in a world in which nearly a whole great nation had become so permeated with the spirit of Christ that they would prefer to suffer rather than to do wrong or to inflict suffering on others, but would tackle the world's evil in the way the early Christian martyrs tackled it, only on a larger scale, Fascism and Hitlerism could never have been born. I admit that arguing on the strength of mere hypotheses is very precarious: but I don't see why non-pacifists should be the only people allowed to do it. In any case, this recognition of a relatively-useful function to be fulfilled by men of differing views takes me as near as I can get at present to a solution of the deadlock. I don't claim that it is free from all difficulty: but it seems to me to do less violence to the relevant data as a whole than any other solution I know. For the rest, I must refer you to the book.

*P.* Yes, I'll look it up. I don't profess to be clear about it as yet; and we may find that we have simply to agree to differ. But you have certainly opened up some new lines of thought. Suppose now, for the sake of argument, we agree tentatively to your adumbrated synthesis, what is the best we can hope for?

*I.* Since, owing to the numerical weakness of Christian pacifism in the world, a pacifist solution of the present international struggle is out of the question, the next best thing is that the far-juster of the two sides should win. Origen, you may remember, saw no inconsistency between Christians praying for the emperor's victory against the barbarian aggressors, and earmarking themselves for what seemed to them on a long view a more needful and fruitful service than fighting. And nor do I. The great danger is that the agony of the conflict may, by the time the victory is won, have so blinded the national judgment that the seeds of yet another inevitable war may be sown in the peace-settlement. It will need all the efforts of all men of good will to ensure that a really-healing settlement is reached; for this will be impossible without a large infusion of the characteristically-Christian spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. Though there is, as I have urged, great danger of this not being done, there is no mechanical necessity to prevent it being done, even although a large element of constraint and *political* penalization may be inevitable along with it.

*P.* Well, and what after that?

*I.* Supposing it prove possible, with God's help, to establish after victory a war-free world, the next task in point of urgency will be what we call the social problem—I mean, of course, the removal of poverty, unemployment, and economic insecurity from the lives of men.

*P.* Are you hopeful about that?

*I.* O yes, quite a lot. One of the many more-encouraging by-products of the generally-ghastly war-conditions is the dissemination of a more public-spirited and unselfish way of life among all classes of the population. Alongside of much of a contrary kind, there is I believe in our midst more brotherliness and willingness to serve, more freedom from class-snobbery and the like, than in time of peace. Furthermore, I believe that there is a keener and more-widespread interest in the social betterment of the more-or-less disinherited classes than there has ever been before. I need mention only the reception accorded to the Beveridge-Report, and the lead given by the Archbishop of Canterbury, as two indications of the new spirit abroad. I don't doubt that there will be much opposition and much *vis inertiae* to be overcome: but our past history has shown that as a nation we *can* advance constitutionally; and a great task lies before the Church in educating her own members in the implications of Christian citizenship, including the reconciliation of various vested interests to social justice.

*P.* I am so glad to hear you speak hopefully and keenly about that.

*I.* I do so because I am convinced that the keenness is obligatory and that the hopefulness is justified. But I ought in all candour to add that in this particular field I myself cannot go beyond generalities. I know next to nothing about economics: and by the time I have done what little I can do in the fields of history and theology, I have no fund of mental energy left over to enable me to qualify properly as a social reformer. However, we don't all need to do everything in this world, do we? The great thing is to back up the best men in each part of the field.

*P.* We mustn't forget, must we?, that we are banking all this time on the United Nations winning the War. But suppose they don't?

