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THE CHRISTIAN MORALITY

by

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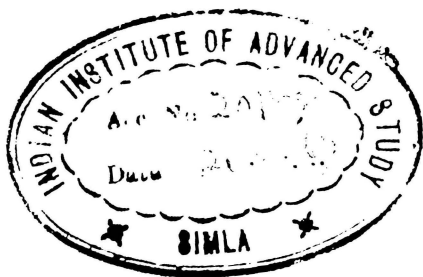
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Preface

THESE six lectures were given to open audiences in the University of Cambridge during the Michaelmas term of 1958. For the privilege of being invited to give them I am indebted to the Faculty of Divinity; and for the pleasure I had in giving them, to the generously responsive audiences. They are printed as given, except that a paragraph here and there which the limit of fifty minutes compelled me to omit has been included. When quoting from the New Testament I have usually taken (with due acknowledgement, except to the Authorized Version) whichever version seemed to me to be the most accurate in the particular instance; occasionally I have ventured to give my own in order to make clear in what sense I was understanding the original. This procedure has enabled me to avoid in many places the use, and discussion of the meaning, of Greek terms.

Every lecture cries out for expansion, but I have let them stand as driving a broad way through the subject for those who are not specialized students of it. If there is anything distinctive in them, it can come only from^v my being not a biblical or theological scholar but a teacher of moral philosophy.

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LECTURE ONE

Morality Natural and Religious

AMONG THE spectators of the moral scene only the poets, novelists and old-fashioned historians have managed to catch and communicate its fascination. The techniques of the sociologists, psychologists, philosophers and theologians seem to be fatally fitted to destroy that interest, the most obvious reason being that, while they are obliged to pass from facts to concepts, which are bloodless, they leave us there, or, otherwise expressed, that they take the living facts to bits and never entirely put them together again. Those techniques are necessary to the effort to understand, but they are painfully imperfect. Our plight as students is that when we try to be clear we become thinly abstract, and when we try to become adequate we become muddled; and the intellectual tradition of the West has schooled us to prefer clarity to adequacy. This Greek preference has been able to produce the marvel of the quantitative sciences (mathematics, physics, part of chemistry); but in the biological, psychological and social sciences it is impeded by a wealth of data that cannot be represented fruitfully as quantities and yet cannot be ignored. In philosophy the one undoubted triumph of the Greek way of thinking is logic, the most abstract of all disciplines; but in the rest of its ancient field the passion for clarity, which cannot be disavowed, remains frustrated, and for this reason the younger philosophers of England have tended to cut philosophy down to logic, or to something else which they call logic, discarding the rest under the double damnation of being

unclarifiable and unprovable. The academic ban falls, of course, on moral philosophy as on metaphysics. I shall ignore it as, though argued and widely approved, *ultra vires*, on the ground that in the commonwealth of learning nobody has the right to forbid a trained student to hang on to problems which others have given up. As for Christian ethics, the subject of this course, I take it up eagerly, because for at least a generation the growing bulk of the theological curricula has tended to thrust it to a neglected margin, and also because within the same period theology has been so engaged with the notion that morality is not enough as to have little taste for the semi-independent study of even Christian morality.

I

I find it helpful to conceive morality as a right relation, in both inner attitude and outer conduct, of humans to one another. This conception may be inadequate so far as it implies that what are called our duties to ourselves, and our duties to animals, belong to something other than morality; but it starts us off with a clear demarcation, and does cover by far the largest part of what the term 'morality' is in fact commonly used to indicate. It may be inadequate too in leaving the expression 'right relation' undefined; but in every field of study we have to have undefinables somewhere, and in ethics 'right' or 'good' is probably one of them. We might say instead that morality is a kind of attitude and behaviour to others which we reflectively justify on the ground that we judge it to be excellent, or, alternatively, which we commit ourselves to, not because we are forced to it (whether externally or internally), or like it, or find it convenient, but because we *ought* to seek to realize it. Here it is 'excellent' and 'ought' that are the decisive and perhaps undefinable terms. The experience of oughtness or obligation holds within it the sense and idea of responsibility or accountability. This has

a twofold relation: we are responsible *for* our character and conduct, and are responsible *to* something. Since it is meaningless to speak of being responsible to anything mindless, we must think of responsibility as a relation to a person or persons, which could be one's own 'higher self', or other persons sometimes individually and sometimes collectively, or God. Responsibility in its moral sense (as distinguished from merely causal responsibility) presupposes freedom in some degree.

That is a bald statement of what morality is and of what it seems most plainly to imply. It coldly marks out the field, and suggests some of the problems that have given rise to moral philosophy. When the basic sense of the term 'morality' has been marked off from other terms that are applied to conduct (e.g. art, skills), moral philosophers may proceed to give it a specific content by identifying the temper and acts that could justifiably be called morally right. The classical controversies have ranged largely round the following questions—whether what morally counts is the internal frame of mind, or the external deed, or the consequences of this; whether the end to be sought is happiness (or tranquillity, or internal harmony), one's own or one's acquaintances' or everybody's, or instead self-realization, understood as the maximal and ordered realization of one's potentialities; whether there is not so much an end to be sought as a set of moral laws to be rigorously obeyed, and if so whether these are each obligatory in itself or can be seen as linked together in a system; and whether the ends, or the laws, derive all their content and justification from the natural facts of the human situation or, as was held by Plato, the Stoics, Plotinus, Spinoza and Hegel, are rooted in a reality that transcends the human order and its natural scene.

There are four problems on which something may be said here, however briefly, partly to clear the ground and partly to lead up to the main topic of the present lecture.

The problems are—the reason for being moral at all, freedom as an indispensable condition of morality, the faculty or organ of moral apprehension, and the criteria by which the reasonableness of any particular system of morality may be judged.

(1) Why be moral? Instead of trying to choose one of the actual or possible systems, why not reject outright the very distinction of right and wrong? Why should we submit to any control, except that of bare prudence, over our desires and actions? The question is usually an expression of peevishness or spleen. When put as a demand for a reasoned answer, we could first meet it with the counter-question, 'Why *not* be moral?' Which of these two questions has the right of way, the prior claim to be pressed? Abstractly considered, neither. Given, however, the age-long tradition of morality, it may fairly be contended that the onus of proof lies rather on those who would reject the moral attitude than on those who accept it. As a rule, it is the rebel who has to prove his case, for the accepted position usually has behind it a large volume of social experience. If, nevertheless, the rebellious question were to be pressed, the only short answer would have to be that to repudiate the distinction of a morally right and wrong is to wipe out one of the marks that make us human; and if this answer provoked the further question, 'Well, why be human?', the only brief reply is that anyone who could be human but won't be has no claim to be treated as a human, and therefore has no place in a human society: he should go back to the woods or the sty. The full reply would take us into metaphysics or religion. Fortunately, it appears to be almost impossible for the overwhelming majority of men to spurn the moral attitude in its entirety, though we are all at times disloyal to it.

(2) The notion of freedom of choice has been queried or denied partly because of the difficulty of defining it

(e.g. does it mean choice with no cause?), and partly because it makes man an oddity, an exception in the causally determined world presented to us by the sciences. I doubt if the problem has been dissolved, or even so much as modified, by the recent abandonment in physics of the idea of causal necessity, for (a) physics is one only of the sciences; (b) its present theoretical superstructure is paradoxical and provisional; (c) it is not the science of man; (d) to infer the freedom of man from the freedom of electrons would be outrageously illogical; and (e) the kind of freedom required for moral choice is different from the mere unpredictability of electronic behaviour. The problem remains. On the one side, those who affirm freedom are unable to give a theoretically clear idea of it; on the other side, those who deny it are committed (as Bishop Berkeley pointed out in his *Alciphron*, I.12) to the *a priori* perversity of maintaining that 'a man is no more accountable for his actions than a clock is for striking'. For my part, I find the denial of *some* human freedom more troublesome for philosophical theory than the affirmation of it, for three reasons. First, I cannot make sense of morality without it, and am convinced that morality is something of which we have to make sense, that is, something to which we have to adjust our power of explanation, not something that has to be adjusted to our present explanatory hypotheses. Secondly, although the sense of freedom is sometimes illusory, to infer that it is always so would be as illogical as inferring that the senses are always deceptive because they sometimes are; and just as the latter inference would knock the bottom out of the physical and biological sciences, so the former one, implying a radical distrust of introspection, would reduce psychology to what could be expressed and verified in biological terms. Lastly, I have not seen, and cannot myself suggest, any way of avoiding a suicidal absurdity in determinism. On his own theory, a determinist denies freedom because

he is causally forced to do so; indeed, on that theory, every denial and affirmation whatever, and by whomsoever made, is just a necessitated event, including my own statement that this is so. No room is then left for reasoned debate, for the distinction of truth and falsity, for the ideal of thinking that begot, and is required to maintain, science and philosophy, namely, a sort of thinking that is *not* governed by the pressure of causes but consists in a recognition of evidence. The kind of freedom that is needed to make sense of moral obligation is very like that which is needed to make sense of the truth-seeking of responsible thinkers.

(3) Is morality merely a matter of feeling? The more I look at them, the more I am convinced that the beliefs that veracity is better than lying, loyalty than treachery, kindness than cruelty, saving life than destroying it—better in a sense other than being more convenient—rest not on instinct, desire or emotion, but on cognitive discernment. The organ of such discernment is commonly called conscience. Some distinctive term for it is required for clear discourse, and I see no good reason for inventing a new one, or for cribbing one from another tongue (as the psychologists do when they call the mind the psyche and the self the ego). There are two popular assumptions about conscience which call for comment, in the one case to question, in the other to deny. The questionable one is that conscience is a quite distinct faculty, wholly peculiar. Against this supposition it could be urged that the remarkable thing about a mind is not its complexity but its unity, a unity not definable by the material analogy of an equilibrium of forces. Accordingly, it seems to me to be more adequate for both description and practice to regard conscience not as an occult little bit of one's self but as the self itself thinking about moral distinctions—not as a special organ of insight but as insight into a special sort of relations. The term 'conscience' is used to cover

also the insights acquired. This is a legitimate extension. The second assumption, which needs to be firmly denied, is that conscience is infallible. The belief that it is, and the identification of it with the voice of God, has made some people arrogant and quarrelsome, and is responsible for some of the larger stupidities and crimes of at least the Christian past. Conscience is as fallible as reason. The demand that we should trust neither of them unless or until they are infallible is the root of scepticism, one of the occupational diseases of would-be intellectuals. The way of avoiding both dogmatism and scepticism is to walk by the light we have while always seeking more light, for conscience, though plainly fallible, is just as plainly educable. My present best thinking about moral relations depends chiefly on how much I have thought about them earlier; and since I have thought about them considerably, I believe that my present best is better than my past best was, and hope that it is worse than my future best will be. Conscience, like reason, cannot be exempted from the law of growth through careful use. Its efficiency is not given with it, but is a function of the frequency, range and sincerity of its exercise.

(4) Contemporary English philosophers have contended that moral pronouncements cannot be proved. Their conception of proof is in my view dogmatically narrow. They began, about twenty-five years ago, by declaring that there are only two clear, certain and public criteria of truth, namely, logical implication and being given to the senses. Since moral judgements cannot be tested by the latter and only derivative ones by the former, it follows that they cannot be known to be either true or false. This was taken to mean that they were meaningless. From this dogmatic negation there has been a move to various positive positions, which cannot here be summarized. What the general line of thought has been doing is to emphasize in a new way an old recognition that a proposition like 'murder is

bad' cannot be true in quite the same sense in which 'metals expand when heated' is true. The latter is a statement of fact, a description, the former is an evaluation of a fact or possible fact. In other words, badness is not a property of an act of killing in the sense in which expansibility is a property of metals. In consequence, the criteria of moral judgements are bound to be different from those of scientific judgements.

The polemic of these philosophers is a challenge to the rest of us to indicate by what criteria moral judgements could be shown to be more than merely subjective or merely conventional. Outside philosophy it is often said that there have been and still are so many conflicting moral judgements that morality must be regarded as entirely relative to an age, a society, a class, or even to the individual. Belief in such relativity should, one would think, make for subjective simplicity and confidence, yet moral unsureness is one of the most prominent signs of our day. However, let us see how the charge of unprovableness may be met—neglecting that academic scepticism that can find nothing provable, not even itself.

We should have to begin, I think, by laying it down as a principle or postulate that moral judgements must be tested by other moral judgements. There is a circularity here, but a justifiable one, not of the kind stigmatized in formal logic as 'begging the question' (*petitio principii*). Every critical system of knowledge makes a point of checking statements by other statements of the same order. For instance, judgements of fact are controlled by other judgements of fact, otherwise there could be no natural science. To reject an *entire order* of judgements would be arbitrary and irreparable. It may be added, by the way, that science itself, as loyalty to the ideal of intellectual integrity apart from technological usefulness, rests on the acceptance of an 'ought', so that the question 'Why seek and insist on truth?' is parallel to 'Why be moral?'

So much granted, some of the criteria for the critical testing of a moral system may be suggested. (a) It must be materially consistent, that is, what it counts as virtues must *in practice* tend to promote or support one another, and so too must what it counts as vices, and the two sets must be incompatible in spirit and consequence. To give a simple illustration, it would be materially inconsistent to judge war to be wrong and not to classify with it those directions of ambition, touchiness, jealousy and hate that lead to it. (b) It must be compatible with an empirically evidenced view of human nature. As Bishop Butler remarked, moral obligations must be human possibilities. These possibilities should, of course, be gauged not merely by general psychological analysis, but also by a survey of the moral achievements and failures of the race and of outstanding individuals. (c) It must be compatible also with a reasoned view of man's total environment. What this total environment is remains a matter of controversy, which may be simplified by reducing it to its largest issue: is our universe simply of the sort made known to us by the natural sciences, or does it include another order of the sort declared by some systems of metaphysics or by the higher religions? My chief theoretical misgiving about the view that takes the scientific account as the fullest as well as the truest is that the scientist cannot fit himself into the world he presents. He is obliged to assume that he is always the spectator of the field he studies, not fully a part of it. If the physicist were to put himself, not as a body but as a physicist, into his physical world, he would have to reduce himself to a field of electro-magnetic forces; but then he would no longer be a physicist, for none of his concepts, principles, measurements and equations includes, or can include, the relation which he throughout assumes, namely, that of knowing. The physicist's world is known, but there is no knowing inside it, and therefore no physicist. Similarly with the biologist's world and, in a

less obvious way, even with the psychologist's. To cut the argument short, the requirement may be justly pressed that, while we must study the sub-human world for whatever light it can throw on man, we must reciprocate by trying to see what light the direct study of man in his distinctively human aspects can throw on the nature of the world of which he *is* a part. A world that contains beings that want to know it for other than practical reasons, and know how to set about knowing it, and succeed in knowing it (if they do not, any argument from science is void), is a world of a certain kind; and so too is a world in which those same beings, not rarely or eccentrically but typically, seek truthfulness, fidelity and suchlike as well as biological utilities, some even electing to die rather than commit or suffer some kinds or degrees of dishonour. There *is* a problem here, and whatever may be the difficulties of finding a detailed solution, we may at least infer the general or schematic solution that both man and his total environment are more than what the sciences in their totality depict him to be, and that that something more is radically different, radically in the sense that it requires for its description, analysis and explanation categories quite other than space, time, number, function, cause and so on.

II

To venture farther into this hinterland of thought would take us to metaphysics or, if we are to bring our living with our thinking, to religion. I have gone only so far as is useful for the drawing of the distinction between natural and religious morality. The former is the kind for which we would give only natural reasons, and which we believe we could live out with nothing but human resources. It is the morality that relies wholly on conscience, individual determination and social support, and expresses itself in such virtues as veracity, honesty, sobriety, patience and

fortitude. It proceeds from human nature and terminates in human nature, seeing no wider frame of reference than the world of space and time, though at its best having a premonition of something different beyond. Religious morality operates consciously in a vaster environment, in which the spatio-temporal world is regarded as enveloped, supported and penetrated by something different in kind. It is a morality of divine rule and sanctions, and—in its Christian form emphatically—relies on the expectation of divine help, so that its peculiar virtues are regarded as received rather than won.

Like most of our intellectual distinctions, this one, although obviously grounded on observation, is sharper in thought than in fact. The two sorts of morality can and do co-exist in the same society and in the same individual; sometimes conscience alone is consulted, sometimes what is taken to be the divine will, and at one time only our evident human equipment is used, while at another time hands are stretched out to a higher power.

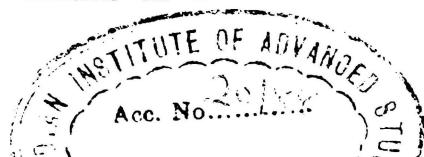
The rest of this lecture must be an attempt to clarify the notion of religious morality. To do this we must sharpen our idea of religion by *contrasting* it with that of morality. If we define this as the right relation of humans to one another, we may define that as the right relation of humans to God. In the one there is a horizontal reference, in the other a vertical one. In morality we look round; in religion we look up. When we see the contrast with this biting sharpness, we shall proof ourselves against slipping into some common howlers to which the Anglo-Saxon mind is specially prone. For instance, we shall no longer say that honesty, fellow-feeling and altruism make a man a Christian. These are moral qualities, not religious ones—and 'Christian' is a religious designation. Conversely, we shall not say or insinuate that worship and prayer are moral duties. They are religious, not moral, activities. Nor shall we suppose that the only, or at any rate the chief, function

of worship is to make us morally better. Worship has, indeed, this as one of its several *effects*, but its intrinsic goal, its *raison d'être*, is not moral. It is wholly a facing towards God, the fit tribute of the creature to the Creator, of the soiled to the Perfect, and, in the Christian Way, of the redeemed to the Redeemer. When these abysmal distinctions are recognized, worship is as appropriate and almost as inevitable as the turning of a flower to the sun; it does not need to be commanded by the divine will, but arises as an intelligent response to the divine nature. Therefore even scoundrels can worship, and should; and many do! That religious act is primordial, *sui generis*, irreducible and irreplaceable. Every creature that can know itself to be a creature, in other words every human being, owes it to God, whatever he does or does not do to his fellows.

This stark, and at first sight shocking, way of distinguishing the moral and the religious does justice both to the inwardly felt difference between our moral and religious sensibility and to the known facts of moral and religious history. Just because our relation to God and our relation to our creaturely equals are so utterly heterogeneous, it is possible for us to actualize them in isolation from each other—in a religion without conscience and in a conscientious morality without religion, the quirks of individuals or the state of society favouring now one, now the other. The present materialistic tendency of the West favours neither, deserting both. There is, however, a third possibility, which some peoples and periods have tried in various ways to realize, namely, the close interrelation of morality and religion. That these two major forms of living *ought* to be integrated, that man's life is not fated to be either rent by holding two unconnected obligations or contracted by jettisoning one of them, I shall take to be axiomatic, or, if you dislike this word, to be one of those points on which we cannot argue but must make a

decision. To that I commit myself, with all that it entails in theory and involves in practice; and that, if I may anticipate, is, in a special form, what being a Christian means.

A religion without conscience could be nothing but a religion, that is, a cult or set of rites intended to adjust men to God without requiring any special sort of behaviour of men to one another. In such a case religion and morality would be unconnected. The early Olympic religion of the Greeks, before Aeschylus and Sophocles began to cleanse it, appears to have been rather like that. But a religion without conscience could generate, and has in fact generated at recurrent times and in many places, a religious morality—one of a special kind, in which all the standards or rules of inter-human conduct are drawn from what the divine will is supposed to be, with scarcely any contribution from conscience. Direct inspection of what is appropriate among men, of what at once suits and elevates their nature and circumstance, is neither required nor encouraged. Among primitive peoples such morally blind religious obedience is intelligible, if we suspect that they had very little conscience to use: it would help to explain, for instance, their sacrificing to the gods their own tribesmen, even their own children. There are relics of that sort of morality—thistles in the cornfield—in the Old Testament; and even after conscience had reached a fairly high level of insight and self-awareness, some Christians have maintained that a divinely authoritarian moral scheme is the best, that conscience is not needed when we have divine decrees, and anyhow that when conscience conflicts with any of these conscience must be silenced. Even in our own day we have a school of theology, dominant in the Protestant part of the Continent and powerfully influential elsewhere, which declares that the natural conscience is too sodden with sin to be trusted as a source of genuine moral insight—a grave contention on which I shall comment later.



There is, however, another kind of religious morality in which natural moral insight is respected and included. Its distinctive character is—if for brevity's sake I may be allowed to put it rather too bluntly—that instead of settling the morally right by what is independently held to be divine decree, it settles what is divine decree by what is directly seen to be morally right. The technical label for this way of integrating religion and morality is Ethical Theism. The moral criticism of actual religion, the insistence that the nature of God, and how He requires men to conduct themselves towards each other, are to be detected to a large extent by what conscience perceives to be good or right, has been one of the epoch-making changes in man's cultural history, *in fact* epoch-making, that is, effecting large and long change irrespective of whether this be judged to be good or bad. So far as the West is concerned, it began most strikingly, in one of its lines of influence, with the Greek philosophers of the sixth and fifth centuries before Christ, and in another and earlier line, prolonged to the West through Christianity, with the unparalleled procession of Hebrew prophets of the eighth to about the fourth century. We are now used to the idea of a religious morality in which the religious element and the moral element are related reciprocally. On the one side the notion of the divine is morally cleansed and enriched. On the other side morality is given a cosmic ground, is seen as not resting wholly on 'how we are built' but also as a response to a divine requirement, a recognition that raises and widens the reach of conscience, making devotion to God a further fount of insight into how we should devote ourselves to one another.

It is necessary to clear thinking to expose the different kinds of religious morality, and especially to note its two extreme forms, in each of which, instead of there being a genuine connection of the religious element and the moral one, one of these is made wholly derivative from the other.

At one extreme the content of morality is taken entirely from religion. Here we are thinking almost entirely about God and only incidentally about men. Such a position is shocking to conscience. At the other extreme religion is reduced wholly to a rational, or imaginative and emotional, support for morality. Here we are thinking almost entirely about men and only incidentally about God; and by finding room for God only as the Moral Governor of mankind we may, as the German philosopher Kant did, disparage the sanctities of worship. Such a position offends the religious sensibility, which sees in God other perfections besides the moral one, and worships Him for them all. In adopting that position Kant was somewhat exceptional on the Continent. It is the one towards which we Anglo-Saxons, practical and unspeculative, have been typically inclined in modern times. In England it first showed itself markedly in the Deistic movement, about the beginning of the eighteenth century, and there are traces of it in the Non-conformist liberalism of the late Victorian period, with its tendency to *identify* the Kingdom of God with a fully moralized society. Matthew Arnold came very near to consecrating it in his famous saying that 'the true meaning of religion is not simply morality, but morality touched by emotion'.

So much for very wide generalities. When we pass to religious morality in its specifically Christian form we shall have to try to seize its particular form and content, but not without noticing how it stands to some of those generalities.

LECTURE TWO

The Teaching of Jesus

I

WHEN WE SAY, '*Of course* Jesus was a Jew', we leave the impression that His being a Jew is the least significant thing that can be said about Him. That would be seriously misleading, for in His aspect as a teacher (with which alone this lecture will deal) His Jewishness was fundamental. When He spoke, it was as a Jew calling to Jews. He was drenched with the entire tradition of His people. Within that tradition He clearly favoured the moral concern and moral honesty or straightness of the major prophets. Not that this made Him, any more than it made any of them, only a moralist; His moral teaching was embedded in His religion, and in its fullness cannot be taken apart from this. What will be brought out in this lecture is, however, that His care for men's behaviour to men was prominent, and that He thought of God in ethical as well as religious terms. He had moved with the prophets from the old idea of the holy as the unapproachable to the idea of the holy as the perfect, including the morally perfect,¹ thus linking conscience upwards to religion and religion downwards to conscience.

This close interlacing of conscience and religious awe has to some extent to be undone for the purpose of exposition; we have to see that, although the two strands are kept together, they are two, and we have to try to

¹ God cannot be moral in the sense defined in the first lecture, but He is supremely moral in being the source of the moral imperatives, the very author of the moral relations among men. In originating, intending and decreeing goodness, He expresses His own goodness.

recognize in the utterances of Jesus which is the one strand and which is the other. It seems to me that there is mere confusion when people speak of His moral teaching as other-worldly. True, they can point to texts that appear plainly to support this view. Did not Jesus say, for example, that we are not to prize the good things of this life (Mt 6¹⁹), and are not to worry even about its minimal needs of food and clothing (6³¹), all that really matters being the fixing of the soul on what is eternal? And has He not been taken at His word by those Christians who have gone into deserts or shut themselves up in monasteries, fasted, kept night-vigils, practised flagellation, and shown in other ways contempt of the world, repudiating affection for any creature as displaced, the Creator alone being worthy of it?

There certainly is an emphatic and irremovable other-worldliness in the Gospels. But it is their religious, not their moral strand. Since religion *means* realizing our relation to God, it is necessarily other-worldly. It is that side of our life in which we contemplate our eternal ground, adore it, and seek to rise into conscious commerce with it. In this perspective the things that belong to our earthly interests *are* fleeting and trivial—though Jesus, unlike the other-worldly, had a quick eye for wild flowers, fallen sparrows, and the games of children. If that were the only Christian perspective, it is hard to see how there could be any Christian morality at all, since our daily contacts with one another would not be worth thinking about. There clearly is, however, in the Gospels the moral perspective. When we have looked up, the nature of the God to whom Jesus directs us obliges us also to look round, to have a care for one another. The service of the God who is Father cannot be spent entirely in temple, synagogue, church or cell; it includes our doing certain kinds of things to one another as well as adoring Him—is moral as well as religious. Indeed, one of the most

striking features of Jesus' sayings is that while the idea of a mere morality is never hinted at, not even to attack it, the idea of a mere religion, in the sense of thought and activity directed entirely to God, is mentioned repeatedly, and *only* to attack it. On its negative side His teaching is an angry denunciation of the displacement of morality by cult; one thing He could not abide was any habit of devotion to religious requirements so exclusive that it hardened a man's heart against the needs of his fellows. The same denunciation was made cuttingly by the gentlest of the New Testament writers: 'If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar' (1 Jn 4²⁰).

Of course God must be met prostrate, or in reverent ritual actions; but *this* God, the one whom Jesus proclaimed, has a concern for His human creatures, and for each of them singly, not merging them in the mass; and our worship is blind if it does not catch and mediate that concern. Our service of *this* God, then, is grossly incomplete, indeed grotesque, if it does not include our service to one another. That this service is not confined to a care for other people's souls is strikingly illustrated in one of Jesus' most solemn passages, in which only physical needs are mentioned: picturing the Last Judgement, He represents Himself as dooming some men with the indictment, 'I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not' (Mt 25⁴²⁻³). That is not otherworldly. To evade its literal point by taking it as wholly symbolic would be arbitrary. He contrasted His own way of living with the ascetic way of the Baptist (Mt 11¹⁸⁻¹⁹).