*I.* The actual occurrence of the War is in any case a world-disaster of the first magnitude: and if a pacifist may be allowed to say it, the fact that it was at least to some extent made possible by the vindictiveness shown to Germany in 1918 and later, ought to make us nationally very penitent. I do not see why even those who are helping the present war-effort most enthusiastically, and for whose self-sacrifice I may say I feel the greatest respect and admiration, should not frankly acknowledge that. But the fact that the war is an immense world-catastrophe will not be cancelled out by the defeat of the Axis, however complete. I am not suggesting that it doesn't much matter whether the Axis is defeated or not: that would be absurd. Imagination shrinks from picturing what would happen to the human race if the Axis won. (I should like to ask you, by the bye, to consider whether it is not a weak point in the non-pacifist case that the war it tries to justify has always to be thought of as one in which the right side is bound to win—a conclusion which of course can never be guaranteed). However, Christians must, whether they like it or not, face the possibility of the United Nations being defeated. You may well ask what is to happen then. No human eye can foresee. But Christians need not forget that dark situations have had to be faced before: and that even a victory for Hitler would not banish God from the world. Civilization would indeed seem bound in that case to take a backward plunge into the darkness of heathenism: but suppose it does, the cause of Christ, as the only ultimate solution, will still be well worth working for. It may be that, if so great a calamity overwhelm us, we shall be led into new and unexpected paths of redemptive and healing service, such as may effect what even a military victory for the right side could not effect. I do not see how any Christian, with the Bible and the history of the Church before him, can rightly deny the reasonableness of that hope. I frankly confess, I dread the prospect of the world having to pass through so terrible an ordeal: for the suffering it would entail would be beyond imagination great. But I don't see that the possibility of it can be denied; nor do I think that, even if it came, we should need to despair.

*P.* You mean that you are confident the world can progress along pacifist lines, but that you greatly prefer it to progress, if possible, along the lines of a military victory for the right side. Is that it?

*I.* You score a good 'debating-point' there, my friend. But when you have pondered a little further what we said just now about the value of all really-conscientious action, both pacifist and non-pacifist, and about the pacifist's willingness to take his full share of danger and render his full share of service, you will realize that, in hoping for the defeat of the Axis, and yet remaining a pacifist, I am not guilty of any over-convenient or dishonest inconsistency.

*P.* Yes, I am sorry. I expect you are right, at any rate in this last protest. So we reconcile ourselves, do we?, to the prospect of a period of Christian activity under difficulties, greater or less according to whether we lose or win the War, but in any case great. So that progress is to be looked forward to in any case.

*I.* The faith and instinct which has kept the Christian eschatological hope alive all these centuries involves the paradoxical conclusion that, although the Christian warfare has to go on constantly and strenuously as a real conflict, yet God's cause cannot be ultimately defeated. Don't ask me for a solution of that paradox, because I haven't got one. But of two things I am certain—(1) God's Kingdom is bound to advance, and (2) you and I have got to devote every scrap of energy to advancing it.

*P.* The Church, in fact, says to Hiter, 'Heads I win; tails you lose!'

*I.* Yes; it comes to that. And it means moreover that, during the War as well as after it, both pacifist and non-pacifist Christians are called on to spend themselves and be spent, in whatever different ways they feel to be God's Will for them, with full mutual respect and sympathy, and with as much actual co-operation as conditions allow. I can, for instance, see no justification for Church-members or Church-officers making things difficult or unpleasant for a pacifist minister, provided that the latter is considerate and tolerant in his attitude. I expect some pacifist ministers are tactless and uncharitable: but I know quite a number of cases where the ill-will they have encountered has had no such justification. Differences of judgment must of course be allowed for: but Christian charity ought to be strong enough to prevent Christian fellowship being broken.

*P.* Going back for a moment to this Liberal confidence of yours in progress despite all, what do you look forward to as the end or culmination of the process?

*I.* That is one of the questions I am compelled to leave unanswered. I share the dissatisfaction of those who refuse to envisage the actual realization of the social ideal, on some day in the far-distant future. That dissatisfaction is confirmed by our awareness that none of us can live on this earth for ever; and the vast majority of us would therefore be bound to miss the great utopian climax. At the same time, the idea of a future Golden Age on this earth serves well enough for the time being as a kind of point to march on. But we must be content to let really-ultimate issues like these remain to some extent unclarified, if we find the clarifying really beyond the reach of our powers. Suffice it for us that, while keeping the eternal world always before our eyes, we can be sure that we are on right lines in toiling for the advancement of God's Kingdom on 'this dim spot, which men call Earth'.

*P.* Yes, I see. But what lines, in particular, do you expect the progress of the race, or shall we say the advancement of God's Kingdom on earth, to follow—looking away for a moment from the immediate international issue?

*I.* I welcome that last proviso because—however much and however naturally we may shudder at the appalling disaster that has befallen us—we must in all Christian decency realize that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and that therefore, whatever appearances may say, the known laws of man's moral and spiritual nature will hold good, war or no war, victory or no victory. To answer your question adequately would require a whole treatise, since the manifestations of the Christian spirit on the field of human action and influence are so multifarious. But I think this at least can be said, without any depreciation of the importance of public issues, that the strategic centre of the great campaign is the redemption of the individual.

*P*. Evangelism, in fact.

*I*. Exactly—only it is rather a pity that that magnificent word has taken unto itself an unduly-narrow signification: for while public preaching is and will remain an essential means of Christian propaganda, the closer contacts open to personal friendship put a still more effective instrument of influence into Christian hands. And another point—while, as I said the other day, the saving power of Christ is so great as often to operate through the crudest medium of presentation, the narrow and old-fashioned theology popularly associated with the word 'evangelicalism' will not suffice as a fitting vehicle for the Gospel of Salvation during the coming days. That is why I deplore the tendency of so many of my esteemed and beloved friends, who seem (only temporarily, I hope) to have lost their heads, to retreat into the dark ages of the past, and to imagine that a recovery of the thought-scheme of Calvin, or perhaps Aquinas (henceforth to be reverently known among Protestants as 'St. Thomas'), is the crying need of the hour. I share the conviction expressed by a wise writer across the Atlantic that the hope of Christianity lies in some form of Christian Liberalism. What in my judgment that means in concrete detail I have tried to make to some extent clear to you in the talks we have had. And please be careful to believe nothing (unless quite provisionally) simply because I say it: if you do accept it provisionally, remember that it is always at least potentially subject to your own verification. The only absolute authority is truth itself.

*P*. Thank you. Yes, I'll bear that in mind. But there seems to be a fairly-strong tide of thought flowing against Liberalism just now.

*I*. I know there is: and for that reason, if I had been conversing with certain other friends I could name, instead of with yourself, I should have felt obliged to add this further plea:—If anything I have urged seems to you to be true, do not reject it simply because it is I who have told you about it!

*P.* No, that would be very silly. But tell me, what do you make of this anti-Liberal movement?

*I.* Well, while I must admit it troubles me, it does not greatly surprise me, nor—knowing what I do about truth—do I propose to despair over it. As I was saying in another connexion a moment ago, adverse circumstances ought never to floor the Christian: and this holds good both in international politics, and in the realm of theological thought. Some panic and confusion in the ranks of Christian thinkers is hardly to be wondered at in so great an upheaval of life as we are now witnessing. It is not as easy as once it was to keep a sense of proportion. The hope of the situation lies in the Divine Master we are all serving. I rejoice to know that quite a lot of my fellow-Christians share my own theological convictions, though not all of them (possibly for good reasons) are very outspoken about them. But I am well content to put up with a little obloquy and misrepresentation, if I can contribute in some small way to a clearer grasp of God's truth on the part of my fellows.

*P.* It seems a great pity, though, don't you think?, that there should be so much friction and tension between Christian teachers at a time like this.

*I.* Yes, in a way it does. But bear in mind that controversy is an inevitable part of the Christian thinker's task, and that, if the only alternative be retrogression or stagnation, the cost involved by controversy ought surely to be cheerfully paid. What indeed might well be more kept in mind than it is, as a great safeguard against the dangers incidental to controversy, is the value of maintaining fellowship unimpaired. This is not always done; and indeed it is not easy to do. But we ought to try more to do it. If we succeeded, half the evils we fear from our disagreements would vanish.

*P.* Well, let me thank you for all the trouble you have taken in answering my numerous questions. I want to say that quite emphatically, though you won't mind my adding that I shrewdly suspect you have enjoyed it all as much as I have! And now, don't you think that we ought, as it were, to 'close with the Benediction'?

*I.* We can certainly close with the assurance that God has not been absent from our conference, and that He will bless it to us both, in proportion to the sincerity with which we have sought to know Him. My hope is that, despite all our limitations and errors, we may have rendered ourselves in some way fitter for our great task of bringing our fellowmen to Christ—for 'there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved'.

*P.* Amen to that! Well, the Lord be with thee.

*I.* And with thy spirit. Good-bye.

# INDEX

THIS Index includes references to some topics mentioned in the book under other terms than those used in the Index. All New-Testament quotations are indexed, whether the actual references are given in the text of the book or not.