The distinction within the total life under God of what is due to Him and what we owe to each other, with the insistence that the latter shall not be squeezed out by the former, is sharply reflected in Jesus' attitude towards

the Jewish Law. The Law was elaborate enough in the Old Testament, though chiefly because it covered what we should call civil law. By the time of Jesus it had been expanded by the scribes, through interpretation and application, into a formidable mass of rules, some of them perceptive but all too many of them petty and wooden. The general body of the people found it impossible to do their daily round under such a load of regulations, and therefore ignored or broke a large part of them. In the eyes of the scribes they were sinners, were always called such, and were despised—one reason why Jesus consorted with them. Alongside the scribes, punctilious in the interpretation of the expanded Law, were the Pharisees, fastidious in the practice of it, both of them conceiving it as the explicated statement of the eternal will of God, and unquestioning obedience to it as the whole nature of righteousness.

II

For the Law as it was written in the Pentateuch Jesus had a deep respect, for the glosses and commentaries on it ('the tradition of men', Mk 7⁸) very little; but He corrected both. True, He said concerning the Law that He came 'not to destroy but to fulfil' (Mt 5¹⁷);² but this is followed almost at once by an impressive sequence of six open challenges, each beginning with the formula 'It hath been said . . . But I say unto you' (5²¹⁻⁴⁸)—one of the passages that enable us to give an exact meaning to Matthew's later remark (7²⁸⁻⁹ RV) that 'the people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes'. Again and again Jesus brings now one and now another provision of the Law under His critical scrutiny, judging it directly

² The Greek word translated 'fulfil' also means 'fill up'; also 'complete' in the sense of to finish or perfect. It can here be rendered 'fulfil' if it refers to the implicit purpose instead of the letter of the Law.

by whether or no it sensibly or sensitively expresses the constitutive core of either religion or morality. For example, He drastically altered the law of divorce (Mk 10³⁻⁹, Mt 5³¹⁻²). He sifted the relevant from the irrelevant, and within the relevant the important from the unimportant, His standard of relevance and importance being more than adumbrated in the greater prophets of the Old Testament, His utterly simple, unobstructed and steady vision of it being entirely His own. His shift of emphasis was so considerable that He transformed what He handled, the scribes and Pharisees and priests rightly recognizing, by their implacable opposition, that He was promulgating a new way of life. He grasped the mountainous mass of gold and silver ore in which they were trafficking, and with an easy hand refined it. There were niceties and ineptitudes to be swept away from the rules the Jews were expected to obey, and 'heavy burdens and grievous to be borne' (Mt 23⁴) to be lifted from their backs.

A summary of His purifying sweep may be brought under four heads.

(1) Regarding what may be called personal ritual, some of it He deprecated in varying degrees, and some of it He deprecated downright. Take, for example, fasting. The Old Testament Law required it but once a year (Lev 16³¹), to which custom added a few other occasions. It was a religious act, a mark of penitence, not a piece of moral discipline against self-indulgence. Jesus did not proscribe it, and Himself fasted; but He did not demand it of His disciples (Mt 9¹⁴). What He did do was to make it decent by making it secret: He condemned the exhibitionism of those who 'disfigure their faces that they may be seen of men to fast' (cf. 6¹⁶ RV), and in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican mordantly exposed the shocking effrontery of the former in reminding God 'I fast twice a week' (Lk 18¹²). Similarly He condemned

ostentation in almsgiving and praying (Mt 6²⁻⁶).³ He spoke sternly also of those who attended minutely to the smaller prescriptions, like the paying of tithes on kitchen herbs, and neglected 'the weightier matters of the Law, judgement and mercy and faith' (23²³); and of those who washed hands and dishes before meals not as physically but as ceremonially unclean (Mk 7⁴, Mt 23²⁵) without troubling about real uncleanness in their minds—they were like 'whitewashed sepulchres'. The distinction of food into clean and unclean he rejected outright and peremptorily (Mk 7¹⁸⁻²³), so destroying one of the most public gulfs between the Jews and the Gentiles;⁴ and the reason He gave, that nothing from outside (no material things) can defile the soul, saps the whole system of taboos. Another heavy blow at the system of personal ritual was His attitude to the Sabbath. To the law that no work should be done on that day the scribes had added a laborious specification of which acts should count as work and which should not.⁵ Jesus' clashes with the Jewish leaders on this matter were frequent and uncompromising. What He levelled against them was the devastatingly simple moral contention that good deeds may be done

³ That in later Judaism almsgiving had a non-moral motive may be gathered from two passages in the Apocrypha—'Almsgiving will make atonement for sins' (Ecclus 3³⁰) and 'Alms doth deliver from death, and it shall purge away all sin' (Tob 12⁹).

⁴ Cp. Epictetus, *Discourses*, I, xxii, 4: 'The point of conflict among the Jews, Syrians, Egyptians and Romans is not whether holiness is to be set before everything else . . . but whether it is holy or unholy to eat pork.'

⁵ Some examples of scribal scrupulosity will be in place. It was forbidden to ride, swim, clap one's hands; to treat the sick, except when life was in danger; for women, to wear ornaments that could be removed easily, since they might be removed and carried, or to look in a mirror, lest, noticing a grey hair, they should pluck it out—carrying and plucking being recognized forms of work. On the other hand, what would be a burden if carried by one man, being light for two men, could be lawfully carried by two. It is reported that there were scribes who dared to say that the Sabbath was made for man, but they too framed rules, and not all of them simple and sensible accommodations, so that even they applied the law of the Sabbath with restrictive legalism.

even on the Sabbath, and that some should be (e.g. Mk 3¹⁻⁵, Lk 13¹⁰⁻¹⁶, 14¹⁻⁵, Jn 9¹⁴⁻¹⁶). The scribes had to find for every exception they allowed a text or a very high precedent, whereas for Jesus a human need was enough, and not necessarily an urgent one—He would not defer an act of healing until the sacred day had closed.

(2) He stripped the traditional interpretation of its legalism, that is, of the tendency both to follow as narrowly as possible the very letter of the Law and to frame from it rigid rules for every contingency. What He said about the Sabbath is germane here. By dwelling on the letter more than on the intention of each rule, and multiplying the rules, scarcely any room was left for the exercise of direct insight, whether religious or moral, into the requirements of each situation. Such consecrated obtuseness is more frequently and strongly condemned by Jesus than the sins of weakness and passion. That reliance on explicit and precise rules was not confined to the scribes and Pharisees is revealed by Peter's question to his Master, 'How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?' (Mt 18²¹). The delicious answer, 'Until seventy times seven', means that in morals there is no place for arithmetic (cf. Gen 4²⁴).

(3) He released the understanding of the Law from its externalism. I suspect that Peter had not risen above the notion of forgiving as merely refraining from open retaliation; he was not yet a Christian (was anybody before the Day of Pentecost?). What the traditional body of laws prescribed or forbade were for the most part external acts. This is true even of the Ten Commandments, only the last of which ('Thou shalt not covet') explicitly concerns a motive. The fifth ('Honour thy father and thy mother') seems to us to have this inner requirement, but appears to have been regarded by many Jews as satisfiable with merely external proprieties, and Matthew 15³⁻⁶ suggests that there was a way of legally and religiously dodging

even these. The primitive belief that the divine laws can be obeyed with purely overt conformity was as persistent among the Jews as it has been among most other peoples. Jesus went down to motives and frames of mind. In His moral assessment anger is next door to murder (Mt 5²¹⁻²), and the condemnation of adultery applies also to the lustful look (5²⁷⁻⁸). It would be odd, by the way, to infer from this, as has been done, that the inner motive is *as evil as the deed*; it is enough to pronounce the motive evil, since this means that we should at once stamp on it with all the force we can muster. Preoccupation with external acts leaves the inner wrongfulness unattended to. The dreadful doom on the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 includes this externalism among its indictments: 'You cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, which inside are full of greed and intemperance.'

(4) He freed the Law from tribalism. The nationalist exclusiveness of the Jews of his and earlier times is proverbial. They matched the Greeks by dividing mankind into themselves and everybody else. Wherever they emigrated they held on to their peculiarities, the noblest of which was that alone of all peoples round the Mediterranean they had no idols to worship. They were proud that the code they lived under was given to them by God, and to them alone; they were not sure that it could bind any other peoples until the Messianic age was come; and it appeared to give them no obligations to other peoples, except to the individual Gentiles in their midst (Lev 19³³⁻⁴). Despite hints here and there in the Old Testament, they never really grasped the idea of a kind of conduct obligatory on men as men and towards men as men. It is very probable that the remark in John 4⁹ that 'the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans' means not simply that they cold-shouldered these, but that they regarded them as outside the moral pale. Anyhow, it is fair to say that the moral outlook of the Jews had at most points a

tribal or national horizon. Jesus looked beyond this horizon; He saw that the moral attitude is universalistic, that no boundaries of race can be drawn round those who are under obligation or those to whom obligation is due. This universalism is at least implicit in most of His teaching. It is explicit in His injunction, 'Love your enemies . . . and pray for them which despitefully use you' (Mt 5⁴⁴), which must have seemed odd to His Jewish audience.⁶ It is in effect explicit in the shocks He gave now and then to the Jews' spiritual pride in being God's chosen race—as in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10³⁰⁻⁶), the sting of the story being that it portrayed a layman of a people they loathed and hated as morally better than priests of the Temple, and in a rebuke occasioned by the trust of a Roman centurion, 'Not even in Israel have I come across such a degree of faith' (Lk 7⁹).

That is as much as need be said, if any proportion is to be kept within a single lecture, on the polemical or negative bearing of the teaching of Jesus. It provides the material for the interpretation of His saying, 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 5²⁰). These were acknowledged to be the most righteous men in Jewry; they lived for the Law, and fulfilled its prescriptions to the last letter. But they missed its spirit and intentions. Whatever they did, they did it only to God, not to their neighbour for their neighbours' own sake; and because they did everything for the one reason that it was divinely prescribed, this one reason flattened everything to the same level, leaving no room for either religious or moral discrimination.

⁶ Among Jewish passages think of the imprecatory psalms, and Proverbs 25²¹⁻², which St Paul unfortunately quotes in Romans 12²⁰. Sir Thomas Browne brings out the searchingness of the injunction: 'To forgive our enemies, yet hope that God will punish them, is not to forgive enough. To forgive them ourselves, and not to pray God to forgive them, is a partial piece of charity' (*Christian Morals*, Pt I, sec. 15).

III

The positive side of Jesus' moral message may be incidentally and preliminarily illustrated through a delineation of the *manner* of His teaching, to overlook which would be a crime. I shall single out three aspects—the first because it expresses, I believe, His *mode of approach* to questions about how we should behave to one another, the other two because failure to appreciate them has led to crass misunderstandings of some of His sayings.

His regal independence of judgement and His searching simplicity have already been emphasized. It is one aspect of this simplicity that I wish first to bring out, as being of both practical and theoretical interest. When Jesus spoke about our attitudes and acts to one another, He brushed aside texts and traditions and spoke straight to conscience. There was no pandering to even pious convention or to blind reverence. He did not say dogmatically, 'This is what God commands: go and do it and ask no questions'; or even, 'This seems to be good, but let us see if we could find a text that would sanction it'. He assumed that His hearers—even some of those who had nearly blinded themselves with evil-doing, and even some of those who had blunted their hearts by looking so much towards God that they had lost all direct concern about their fellows—had at bottom a practical sense of what is good and bad in particulars, and to this sense He spoke, to evoke it, exercise it, and so educate it. With Him, as with the major prophets, conscience called to conscience. He did not so much say as frankly take for granted that over the range of common affairs His hearers knew, or had the ability to know, what is morally appropriate, and a not inconsiderable part of His work as a moralist was an insistence that that ability must be used, not sidetracked by remembering texts, or perverted by sophistical interpretations of these. To this extent Jesus stood for the autonomy of conscience,

which is to be illuminated and strengthened by religion, not pushed aside by it. 'Go', he bids, 'and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' (Mt 9¹³). His manner was to settle a moral question by a direct moral appeal, and not always by giving the answer but sometimes by simply pressing the question on conscience. He implied that so far as the Law dealt with what individuals should be and do to one another, its prescriptions did not need to be simply memorized; folk should use their moral gumption. The Jews could know quite well that some things were right whether the Law exacted them or no, and some wrong whether it forbade them or no. The principle is that what is morally wrong cannot be religiously right, and that what is morally right must be religiously right, *and was so on the view of God which He preached.*

The second aspect of the manner of His teaching was that His sayings were concrete. After all, He was clarifying morality not for theory but for practice. What His sayings carried were not precise concepts but sharp images; an Easterner among Easterners, He thought in pictures, in similes. 'It is like . . .' is one of His characteristic expressions. Instead of defining He illustrated, thereby substituting the particular for the general. The result is vividness. 'If thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off. . . . And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out' (Mt 18⁸⁻⁹). The picture is not itself the point but only the prompter to the point; any literal interpretation would be inept.

Some of the pictures are funny, and must have been intended to be; and when they are not seen to be so but are taken with literalistic solemnity, their general bearing is missed. Jesus was surely not thinking primarily of slaps and cheeks when He said, 'When anybody slaps one of your cheeks, offer him the other as well' (Lk 6²⁹). A scribe of the most pedantic sort would have noted that the reference is only to cheeks (in Mt 5³⁹ to the *right* cheek

first), and that in submitting to a second slap the injunction would be completely fulfilled—leaving thereafter liberty of action! Similarly, 'When anybody takes your cloak, don't stop him from taking your undergarment too' (Lk 6²⁹) is not simply about clothing; and it is sanctimonious to take it literally, since the two things mentioned were all that most folk in Palestine usually wore. Our picture-proverb, 'People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones' is bettered, given a more satirical edge, in the picture of the man who is quick to see a little splinter in somebody else's eye, but not a whole log in his own (Lk 6⁴¹⁻²)—which is, of course, a physical impossibility, but, to retain the imagery of the carpenter's shop, hits the nail on the head. Almost uproarious in its sense of the morally absurd is the sketch of the Pharisee so intent on straining out a midge from his cup of wine that he overlooked and swallowed a big-footed, long-necked, fatty-backed, *and ceremonial unclean* (Lev 11⁴) camel that had dropped in (Mt 23²⁴). The saying, I am told, is all the wittier in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke; the finical man strains out a *gam^ela* and swallows a *gam^ela*. In academic language, Jesus was addicted to the humorously hyperbolic—one of the turns of mind and speech that made Him so remarkable a teacher.

The third feature of His manner is that when His sayings were not pictural they were unqualified. They were not philosophical propositions. Qualification is both the virtue and the vice of the academic man—his virtue as a thinker, his vice as a teacher, since his intellectual conscience surrounds and smothers whatever he says with exceptions and caveats, leaving us wondering whether he has really said anything. The teacher and preacher have to be downright, certainly with a general audience and a practical theme. 'Judge not, that ye be not judged' (Mt 7¹) is an example. Never to judge is to suffocate conscience, the very thing that Jesus was trying to quicken, so

that *that* cannot be what He meant. Was He not speaking against the tendency of the righteous to go about sticking facile condemnations on nearly every situation and person? Love tries first to appreciate, and does not solemnize trifles. 'Give to anyone who asks you for anything, and don't turn away anyone who wants to borrow from you' (Mt 5⁴²) can be taken literally within a community of saints; elsewhere it is a straight thrust at the skinflint that is in all of us. 'Go, sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor' (Mk 10²¹) has its qualification in the context: in all the three Gospels in which it occurs it is spoken not as a general maxim, but as a directive to a particular rich man (I imagine he had no dependants). Luke reports a similar saying that does seem to be general, 'Sell all that ye have and give alms' (12³³); but here again the context may qualify, for the words were spoken to His immediate disciples. This and some other 'hard sayings' (e.g. to 'hate' father, mother, wife, children, Lk 14²⁶, cf. Mk 10²⁸⁻³⁰) probably had reference to the peculiar position of the first disciples, those whom He had chosen to share and later to continue His evangelical mission. Jesus undoubtedly made very exacting claims on all those who are really to be Christians, but I am not convinced that that is one of them. What He unequivocally forbade was not wealth but the love of it and the wrong use of it. A saying that might be quoted against me reads not like a moral law but like a psychological observation. It is another of His comical pictures: 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle [the biggest beast of Palestine through the smallest hole] than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Mk 10²⁵).⁷

⁷ J. Klausner asserts that in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Lk 16¹⁹⁻³¹) Dives was sent to hell 'simply and solely because he was rich' (*Jesus of Nazareth* (1925), p. 375). But the story clearly implies that he had ignored the sick beggar at his own gate. To infer correspondingly that Lazarus went to heaven simply because he was poor would again be to miss the extreme economy of Jesus' way of telling stories: Dives is the subject.

I may be expected to say something of those jewels of Jesus' teaching method, the story-parables, a form which He did not originate but which He certainly did perfect. The tendency of recent New Testament scholarship has been to obscure or deny what used to be called their elemental simplicity. To me the taste and feel of these parables is still that they are the work of a master storyteller; it is the story as a whole that has a point, the detail being chosen to make the story go as a story, for a people that revelled in stories. All that I need say about them that is relevant to my theme is to draw attention again to the distinction between the religious and the moral. The parable commonly called that of the Prodigal Son is plainly and wholly religious: it is about the nature of God, and should be entitled 'The loving Father'.⁸ It has the interest, however, of representing a human father, not said to be religious, but being what Jesus' hearers knew naturally a natural father should be, as a type or symbol of God—which suggests that Jesus had a higher view of the possibilities of unregenerate human nature than Paul sometimes suggested. There are prodigal sons rotten with dissipation (though even then sound enough to repent), but there are also fathers good enough to be used as illustrative of the character of God. Any doctrine of man's 'total depravity' that uses this expression straightly would make such an analogy false and impious (cf. Mt 7¹¹). The parable of the Good Samaritan, on the other hand, is plainly and wholly moral, is entirely about our duties to one another. Religion does not enter into it—except incidentally in its misrepresentatives, the priest and the Levite, apparently pilloried for being too religious to be moral, or, if that seems to be too strong, for being religious without also being moral. But how are we to take the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Mt 20¹⁻¹⁶)?

⁸ The second part (in which the elder brother comes in) closes, like the first, with an expression of the father's love.

Is it intended as a lesson on how masters should pay their workers, and could it be used as a text against trade-unions? If so, we should have to take account of it in Christian ethics. Or is it primarily about the nature of God, about His eagerness and right to admit to the full benefits of salvation any who come at whatever hour? If so (which is much more probable), it belongs to religion. So far as it can be read as a condemnation of (*a*) the resentment of the Jews, long installed in Jehovah's vineyard, at the prospect of the admission of the Gentiles, or (*b*) the recoil of the Pharisees from Jesus' invitation to and reception of those Jews whom the Pharisees called sinners, or (*c*) the jealousy which any of us might feel who have stayed the course of faith for a lifetime against the errant who belatedly seek, and then freely get, all our spiritual privileges—so far as the parable can be read as a rebuke on any such attitudes of men to men, it falls also in the moral group, but at the religious edge of this, since it only has meaning when we are considering men in their relation to God.

IV

So far I have been considering the moral teaching of Jesus chiefly in its occasion and form, mentioning its content illustratively and desultorily. In consequence I may have left the impression that it consisted of a number of high but unrelated precepts. There *is* a central principle controlling these. The meaning and fruitfulness of it can be conveniently examined in the fourth lecture, after we have looked at and listened to St Paul. For the moment it will be enough to show very briefly how that principle emerged from the Jewish context with which the present lecture began. We have already seen that in His pondering over the Law, both as written in the Old Testament and as clutteringly built over and hedged round by the long line of scribes, what Jesus did, and did with a

unique ease of insight, was first to distinguish cleanly its moral from its cultic prescriptions, and secondly to see through their various and often petty peculiarities, distilling out of these their implicit intentions. We have now to note that He gathered up the sifted material, with a simplicity that is magisterial, into one religious principle and one moral principle, and did this in a way that, while leaving each its own province, bound even these two together in a unity of motive and ground. His own summary is concise and simple, for He was not writing to be read at leisure, but speaking to be at once understood and easily remembered: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets' (Mt 22³⁷⁻⁴⁰). He was, as is well known, quoting from the Old Testament, but He fetched the first commandment from Deuteronomy (6⁴) and the second from Leviticus (19¹⁸). If any previous Jewish teacher or prophet had picked out from the big heap of statutes just those two, and posited them together as the supreme directives for all man's living, we do not know of a single one who in fact shaped all his religious and moral teaching by them, as Jesus did. If there was one, where is his influence, and why is he not famed? In any case, we have to bear in mind that those Old Testament commandments swelled with new meaning in the context of His teaching, life and mission—so new that it was vehemently rejected by Jewry.

We who look back on that great simplification across the nineteen centuries that have been hearing it are prone to take it as a commonplace—which is a sign of how much it has entered into the Western way of thinking. If, on the contrary, we were to look forward to it, coming upon it as it were for the first time after we had immersed ourselves

in the Bible, commentary and custom of the Jews, and in the traditions of the Gentiles, we should feel as if age-long mists had been blown away, and would bare our foreheads to the sunshine. Keeping to the province of this course of lectures, it cannot be said too emphatically that the enunciation of the second of the two commandments as not one precept among many but the sovereign moral principle marks not a step but a leap. Indeed, it jumps out of the ancient world. Whether we consciously endorse it or no, it has not the feeling of strangeness for us which either the customary or the philosophical moral notions of old Greece and Rome have. In so far as the term 'modern' covers what the mind of Westerners can think of today with a sense of familiarity or ease, that moral principle is modern. If we keep in mind not the scholars but the great bulk of people, we may say that Jesus was the first modern moralist, in the sense that it is He who has shaped that part of the moral consciousness of the Western world that lies below the fashions of its unstable sophistication.

Love of one's 'neighbour' as the source and criterion of a devout man's dealings with other individuals was the theme taken up by St Paul and St John. It cannot be too strongly stressed that that Old Testament commandment, greatly interpreted, is Jesus' own explicit summary of His moral teaching, in order to make clear that His more popularly talked-of 'Golden Rule' is not. When we have put as much as we can on His change here of the old negative form (e.g. Tob 4¹⁵ RV, 'What thou thyself hatest, do to no man') into the positive form, 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them' (Lk 6³¹, Mt 7¹²), this does not evidently embody the spirit of His various precepts and parables. Out of the context of love it is at its lowest a rule of prudence or common sense—for which Jesus undoubtedly finds room—and at its best a rule of fairness, both of them forms of reciprocity.

Christian love goes beyond the expectation of reciprocity, as is made plain in the verses that immediately follow the 'Golden Rule' in Luke's report: 'If ye love them that love you. . . . If ye do good to them that do good to you. . . . If ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive', you are merely doing what 'sinners' do. The same is shown in the admonition to a host not to be always inviting guests who would invite him back, but to 'bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, for they cannot recompense thee' (Lk 14¹³). Love gives simply because there is a need.

There is certainly the promise of a higher return. Does the linking of this morality with religious reward impair its altruism? Sentences like 'Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just' (Lk 14¹⁴), 'Your reward shall be great' (Lk 6³⁵), 'Thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee' (Mt 6⁶), are too frequent to be glossed over. Such texts have been adduced to prove that the Christian altruism, after all, it not pure, but muddied by the religious expectation with selfishness. Two replies may be given. In the first place, the reward of which the New Testament speaks is a peculiar one, so peculiar that it would have the taste of a reward only to a deeply religious mind; heaven, as a state of spiritual enjoyment of the immediate presence of God, would be no joy to the earthly-minded, so that the promise of it would be no motive to altruism, or to the facing of the rack, arena, cross, stake or block, which were part of the prospect of the Christians of the first three centuries. The Christian heaven is not comparable with, for example, the Moslem one, the delights of which are very earthy. In the second place, being altruistic simply for the sake of the heavenly reward is ruled out by the spirit and much of the letter of the New Testament. In the moments of action we are to give help just because help is needed; the love of one's fellows that is rooted in the love of God *is* the love of one's fellows, not the love of self under a mask. Apart from

moments of great danger, it is not when the Christian is deliberating about how to act to others, but in abstracted religious reflection, that the hope of heaven becomes a moving element of consciousness. After all, a Christian is bound to want to go forward to the consummation of his now imperfect fellowship with God, and it is as such that he conceives heaven, not as a reward for moral merit, whether as a due *quid pro quo* or as an inducement. I am speaking of the mature Christian, remembering that on the way to maturity other longings naturally enter in. There is, indeed a level of purely religious contemplation in which we can think of God, not as the ultimately unavoidable dispenser of future favours and penalties, but as One who has done so much for us already that we gratefully consider it more than enough, and ask for nothing more. This is the height to which the hymn attributed to St Francis Xavier rises: in Caswall's faithful translation it begins—

*My God, I love Thee; not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Are lost eternally. . . .*

In the poignant *Dies Irae*, almost overpowering in the original, the plea for mercy moves from personal longing to a concern for the fulfilment of God's redeeming purpose. Two relevant verses may be rendered—

*Holy Jesus, think, I pray,
'Twas for me Thou trod'st this way.
Lose me not on that dread day.
Worn Thou wast in seeking me,
Crucified in saving me.
Let Thy toil not wasted be.*

As for the fear of hell, this alone can at best only make a person's conduct externally correct, and is so far valuable

in earthly society. It alone cannot *save*, although it can be, and often has been, the first low step towards penitence for sin as sin.

The primacy which Jesus gives to love has a radical implication, namely, that the major distinction to be drawn among humans is not between the virtuous and the vicious, but between the loving and the loveless. Is not lovelessness the chief ground of His condemnation of the very righteous Pharisees? And does not Paul say that even if we give all that we have to the poor or go to the stake for our convictions, but are without love, we are 'nothing'. Here is a revolutionary notion, at once religious and moral, of what counts most. Vices are vices, and therefore should not be practised. That stands. But vices can be forgiven, by God and by those who have learned of Him. Virtues are virtues, and therefore should be practised. That also stands. But strenuously virtuous conduct without love is without that quality in God which Jesus came to demonstrate, and which He called us to reflect. We are here to be helpful to others, not to be individually righteous. It seems, then, as if at the last day we are to be sorted out not by the frequency or rarity with which we have cried 'Lord, Lord', and not by the stringency with which we have kept, or the degree to which we have broken, the common laws of moral rectitude, but by whether we have or have not lived by love. That looks like a divine disparagement of virtue, and a divine underestimation of vice. It would be the former if love were not itself a fount and receptacle of the common virtues, as well as of lovelier ones; and it would be the latter if love's forgiveness were simply an easy indulgence, not involving the Cross on God's side, and on ours a lasting shame. Still, the re-evaluation remains. Love is greater than all the virtues without it; and there are big sinners, trapped by combinations of personality and circumstance, who will be ranked high because they

were, in the Christian sense, big lovers. This is disconcerting and humiliating to those of us who are righteous by the iron standards of Jewry, of the Puritans, or of conscience understood in the manner of the Stoics. Such righteousness is vastly better than vice, but is defective by the Christian standard because at its best as well as at its worst it is self-righteousness (not the same as selfishness)—from which love is the only deliverance. It was the self-righteous—not always the worst of them—whom Jesus criticized, and it was obvious sinners, not moralized into undeviating self-respect, that He consorted with. Shall we, then, sin that love may abound? God forbid! We have only to re-ground our virtues in love, and to appreciate whatever approximates to Christian love in those other sinners who have fewer virtues and more vices than we have. This much is pellucidly clear in the message and example of Jesus.

LECTURE THREE

The Teaching of Paul

I

WITH PAUL we are in another world and under a very different mind. Jesus was a Jew on His own soil, speaking to His own people, to those within earshot, and speaking only, writing nothing. Paul was a Jew of the Dispersion, the 'Apostle to the Gentiles' (Rom 11¹³), a wanderer through many lands where, after addressing the Jews in their synagogues (at Philippi also 'by a river side', Acts 16¹³), he preached outside to casual crowds of pagans and founded the first Gentile churches, to which he wrote, the surprising survival of some of his letters enabling us to get an intimate knowledge of his teaching. Jesus, then, faced directly a wholly Jewish situation; Paul the pagan one, though he had to deal also with the Jews who outside the churches persecuted him as an apostate, and those inside who wanted to bind even the Gentile Christians to the Jewish Law. The difference of scene has to be borne in mind. The Palestinian scene had a centuries-old tradition of a single and noble religion with exacting moral requirements, however faultily these may have been grasped and met; the other was like a fair-ground, a medley of backward cults so poor in moral suggestion that the most outrageous vices could have public carnivals. Jesus was concerned about a righteousness that had gone awry; Paul was looking into Augean stables. The difference is reflected in what they respectively denounced: the vocabulary of sin in the Gospels is

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less extensive and less gross than that which Paul had to use.¹

And how different they were in mind! Lest the comparison verge on the irreverent, let me merely hint at it by touching on the Pauline side only. In temperament Paul was mercurial, passing swiftly from mood to mood. Correspondingly, in thought he bubbled with ideas, which he poured into his letters (usually dictated)² at a speed that often upset his grammar, so that not all his statements can have been intended to be as definite and definitive as they have often been taken to be. He had more of the eagerness, passion and diffuseness of the preacher than of the restraint, brevity, ordered clearness and simplicity of the teacher. He had undergone a convulsive change, and still carried smouldering relics of the days when he was a Pharisee so fanatical that he asked for, and got, Jewish official authority to harry the first Christians. He was the new religion's hardest, as well as most influential, convert. The change in him was prodigious. It was a proud, unswerving rectitude, a fiercely finical servitude to the Law, that yielded to the suppleness and gentleness of Christian love. One result in his moral as well as his religious teaching was an exultant sense and commendation of freedom. The deepest difference, humanly speaking, between Jesus and Paul is, of course, that the One was originative and the other derivative.

We move beyond this human level of comparison when we note that for Paul the Jesus of Nazareth had passed into the Christ of glory. The first he apparently had never met. The second he had met on the road to Damascus, and had learned the meaning of the encounter

¹ See his lists of vices—Romans 12⁹⁻³¹, 1 Corinthians 5¹¹, 6⁹⁻¹⁰, 2 Corinthians 12²⁰⁻¹, Galatians 5¹⁹⁻²¹, Ephesians 4³¹, 5³⁻⁴, Colossians 3⁵⁻⁸, and the examination of them in L. Dewar's *Outline of New Testament Ethics* (1949), pp. 149-55.

² See Romans 16²², 1 Corinthians 16²¹, Colossians 4¹⁸, Thessalonians 3¹⁷, and perhaps Galatians 6¹¹ RV.

first from Ananias there, then from a long spell of pondering in solitude, and perhaps later from Peter (Gal 1¹⁸). In consequence, his teaching is not a mere reproduction and application of that of the earthly Jesus. He began his ministry with a doctrine *about* Jesus, to which he related all his religious and moral message. It was a doctrine which, despite the adumbrations of it that Jesus had given, could scarcely have been formulated and fully believed until Jesus had died, in a certain way and from certain causes, and had thereafter given convincing signs of continuing contact with His disciples. The doctrine was that Jesus was not a merely human teacher but an integral part (if the theologians will pardon this non-technical expression) of God, temporarily embodied as a man to reveal God's nature, to declare His purposes, to plead for whole-hearted and intelligent loyalty to these, to offer forgiveness of sins, and to make available what Paul vividly speaks of as 'the power of his resurrection'. This doctrine complicated the apparently simple teaching about God as reported in the greater part of the Synoptic Gospels, most simply of all in the parable of the loving father, in which Jesus gave Himself no place. On the strength of things that Jesus said (e.g. parabolically in Mark 12¹⁻⁸) but which were only now understood, of the spiritual power of some of the things He did, of the unique purity of His life, of the mode and motive of His death, and of His felt presence thereafter—the evidence was cumulative—the Church from its beginning put Christ into its teaching, or rather, the Church came into being when the Apostles felt obliged to put Him into their teaching, as the Son of God and the Saviour of men. After this distinctively Christian doctrine had been preached by the original leaders of the Church for some fifteen years with practical straightforwardness, Paul, a religious mind of the first order, gradually unfolded its implications theoretical and practical, partly in controversy with the Jews, as his rabbinical training at

Jerusalem had made him (apparently him alone) competent to do, and partly through having to preach it to the Gentiles, as his upbringing in the Hellenistic city of Tarsus had fitted him to do.

For these several reasons the original outline of Christian morality as recorded in the Gospels took on a new shape in Paul's hands. In the first place, it was fitted into the post-Resurrection theology. In the second place, it acquired a larger range of application and articulation. Although he achieved no neat intellectual system, it may be said with pardonable looseness that he was the founder of Christian ethical reflection as of Christian theology. What, then, were the main constituents of his moral teaching as seen in the light of his Christocentric theology? To bring them within the limits of this one lecture I shall contract them under the two headings of love and of sin and salvation, concluding with a few of his applications to the problems of Christians living in a pagan world.

II

That love is the supreme and sufficient motive for right living Paul takes over with complete fidelity from Jesus. Comparing it with the multiple and often external prescriptions of the Jewish Law, he parallels the Master's dictum, that on the precept of love hangs all the content of the Law and the Prophets, with the remark that 'he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law', since the moral commandments are all 'comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Rom 13⁸⁻⁹, also Gal 5¹⁴). They are summed up in it not in the sense of being logically deducible from it, but in the sense that the love of one's neighbour, when whole-hearted and consistent, would in fact result in behaviour in deep accordance with the purpose of the commandments. We just cannot, for example, covet anything that belongs to a man, or steal from him, or give false witness against him,

if we love him; love fully realized would be a guarantee against any wrong not due to innocent ignorance. Put positively, a person in whom the love of one's neighbour is dominant produces inevitably the recognized virtues, those qualities of mind and deed against which, Paul observes with triumphant simplicity, 'there is no law' (Gal 5²³). We might well ask ourselves whether such a statement can be made of any very general moral principles other than that of love. For Paul, then, love unifies the virtues in the thoroughly practical sense that it cannot help being the source of them all.

Love being so fontal, a man entirely possessing it has no need of law, the Jewish or any other. He walks by a sensitive intuition, improved, of course, by experience. On this point Paul writes with a thrill, contrasting his liberty as a Christian with his former servitude as a Pharisee. He was a free man; he could go about without a moral statute-book in his hand, without having to ask himself at every juncture which of its numerous laws was ordained for the given situation.³ 'Christ freed us', he tells the Galatians (5¹); to the Romans he writes, 'We are discharged from the Law . . . to serve in the new spiritual way, not in the old literal way' (7⁶; cf. 2 Cor 3⁶), and to the Corinthians, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty' (2 Cor 3¹⁷).

This was heady wine, perhaps for some of the converted Jews, startlingly emancipated, certainly for many of the Gentiles, who had always been nearer to licence than to rigour, those of Corinth (the wickedest city in Greece) in particular swallowing it with large enjoyable gulps. St Paul had to remind them that the freedom he preached was the replacement of an external and dictatorial control

³ Ephesians 2¹⁵ seems to mean 'the whole code of commandments set out in particular decrees'. By heaping up three roughly synonymous terms (in AV, law, commandments, ordinances) Paul was doing his best to bring out the nature of the Law—its mass, its detail, and its being externally imposed.

by an inner one, at once guiding and constraining (e.g. Rom 6¹⁴⁻¹⁵, 1 Cor 6¹², Gal 5¹³); and since his day the Church has had to deal sternly with the antinomianism that merely mocks at all law, and sometimes at conscience too, abandoning itself to the formless enthusiasm of a romanticized love or to the *ignis fatuus* of private 'revelation'. Christian love is a care for others, not a general permit for proudly rebellious antics. It frees us, indeed, from even good rules, not, however, by denying their validity, but by releasing, quickening, extending and elevating insight into the needs of our fellows, so enabling us not merely safely but with greater moral efficiency to play our part in society without the limiting help of either imposed laws or conventional maxims. To every good moral rule Christian love says, 'Of course'. It does not need to be told to be kind, or not to steal, cheat or to be stingy, and so on. In this sense 'love is the fulfilling of the Law' (Rom 13¹⁰)—in its moral part, since concerning the rest Paul's historic role was his refusal to agree that in order to become Christians Gentiles must first be made almost proselytes to Judaism. Sir Thomas Browne has a felicitous expression of the negative aspect of the matter: 'Moses broke the Tables without breaking of the Law; but where charity is broken, the Law itself is shattered.'⁴

The supremacy of love, and its freedom in the sense indicated, rest on religious as well as moral insight, these two being as intertwined, as mutually needful, for Paul as for Jesus. For both, God is love, so that the right response to Him is love; or, to insert Paul's (and John's) special emphasis, since God is Father, our response is to be that of sons, not of slaves, the fear being taken out of it (Rom 8¹⁵, 1 John 4¹⁸). That is the religious reference. The moral reference emerges with it unmissably: since God is our Father, we humans are brothers and sisters—

⁴ *Christian Morals*, Pt III, sec. 4.

and the relations among the members of a family are regulated not by written rules but by the free yet more deeply binding insights of love. So far the doctrine of Paul is the same as that of Jesus. Because, however, he brought Jesus as the Christ into his theology, he was able to increase the motives to love. The coming of God to us in human form was an extraordinary expression and proof of God's love for us, provoking a specific gratitude, in which, in the Christian order, our love for God is born: Paul's theme is 'the love of God, *which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*' (Rom 8³⁹). Further, the life of the incarnate Christ was a perfect example for our guidance of love at work under human conditions (Phil 2); here Paul lays down what became the immeasurably fruitful 'Imitation of Christ'. Yet further—and here the distinctively Christian shaft goes pointedly into the moral layer—the 'benefits of His passion' should move those who receive them to be found 'forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you' (Eph 4³² RSV); we are to bear with this trying saint, and even with that scoundrel, because he is a brother 'for whom Christ died' (Rom 14¹⁵, 1 Cor 8¹¹). At this point the doctrine of our salvation has not only a virtually logical implication but also a moving appeal, which has produced miracles of service to those who by any natural standards are unworthy of it. We have grasped the universalism of Christian love only abstractly, leaving out its Christological note, if we simply say that God loves all of us and therefore we should love one another. We have to say rather that God loves all men in the extreme sense that for their salvation He stripped off the power-element of His divinity, submitting Himself to human conditions, to rejection, even to the ignominy of public execution; that of such divine sacrifice even the best of men is not worthy; and that therefore Christian love must have a like width, not limited by the distinction of worth and unworth.

III

St Paul's exposition of love is full-bodied and full-blooded. At times it condenses itself into epigrams, sometimes breaks into rhythm, sometimes puts on wings. In such moments he gives us fragments of literature. They were not intended as such. I never get the feeling that he planfully composed any of his letters (except perhaps that to the Romans), or that in detail he chose his words and shaped his phrases with conscious art. He was characteristically spontaneous, and some of his spontaneities are so self-evidently inspired that we need no ecclesiastical doctrine about Scripture to tell us so.

Yet in this spontaneity he was not facile. He did not romanticize, slobbering about human nature as if it could easily be put right. He was not in love with a lovely idea, like some aesthetic quasi-Christians, but with God, and with the awkward folk he himself met. This practicality made him a realist. He was under no illusion that men could live by love simply by listening to exhortations or making enormous efforts of will. He had taken full measure of the difficulty of rising in practice to any high moral ideal, *a fortiori* to this highest, most exacting ideal of love. Himself a man of strong emotions, the memory of the grip he had had to keep on them when he was a Pharisee had bitten deeply into his mind. He had felt the fight to keep every letter of the Jewish Law to be a losing one. The very numerousness of the legal prohibitions had suggested some attitudes and actions which, he believed, would not otherwise have occurred to him, and thereby multiplied temptations and exacerbated his struggles (Rom 7⁷⁻¹¹); the Law had touched off his latent sinfulness. Insistence on the deep-rootedness and persistence of an evil tendency in human nature is one of his characteristics. 'I know', he writes, 'that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh; for while I can indeed

will it, I cannot do it . . . and the evil I do *not* will I do' (Rom 7¹⁸⁻¹⁹).

The word 'flesh' suggests that he conceived the conflict as one between soul and body. It is clear, however, from other passages that he locates sinfulness in the soul or mind itself, and does not believe that the escape from it lies simply in either the ecstatic or the mortal rupture between mind and body. 'The works of the flesh' listed in Galatians 5¹⁹⁻²¹ are not all bodily passions, and there is a similar width of reference in Ephesians 2¹³: 'We all once lived by the desires of the flesh, doing the biddings of body and mind.' The metaphysical and moral dualism of body and soul is quite un-Hebraic; it belongs to the Orphics, Platonists, and Manichaeans, who could not have said, as Paul did, 'Your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you. . . . Glorify God therefore in your body' (1 Cor 6¹⁹⁻²⁰ RV).

The inability of man to carry out so much as he knows to be good is put forward by St Paul as a general and radical fact of human nature. Whether he rested his wide contention primarily on introspection and observation, or on some rabbinical theorizing about the sin of Adam (Rom 5¹²⁻¹⁹; that through Adam we all sin has little if any place in the Old Testament), need not detain us here, though I feel certain that observation played a strong part. He held that to man's moral need of the power to do the good (and the ability to know the best) natural effort cannot make the chief contribution, the effort itself being hamstrung by the radicalness of our perversion. If this Pauline judgement seems unduly severe, or based too closely on the rampant vice of the motley Mediterranean peoples of his day, let us set down in partial support of it one of the largest facts about our own people in our own day, namely, that with our far greater store of natural helps—a longer moral tradition, widespread education, a longer spell of life, less room for the temptations of

poverty and economic insecurity—we have become morally unsure, morally fickle, and morally ineffective.

Nevertheless, Paul was no pessimist. He looked at both the obvious evil and the impotence he believed to underlie it, with a curative intent, convinced that a cure was available. He could not find the cure in the natural man. He had not found it in the most pious fulfilment of the Jewish Law. He had found it for himself in the revelation of God in Christ, in the recognition of the divine quality of love as the fundamentally right attitude for man, and in a continuing experience of direct spiritual contact with Christ that had cleared his sight, cleansed his heart, broken his chains, and sent him on an adventure which he felt as one of freedom and joy, and which he wanted everybody else to share. I am inclined to think that despite his fierce and sombre natural temperament, his exhausting labours, his hardships and perils (2 Cor 11²⁴⁻⁸), and his knowledge that the Jewish authorities at Jerusalem had set their minds on procuring his arrest and execution—that despite all this he was at bottom probably the happiest man of his time.

His solution of the moral problem was, then, a religious one. Reason could not solve it theoretically; the will could not solve it practically; neither could the cult of the law-imposing God of the Jews, or any of the cults of the capricious gods and godlings of the Gentiles. But when Christ is taken as the clue to the nature of God, or rather as an immediate expression of God, and God is both worshipped and received in and through Him, the highest of all moral possibilities emerges, the life of Christlike love in which every acknowledged virtue is included and new virtues are added; and that highest possibility then stands before us not to tantalize conscience still further, not to baffle even more the moral effort that has been frustrated at a lower level, but as realizable through the help—the grace of liberation, enlightenment and power—

which God in Christ is ready to give to those who commit themselves to Him. The life of love in the Christian sense is certainly too high for the natural man. As Jesus had said, 'Ye must be born again', which Paul was able to re-express Christologically in the form, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation' (2 Cor 5¹⁷ RSV).

The new morality, then, was impossible apart from the new religion. It involved the radical change called salvation. What is this? Being forgiven? Paul was never tired of preaching God's readiness to forgive, and of pleading for penitence to beg for it and faith to receive it. But he never contracted salvation to being forgiven, or being forgiven to escaping hell. Sin is something to be shed, not only pardoned, and it is from *it* and not from its ultimate consequence alone that we are to be saved. In what, then, according to St Paul, does the process consist? In the illumination of conscience? Yes, though the natural man has conscience enough to be able to distinguish many goods and evils.⁵ It was not, however, on illumination that Paul put his chief stress. What impressed him, at any rate in the order of urgency, was less dimness of conscience than impotence of will. The overcoming of *this* was in his eyes the essence of salvation in its moral aspect. We need power more than we need light, and more power to live out the Christian morality than to fulfil only the demands of the natural conscience. That the needed power could be got through personal contact with Christ, and could not be got otherwise, was one of the most prominent parts of Paul's teaching. In other words, morality at the Christian level is possible only to the redeemed, being an integral part of the redeemed life.

⁵ Cf. Romans 2¹⁴⁻¹⁵: 'When Gentiles, who have no Law, do by nature what the Law demands . . . they show that the Law is in effect written on their hearts, their conscience being a concurring inner witness.' Conscience without particular revelation does not, of course, mean for Paul, any more than it did for Jesus, conscience without God; it comes from God through general creation.

The Apostle's moral teaching was here again inseparable from his Christology. He was saying what he had found to be true for himself. When we remember what he had endured and achieved, we shall not be sceptical, but catch our breath, when we hear him saying from prison, 'I am strong enough for anything because of Him who puts power into me' (Phil 4¹³).

IV

So much for the main notes of the Pauline moral teaching, embedded in the religious teaching which it requires, and which requires it. Liberty and love are inflammatory words, and there is always a lot of easily combustible human material ready to be burned by them. They can end by giving a foretaste of the flames of hell. Did St Paul handle them recklessly? Here we must remember that he was a pastor as well as a soaring preacher. His letters are all well sprinkled with particular moral guidance for his scattered congregations of beginners. In his pastoral advice he shows a remarkable sobriety. Like a much later apostle to the wicked, John Wesley, who also put love in the forefront of both his religious and his moral message, he kept his head in the hot revivalism which he evoked, though even in the warmest passages of his preaching he really gave no handle for taking Christian love as either an erotic passion or an exclusively religious one that absolves us from the simpler duties to one another.

One instance of explicit warning against the latter danger is what he wrote to the Corinthians on the matter of 'speaking with tongues', a form of compulsive unintelligible utterance prompted by intense religious excitement, not uncommon in modern revivals. St Paul regarded it as a legitimate mode of address to God. Some of the Corinthians, however, were using it so freely during the church-services that he had to remind them of the

need to consider their fellow-worshippers: speech in the presence of others should be intelligible. 'I speak in tongues more than you all: howbeit in the assembly I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might also instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue' (1 Cor 14¹⁸⁻¹⁹). Excitement about God is right, but it must not get in the way of considerate fellowship; religious zeal must not make us negligent of an elementary moral obligation. In putting his finger firmly on this principle, Paul was following the example of Jesus.

The sobriety of love in action comes out also in his advice on the problems that arose out of the continuing involvement of the new converts in their old pagan environment. For example, when one of the partners of a marriage remains unconverted, should the Christian partner divorce the pagan one? Would their different sensibilities and ways make their daily life together impossible? Not necessarily, Paul thinks, and suggests that the Christian may win over the other by his or her better conduct; but if the unbelieving partner insists on separating, he or she is to be allowed to do so, for 'God hath called us to peace' (1 Cor 7¹²⁻¹⁶). For this judgement he claims no authority, prefacing it with the remark: 'This say I, not the Lord.'

Another question was whether a Christian should eat food that might have been offered to idols, for food that had been so offered sometimes went to the open market. Paul's doctrinal answer is that all foods are permissible, the distinction between clean and unclean having been annulled by Jesus, and further that idols anyway are simply lumps of stone or wood. There is, then, no offence against God in the eating. But he proceeds to a moral answer, for the feelings of some fellow-Christians have to be taken into account, namely, those who have not yet managed to shake off all their former pagan sentiments,

at bottom still supposing that food offered to idols has been dedicated to real if base gods, and is therefore polluted. If a fully emancipated brother were to eat such food in the presence of a weaker brother, he would cause offence or distress; and that would be unbrotherly, and consequently unchristian. Table-fellowship would be destroyed. Therefore, Paul enjoins, 'Eat not . . . for conscience sake. . . . *I mean the other's conscience, not thine own*' (1 Cor 10²⁸⁻⁹). Christian liberty in respect of food stands as a sacred principle, but the exercise of it must be qualified by consideration for the brethren (1 Cor 7⁹). This is an implication of that dictum of St Paul's which the AV gives as 'All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient' (1 Cor 6¹², 10²³), which in its context clearly means: 'Not everything that is in principle right is always in practice good.' Doctrine must be kept pure, but when it is dipped into life it ceases to be ruled entirely by logic. While in doctrine truth is paramount, in conduct love is supreme; not that there is any ultimate dualism here, since the ultimate doctrine is that God is love, which is the fount of both the Christian theology and the Christian ethic. The extension of logical purism from doctrine to conduct, not difference of doctrine, has often been, and still is, the most deeply sinful rent in the family of Christ; and the individual Christian who in all things binds himself hand and foot as well as head to 'principle', insisting on behaving to everybody and in all matters by his own conscience, has missed the way of love and is treading the grim way of the Stoics. This grim way has been represented by many as half-Christian; but nothing is half-Christian, or quarter-Christian, or Christian at all, that is without love. Such, I think, is the conclusion on which Christian theology and Christian ethics converge.

On some matters Paul's applications fall short of what we might expect from his perceptiveness elsewhere, for example, on the position of women and the fact of slavery.

The expectation is unfair, because unimaginative, without historical sense. Why did he not campaign for the equality of women with men, and for the abolition of slavery? Part of the answer is that both reforms would have turned the Roman Empire upside down, that the attempt would have been vain and suicidal, that as a Christian Paul was a member of probably the tiniest minority in the Empire, and that a private citizen had no power to agitate for social reform (though philosophers were allowed to talk, until Domitian); also, that his mission, big enough in all conscience, was to convert individuals to the new faith and life, the Church being still embryonic.

There is a relic of Jewishness in his declaration that the husband is 'the head of the wife' (Eph 5²³), and that her attitude to him should be obedience and 'fear' (? 'respect', 5²², 3³, Col 3¹⁸); and in his injunction that women are not to speak in church (1 Cor 14³⁴), though this is puzzling, since 11⁶ shows that they prayed and 'prophesied' in the assembly. His command that they must not do these actions with head uncovered (11⁵, 1³) may be both a relic of his Jewishness and a way of recognizing the need for modesty in the sexually loose pagan world, especially in licentious Corinth. As for slaves, what he says to them is that they should accept their lot without worrying (1 Cor 7²⁰⁻⁴)⁶—as long as they were slaves, for manumission was common. This can be taken as simply the advice of common sense. He rises to moral advice when he tells them, in direct address, that their business being work, their Christian business is to work well, not 'with eye-service, as men-pleasers' but 'with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men' (Eph 6⁶⁻⁷). In the same passage he tells the masters that they have a reciprocal obligation, and should remember that they themselves

⁶ The latter part of verse 21 is a standing puzzle grammatically: after 'but if you can get freedom' the original may mean either 'take it' or 'prefer to make good use of your lot as a slave', with the former, I think, as the more natural sense.

have 'a Master in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him'. The full Christian principle is, however, bluntly stated: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . bond nor free . . . male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3²⁸; also 1 Cor 12¹³, Col 3¹⁰⁻¹¹); and this was from the outset put into practice as spiritual equality within the fellowship of the Church. In his own personal relations Paul made no distinctions: both his friendships as recorded in Acts and his tenderly respectful references in his letters show that as regards women, and his delicate but firm letter to Philemon shows it as regards the runaway slave Onesimus. What remains puzzling and humiliating is that the Church, while mitigating slavery as soon as she was strong enough to do so, accepted it for eighteen centuries, and in our own country took no part as a body in the steps that led to its abolition—though the men who did force our nation to this belated act were devout Christians pleading Christian reasons.

On the relation of Christians to the State he touches only once in his extant letters (Rom 13¹⁻⁷). What he says is downright. Authority is needed; the only source of authority is God; rulers are His delegates, and are to be obeyed both on this religious ground and on the moral ground that their sword is used for the restraint of evil conduct, so that well-behaved people have no reason to fear them. If this seems to express undue subservience, we might bear in mind three things: (*a*) that as a traveller over several lands and a wide sea, Paul was much aware of the boon of the Roman order,⁷ (*b*) that he possessed Roman citizenship, and (*c*) that he was writing before the beginning of the imperial persecution of the Christians. When the Church became strong, she was usually an ally

⁷ Epictetus, teaching about fifty years later than Paul, also speaks of this: 'The Emperor seems to provide us with a great peace, for there are no longer any wars or battles or big bands of robbers or any pirates; we can travel at all times, and sail from end to end of our sea' *Discourses*, III, xiii, 9).

and instrument of imperial or kingly authority, sometimes a successful obstacle to the abuse of it.

Partly on the strength of St Paul's passage, some seventeenth-century ecclesiastics in our national Church framed a doctrine of what was called passive obedience: the divine source of the ruler's authority precludes active disobedience, and also active obedience when his commands are against conscience or faith, but in the latter event we should still acknowledge his authority by merely abstaining from compliance and accepting without demur any consequent penalty. The immediate motive was the fear that to grant the right of private judgement to choose with impunity when to obey and when to disobey the civil power was a certain way of inviting anarchy. The democratization and secularization of politics have now changed the actual scene. Has it changed Christian principle? We would, I imagine, now put Paul's principle in the form that a ruler is *answerable* to God, but would add that he is also answerable to his people, and further that his people are equally answerable to God. Whether the ruler be single or multiple, and hereditary or elective, is not thereby determined. The complete secularization of politics would, of course, remove the first and third clauses of that complex principle. Whether the second would then be left standing is doubtful; and if it were, how it would operate alone would depend on the relative strength in the people of natural conscience and natural selfishness.

The social situation Paul had in view was so different from our own that we cannot take to ourselves every piece of advice he gave to his churches. He was dealing with tiny groups newly converted to a new faith, called to live very differently indeed from all their neighbours, and unable to take any part in either public office or public occasions, because these involved idolatrous invocations or sacrifices. It was a constant embarrassment to be a

Christian; it meant being at odds with the citizenry to which one belonged and whose ideas and ways one had until recently shared—as in parts of the mission-field today, except that there was not yet behind the missionary and his converts the prestige of a powerful nation or a large and thoroughly organized Church. It is enthralling to notice how the Apostle dealt in his letters with the moral difficulties that arose both within each of his small congregations and between their members severally and the pagans they had to live with. His particularized advice was addressed to the situation he knew, not thrown out grandly into the air. Yet it was governed by a general viewpoint, which he repeatedly expressed in general terms: to be a Christian is to be 'in Christ', this is to receive and live by His spirit, and this is to make love the source and stream, the seed and fruit of all one's conduct. Such peculiarly Christian love he spelt out from time to time in detail. It was to be expressed to pagans, though more urgently within the little bands of Christians, partly to mature them, since they were but tyros, and partly because, having no human moral support outside, they could remain faithful only by supporting one another. There was, then, a special undertone in some of his injunctions which we too easily read as obvious generalities, e.g. 'Bear ye one another's burdens' (Gal 6¹²), and 'As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of the faith' (6¹⁰ RV).

v

It is a singular thing that we are careful to remind ourselves of the basis of our Christian religion, but not of the nature of our Christian morality. Regularly we rise in church to recite together what we believe about God in Christ, but never similarly confess what kind of behaviour to one another that belief commits us to, and what is its

root as well as its fruit. Yet such a religiously moral creed has been written, and the writer is appropriately St Paul. If his so-called hymn of love were publicly and regularly recited, we should have to have hearts of brass to resist its beauty, its practical truth, and its faith that Christlike love is even in us immortal, not liable to be transcended or invalidated, as so many of our virtues and skills will be, when we pass into the unmediated presence of God. St Paul's inspired passage can, I am sure, be made recitable. In the hope of provoking better pens than mine to make it so, I submit a close version, which has some rhythmical faults which I am unable to mend without handling the Greek freely.

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels,
And yet lack love,
I am but a booming gong or a clanging cymbal.
If I can preach the mind of God,
Know all the secrets and doctrines of the Faith,
Or have the perfect trust that moves mountains,
And yet lack love,
I am nothing.
If I give to the poor all that I have,
Or give up my body to the stake,
And yet lack love,
I am none the better.

Love is patient and is kind;
Is not jealous;
Boasts not outwardly, and swells not inwardly with pride;
Behaves not coarsely;
Seeks nothing selfishly;
Is not quick to anger, and keeps no account of injury;
Takes no pleasure in evil, but only in the right;
Abides everything,
Trusts through everything,
Hopes in everything,
Endures through everything.

Love never ends.

But preaching the mind of God will be cancelled,
Speaking in tongues will stop,
And knowledge of doctrine will be superseded;
For our knowing is incomplete,
And our preaching the mind of God is incomplete:
When therefore that which is complete is come,
That which is incomplete will be put away—
As when I was a child I spoke like a child,
Felt like a child, thought like a child,
But when I became a man put off childish ways.
So now our seeing is indirect and darkened,
But in the end it will be face to face;
So now my knowing is imperfect,
But then I shall know as God knows me.
What then lasts on? Trust, hope and love,
These only three;
And the greatest of these is love.

LECTURE FOUR

The Nature of Christian Love

I

IN THE PRECEDING account of the moral teaching of Jesus and Paul, the governing notion of love has been left where they left it, luminously illustrated but not defined. Neither of them was addressing an audience that had the intellectual itch for definition, for precise conceptual identification. The Jews had no scientists at all, in any tolerable sense of that designation, and their only philosopher, Philo (born *c.* 25 B.C.) had not passed on to them the Greek art of formulating definitions. The Gentiles of Paul's churches seem to have had no contact with philosophy in the sense of a sharp intellectual discipline. We know of one occasion only when he himself conversed with philosophers, at Athens (though he must have seen, and probably listened to, Stoics in his native Tarsus), but the report of it (Acts 17¹⁸⁻³³) does not cover any moral points; and in his letters the word 'philosophy' occurs only once, linked with 'vain deceit' (Col 2⁸). In consequence of all this, what you and I mean by the question 'What exactly is Christian love?' is not formally answered in the New Testament. The answers there given, particular and concrete, are better than any definition, because they suit the practical nature of the subject. Still, the modern mind demands conceptual clarification, and some common misunderstandings require the Christian moral philosopher to try to supply it.

Let me pass quickly over a verbal question. The Greek noun (*agapē*) translated 'charity' (from the Vulgate '*caritas*') or 'love' in our English versions was not the usual

Greek word for 'love'. It used to be said that that noun did not occur in any document before the Septuagint, and therefore was presumably of Jewish coinage, to express a religious idea. There is now some doubt about this. It remains significant, however, that the common Greek noun for 'love' (*eros*) and its cognate verb are completely avoided in the New Testament. In classical and Hellenistic usage these had reference to a passion (commonly though not always sexual). From this point we may start our elucidation of the meaning of Christian love—the thing itself, not the word—first likening it to, and then distinguishing it from, natural love.

As a name for a natural human fact, 'love' is used to denote several well-marked particular emotions, of which tenderness is an example, and feeling warmly amiable another. But it has also a deeper meaning. We can readily admit that a young couple has all the relevant particular emotions, and has them strongly, and yet question whether they are *really* in love. Conversely, when we say of a person that he is really in love, we do not mean that he goes about with those particular emotions constantly in the forefront of his consciousness. If we did, we should have to say that when he was not feeling them he was not in love. Of all natural love maternal love is in general the strongest, one of the wonders of the world; yet we should shake our heads over a mother who was always feeling like fondling or fussing over her child. Clearly, we do not identify love wholly or even chiefly with a few very specific emotions, whether these be impulsive swells from instinctive depths or delightful motions on the moralized surface. We mean also and chiefly a structure of the whole mind, the entire personality moulded to a certain shape, tilted to a massive bias, organized to think, feel, desire and act in certain ways towards and about a certain object, which may be a cause (an ideal, or a programme, or a party), a person, an animal,

even an inanimate thing (a book, a painting, a keepsake). Love in this sense is a rich inner source of what does come into consciousness and of our outer behaviour, and directs as well as generates these.

For example, if a friend we really love prospers, we are glad; if he does not, we are sad; if a rival of his fares better, we are jealous; if he needs help, we give it liberally and easily, taking self-sacrifice in our stride; if he has persistent enemies, we shall hate them, no hate being so implacable as that which springs from love; and if he is in dire danger, we shall fight for him, and may fight like fiends, just because we love him. Natural love, then, in the full sense—whether between man and woman, man and man, woman and woman, or adult and youth—is the whole self so structured that for its object it will use every one of its passions and powers. It can be gentle and steely, long-suffering and aggressive, reticent and voluble, running through the entire gamut of feelings, desires and decisions. It can make one now a doormat and now a tiger, here something like a saint and there a savage, at one time as wise as a sage and at another an obvious ass. It can be the loveliest thing in the world, and almost the most terrible, sometimes touching the moral ceiling, sometimes smashing every moral boundary. Little wonder that the poets and novelists have swung to their moments of glory on this kaleidoscopic and phantasmagoric theme. Without it most of them would have fluttered in frustration, like a lark, or an eagle, in a cage.

Is Christian love like that? Yes—in the respect that it is not a particular emotion, or sort of emotion, or mood (which is but the foretaste or aftertaste of an emotion), but a bent, set or attitude of the whole mind, whose various operations it controls. In its human reference it is a settled, stable, steady concern with and for other people. The sign or test of its presence is not any one specific emotion. It does not mean being always gentle, amiable,

or 'nice'. It consists in having that deeply rooted concern for others, at some times without having any emphatic feeling at all, at other times with one that is suitable both to that concern and to the given occasion, and therefore varying considerably. The concern, sincere and constant, is the essence, the rest being either consequence or accident.

If this likening of Christian love to natural love appears at first sight to be surprising, consider it in the light of two of its practical bearings, both of them in accordance with that sobriety I spoke of as a prominent character of the moral teaching of Jesus and of Paul. One of them is directly relevant in the pastoral guidance of facile Christians, the other of the morbidly anxious ones.

(a) Christian love is not gush. To love your neighbour is not to be sloppy, ostentatiously maudlin, about him. That, besides being too easy, is unseemly, and unpractical because it is not perceptive. Similarly, to love your enemy is not to have a tender warmth in your heart at every thought of him. To suppose that it is to narrow love to liking. To like some people would be morally corrupting. Could a Christian *like* or be fond of Hitler? Liking has both natural and moral limits; we cannot extend it at will, and we ought not to try to extend it to everybody. Christian love is compatible with absence of liking, and even with dislike, though not with hate, contempt or jealousy. Liking is for the likable, varying from person to person, essentially selective. Loving in the Christian sense is not; whether for neighbour or for enemy, it is to have a practical concern for him, to have the mind set in a certain attitude, not necessarily coloured with a 'nice' feeling. The emotional accompaniments of that attitude cannot either in fact or with moral rectitude be the same towards a bitter foe as towards a casual neighbour, a friend, or a member of one's family.

(b) Emotions are to a large extent the playthings of accidents. Even in mature or disciplined minds they have

a link with the body, can be evoked, strengthened, weakened or dispelled by purely physiological changes. We all know how hard it is to feel amiable or tender when tired, and that a headache can drive out every feeling but vexation and self-pity. Christian love, like natural love at its best, is not at the mercy of such lowly contingencies, just because it is not to be identified with an emotion; as an attitude, it persists through them, directing and constraining us to act kindly even in the moments when we are unfitted to feel kindly in any marked degree. Once more, the injunction to love is to have a mind of a certain structure, not to have one or two feelings, or to have them always, or to have them alike towards everybody. Therefore, not having them always is no ground for anxiety or self-condemnation.

II

Christian love and natural love having been so far likened to one another, how are they to be distinguished? Well, as we have noticed, natural love breaks out into both sublimities and enormities. Shall we lop off the latter, and say that Christian love is natural love thoroughly moralized? This way of distinguishing it may be allowed, but only provisionally, for it is vague, not distinctive enough; in particular, it leaves out the religious reference. If we are to retain the comparison in respect of similarity, we must underline the contrast by saying that Christian love is natural love moralized in a peculiar way, resulting in a type of character and behaviour that has no parallel in any practical moral tradition known to me. Its singularity is evident to me when I study it in the New Testament, and when I see it embodied, as I often do, in people worthy to be called saints, those who hold the Church together despite her grave imperfections. I cannot capture that Christian type in a formal definition, but will try to seize on some of its most typical marks.

(1) Christian love is unlimited. I think we must admit that natural love too can be unlimited in the respect that it can leap beyond the prescribed or conventional boundaries of a duty, that is, can go the extra mile, turn the other cheek, and forgive more than seven times. These examples of a generosity greater than rectitude *might* have been caught by Jesus from the clouds, merely imagined as illustrations of His moral ideal, but it is far more congruous with the ways of His mind to say that they were culled from His observation of how some simple souls, unconfined by convention or law, actually lived in their best moments.¹ True, these best moments were few, so that we may truly affirm that what Jesus did was to demand and ensure their multiplication by lifting the motive from impulse to conviction, the only way (other than mere habit) of transposing such generosity from the class of the exceptional or abnormal to that of the normal. If we agree, as I think we must, that a demand so unlimited could not be justified without the religious reason which Jesus gave for it and the Christological reasons which Paul added, and cannot in practice be met without meeting also their religious demands, that moral demand takes us beyond natural love to Christian love.

This step is taken also by the requirement of another sort of unlimitedness. Natural love in its most generous outbursts is extremely partial, restricted by the lover to very few persons. Jesus removed this limitation. The generosity of love must be extended to everybody with whom we have dealings, whether we happen to like them or not, even if we dislike them or they dislike us, and even

¹ It might be objected that Jesus took the instances from a people whose moral consciousness was deeply affected by religion, so that they are not instances of entirely natural love. Similar instances can, however, be adduced from pagan peoples. If it be urged that these also were morally modified by religion, we might have to deny that there is any such thing as natural love, *i.e.* love as a potentiality and actuality of our created nature. Such a conclusion would, I think, be rather academic.

if they are our enemies.² This some people can do spasmodically, but as a steady attitude it goes against the natural grain. Nature does not equip us to do more than the moral minimum to the unliked and the unlikable.

(2) Christian love is of individuals. When it is presented or accepted as general benevolence—a very common identification—something very distinctive of it is left out. Talk about general benevolence is usually about Humanity or Man, which is an abstraction, or about mankind or the race, which is a huge collection or class. Good will of that sort all too easily becomes sentimental. We are familiar with the kind of idealist who loves all men but can't get on with the folk he lives or works with; censuring or despising the people he sees, whose faults are obvious, his heart warms at the thought of the remote multitudes he does not see, and whose faults he has not to live with.

G. K. Chesterton has a neat thrust at him: I learn

with little labour
The way to love my fellow-man
And hate my next-door neighbour.

Such an idealist expresses his universal benevolence by sending subscriptions to an international organization. In the New Testament the primary interest is in personal relations, in individuals; Christian love is for one's 'neighbour', a term which in the parable of the Good Samaritan is widened to mean anybody who is within our direct reach and whom we can therefore directly serve. Not that this sort of love restricts itself to giving help: to take an example from current life, it would move a

² Cf. *Didache*, 2.7: 'Thou shalt hate no man. Some thou shalt reprove, for some thou shalt pray, and some thou shalt love more than thine own life'. This last clause may be pitted against those writers on Christian ethics who have taken 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*' with rabbinical literalness, though they are probably protesting against the view that we must *never* consider ourselves. When to do this and when not is to be solved not by rule but by love, which is not likely to err on the wrong side.

passenger in a train, when holding out his ticket to the inspector, spontaneously to turn from his newspaper or book and acknowledge him, if only with a look, as a fellow man.

This is the love that accepts contacts, that also seeks them, and unselfconsciously makes all of them personal. By recognizing its duties and opportunities at its own doorstep, before its own nose, it is constantly sharpening its vision and constantly exercising its moral muscles. We do more justice to the special character of the Christian way when we take its maxim not as 'Love all men', but in the form used, and in the sense meant, by Jesus, 'Love your neighbour'. The proverb 'Charity begins at home', taken in its best intention, preserves practicality. Christian charity cannot, of course, stop there, but the sober exercise it gets there prevents its extension to people beyond personal contact from becoming vague, fluffy, sentimental, unrealistic. The Christian evaluation of man requires such extension, with no definite limits in theory; but in practice it is usually realistically limited to what can be done personally to a manageable number of individuals. This may be illustrated even from a sphere in which remote benevolence is plainly involved, namely, in the Churches' foreign missionary work: their sense of particularity is shown in their encouraging the home congregations to add to their general support the special support of a single hospital or school, even of a single orphan, widow, blind man or leper. Although here the Christian urge to direct service, *without deputies or proxies to do the sacrificial work for us*, cannot be fully expressed, the interest in individuals is retained.

(3) Christian love is perceptive. By this I mean that it is governed not by general rules but by direct insight into the requirements of the given situation. It is possible to overstate this. Some persons and some situations are morally similar, and to that extent general rules may

apply. Commonly, however, there are relevant differences, requiring some differences in the deed to be done, or in the mood and manner of it, or in the timing of it. Of the legalism of the Pharisees I have said enough earlier. The Roman lawyers were aware that the rigid application of State law can defeat the very justice which that law was designed to secure—*summum jus summa injuria*—and made some provisions to avoid such legal woodenness. Aristotle, besides explicitly anticipating that principle of 'equity', had insisted that even moral maxims are only roughly valid as paedagogical substitutes for the sagacious adult's insight, remarking at another point that 'among friends the rules of justice are unnecessary'.³

Despite these classical precedents and the emphatic anti-legalism of the New Testament, the moral tradition of Europe has continued to exalt strict fidelity to general rules, the Church in practice supporting. The reasons for this support are easy to see: for many centuries the Church had to deal with successive influxes of barbarians, who had to be civilized before they could be Christianized; even thereafter the people it had to guide were only superficially Christian; every now and again it had to defend its own and the public order against sects that turned liberty into an easy self-expression that lacked consideration for others; and always it has recognized the simple empirical truth that the immature, of whatever age, have first to be taught unqualified rules of conduct. Whether the Church has done all that it might have done to encourage the immature to grow up is a question that will be variously answered; but it has to be remembered that to pass from living by rules to living by Christian insight requires a religious commitment which the Church can invite and plead for but cannot enforce. Living by rules, as well as being a necessary stage of moral education, is

³ *Eth. Nic.*, V. 10, 1137b11ff; II. 2, 1104a11ff and 6, 1107a1; V. 1, 1152a26.

something which even mature Christians have to fall back on when they are not spiritually 'in form'—the position we are all in sometimes. Antinomians either overlook this fact or proudly deny it.

Besides rules and tags, there is something else in our moral tradition for which Christian love, in its aspect of perceptiveness, would find only occasional use, namely, the notion of a fixed scale of values. True, we have the blunt saying of Jesus, 'Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God' (Mt 6³³), and it is indubitable that in the Christian scheme the soul is higher than the body, worship than work, prayer than eating or sleeping. But these are religious evaluations, in the perspective of eternity; they belong to the inexpugnable otherworldliness of the Christian way in its religious aspect. There we are thinking of God and our ultimate destiny. In morality, however, we are thinking of our fellow-men, and in the Christian morality we are required to do this more fully than in any other system. Now in his deeply interested contact as an individual with other individuals, the Christian, not doctrinaire but perceptive, is led by the genuineness of his interest or love to break the religiously absolute scale of values. Again and again he gives priority not to the higher but to the more urgent, or to what happens at the moment to be the more appropriate. If the needs of the man he faces are bodily, he addresses himself to these. He is not fastidious, loftily spiritual, but sympathetic. He does not say to the hungry man, 'Your body is sinful, perishable, unimportant; let me give you something for your soul' (cf. James 2¹⁵⁻¹⁶). He is not always sweeping along the high religious way, but treads too the lowly soil of earthy needs. In the teaching of Jesus, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked were not tail-end applications but outstanding ones.

(4) Christian love is outward-looking. Its outwardness is very different from the externalism, of which Pharisaism

was but one instance, that takes injunctions like 'Do this' and 'Don't do that' to be the very form and substance of the moral requirements. Most modern moralists are agreed that the step beyond such externalism to a care about the motive or spirit behind behaviour was one of the great landmarks of moral advance. It is well known that Jesus sounded the internal note, with immense consequences. Not that He was the first to do so, for that note had been already sounded by the Jewish prophets, and among the Gentiles notably by the Stoics; but while the influence of the Gentile philosophers touched an intellectual and social *élite*, that of Christianity spread to people of all kinds. But what I want to bring out at present is that the inwardness proclaimed by Jesus was different from that proclaimed by the philosophers. One maxim of Socrates is said to have been 'Know thyself', i.e. clarify and sharpen your concepts of the nature of the good, and then you will be and do what a rational man should be and do. The Stoics said, 'Concern yourself only with what is wholly within your own control, i.e. your rational will, not with anything external to your mind, and then you will have inviolable virtue, with the accompaniment of inner tranquillity'. In both cases the interest is in the self; the primary aim of moral endeavour is one's own rightness of mind. It was not, of course, selfish in the vulgar sense, for it forbade self-indulgence; but it made everything subordinate to inner excellence or rectitude, and tended to what may fairly be called moral snobbery. The business of adjustment to other people was recognized, but relegated to a lower plane of consideration. In short, it was *too* inward.

The ethic of Christian love does not involve that sort of care for the self. While heavily emphasizing rightness of motive, the motive it pronounces to be the basically and supremely right one is directed away from the self. Put paradoxically, its inwardness consists in being an outward

concern, a persistent interest in other people. The Christian is not, in his moral aspect, to devote himself to an ideal of self, but to the individual persons within his reach; not to make his mind of a certain sort for its own sake, not to cultivate it in order to make it virtuous, not to be always feeling his own pulse, but to become interested in his 'neighbours'; and the forms which this outward-looking interest takes *are* the virtues. If there is any overstatement here, it is required to rebut that introspective cultivation of mental excellences which, prominent in pagan thought, many mistake for the Christian moral way. St James's injunction that we are to keep ourselves 'unspotted from the world' (1²⁷) cannot mean that, as its immediate context proves, for this is about visiting 'the fathers and widows in their affliction'. The inner cultivation of virtue can leave us invincibly respectable, whereas love will sometimes drive us, as it has done the Salvation Army and many a pastor in our cities, into the world's filthiest corners, from which we shall not come out altogether unspotted, or at least unscarred.

III

This listing of the features that distinguish Christian love could be continued, but those four are basic enough to suggest the rest. In any case, a mere catalogue is not the best way of expounding its nature, nor such a list of its specific virtues as St Paul gives in the passage where he coins the happy phrase 'the fruit [or crop, or harvest] of the Spirit' (Gal. 5²²; other lists in Eph 4²⁻³, 3², Phil 4⁸, Col 3¹²⁻¹⁴). Jesus' method is better. Sometimes He names the virtues, as in the Beatitudes, though He never mentions many; and sometimes He gives precepts; but His awareness that neither the virtues named nor the precepts enjoined exhaust the nature of love is shown by His resort to pictures in similes and parables, in which He makes us *see* love in *particular action*. Before His story of the Good

Samaritan, His incontrovertible and silencing answer to a lawyer asking for a definition, our intellectual demand for abstract generalities lies humbled. We can learn more from His stories than from His precepts, and more still from the Gospel story, told four times over, of His own life. Christian casuistry is not logical but imaginative. When we want to know what is the right thing to do in a given situation, we are not to make a rigorous deduction from a general rule, but are to frame a vivid picture of what in that situation neighbourly love would do. A picture of love in action is, if right, likely to be self-evidently right, and if wrong to be self-evidently wrong; and when right, it moves as rules do not.

The place of imagination in the moral life is a neglected subject. The chief reason for this is that in the natural morality of conscience imaginativeness is not encouraged. What is encouraged is a deadly seriousness, a rigid adherence to principle; we are to bring the particular case under one of our few general maxims, and then go straight ahead, *ruat coelum*, without regard to consequences. This is why nobility, real nobility, has so often been stupid, sometimes even tragically so. It does frequently look like sheer obstinacy. Evil is more resourceful; when end or means is blocked, either can be changed, an evil mind being so little restricted in its choices. A good mind can seek only good ends, and only good means, and its being preoccupied with loyalty to conscience makes it tend to suppose that in the given situation there is, besides only one right end, only one right way to it. The moral map of the very conscientious man has only a few places marked on it, and simply one road to each, perfectly straight. Love, on the contrary, has a natural link with the imaginative power. When, therefore, a person's mind is moved by the interest of love for his fellows, his conscience is given a wider field of possibilities from which to make his choice, so that when he is frustrated on one path he can

detect another, and another. In this regard, a conscience dynamized by love is a better match for evil than conscience alone, and more efficient in the service of others' needs. The preacher or the novelist could do more justice than a lecturer to the moral originality and versatility of love.

Conscientiousness, besides being narrow, can be very angular and forbidding, although it does sometimes rise to a grandeur that can wring reluctant admiration from those who have no liking for virtue. The ordinary virtues of conscience do make many of us dull, and some of us *frightfully* good; and the dead-serious striving after them can make us feverish or harsh. A merely aesthetic view of conduct certainly won't do, but surely when attractiveness can be added to goodness, conduct acquires more excellence. Charm ladled on consciously can be repellent, and there are occasions when the act to be done leaves no room for genuine graciousness; but the bloom of grace appears inevitably on most actions done from Christian love, just because this is a care not for that which is abstractly right but for that which is right for the persons for whose sake the actions are done. Love puts its signature on what comes from it.

These notes of imagination and grace may suggest an already widespread view that Christian love romanticizes life, seeing men through rose-coloured spectacles. On the contrary, it demands a very tough form of idealism. Christian realism, in its doctrine of sin, is relevant here. I know myself to be a sinner, *and everybody else as well*. That excludes any whitewashing. When even with love I see sin, I cannot Christianly pretend that it is not sin; to do so would be to try to make love blind, to tamper with moral honesty. We are to love people whose badness we look straight in the face.

What motive or motives can justify our doing this? One or other of three is supposed or recommended. (a) The

goodness we can actually see in bad people. Happily, we can often see goodness in them. In such cases the task is easy. Love is not being strained or tested, for it is directed on what we approve. There is no problem here.

(b) The good we cannot see, but believe to be there. This is a form of faith, and love needs it. I am not, however, at ease with two ways of stating this motive. One is that every man has in him 'a spark of divinity'. This is *Stoic* doctrine, and blurs the distinction between the divine and the human. I hope I am not wrong in thinking that on the Christian view the natural man is wholly human. The other way is that everyone of us has in him the 'image of God.' This term and the idea it stands for seem to me to be *very* fugitive in Scripture. It is taken by some theologians (who, oddly, can only say it in Latin) very concretely, as though it were something separate in us. The evident fact is that we have, apparently by nature, spiritual capacities. These *may* be said to give us some likeness to God, but far too little to warrant our calling it *in theology* (where precision is expected) an 'image' of Him.

(c) The fact that Christians can love evil out of existence. They have done, in some cases, and are still doing so. It is a fine faith, counteracting our tendency to love too little. But are we committed to believing that love could do that in all cases, so that all failure must be put down to our not loving enough? Love, it is said, is *bound* to win. This is said primarily of God. If it means that in the long run everybody, freely or otherwise, will be saved, it is not in obvious harmony with the New Testament. That in some sense God will ultimately win is surely certain; that He will *win over* is not. I have trespassed into this eschatological issue because of its moral bearing. Are we to love others because, if we do so fully, we are *bound* to win them over? Can we proceed on the certainty of response? We are faced with the fact that Jesus, in whom love was at its

best, failed with all but a handful of his contemporaries.

Doctrine and practice require us, I think, to state the motive or ground of Christian love in a different way—in Paul's way. To love is to serve willingly and steadily. We are to love the *bad* sinners because they need us, because God loves them, and because Christ died for them; also because God loves us, and Christ died for us, despite our being sinful. We are to love without the certainty of response. If men can stand out against God, they can stand out against us. Yet we are to love on. *That* is Christian love. Evidently, it is a tough idealism.

IV

The account here given of the nature of Christian love is at variance with that given in one of the most important of recent treatises on the subject, *Agape and Eros*, by Anders Nygren. I should be wanting in courtesy not to draw attention to the variance, and to indicate the main reasons for it. According to him natural love (*Eros*) is a form of desire, the mind's movement to what it believes to be good or beautiful, the attainment of which would bring satisfaction. It is therefore egocentric, though not necessarily selfish, since in its purest form it seeks the highest good, namely God, as it did in Plato and the mystery religions, and has often done in Christians. Love in the Christian sense (*agapē*) is radically different. In Scripture it means primarily God's love for men. It is not a desire at all, for (a) it is directed to men undeservedly, is 'indifferent to human merit', conferring value, not responding to it, and (b) it does not seek anything for itself. It is entirely a 'self-giving', is 'spontaneous and uncaused'. The love a Christian has to have to his neighbour must be of this kind—not directed on anything good seen in the neighbour, and not exercised even to please God. It too must be pure self-giving. Now humans are capable only of human love, the distinction

between responsive and uncaused love being part of the ultimate distinction between the human and the divine. We are obliged to say, then, that when a Christian loves in the Christian way, it is not he but God who is loving. God is the only 'subject' of *agapē*. I apologize for the bareness of the summary; I am picking out from a large, learned, and unfailingly charitable work only what is strictly relevant to the present lecture.

Bishop Nygren would have to say that in my own account of Christian love I have confused natural and divine love, in the confusion have given much more place to the former than to the latter, and have assumed that the human self is the 'subject', the real agent, of even the divine kind of love. My reasons for not being able to accept his position are psychological and ethical.

Human love is a fact. Its nature is therefore to be learned from observation. As I see it, whether rightly or wrongly, it is not always a desire to possess or enjoy; it is often a desire to give, and often not conscious enough to be a desire, being just a giving. Further, I cannot reduce it to any other single movement of consciousness. I have called it a set or attitude of mind, generating and directing all the mind's functions, of which desire is only one. It is something massive. As for Christian love, this too is a fact, though much less common; and so far as I have been able to observe it, and to read the observations of others, it seems clearly to resemble natural love in the respect just mentioned. Although it differs greatly in other respects, I cannot tear the differences out of the concrete mental context. Nygren would probably not allow that the matter could be settled in this psychological way. His approach is scriptural and theological. I have tried to understand Scripture in the light of common and Christian experience, admitting that this has not managed perfectly to realize the ideal.

Nygren's account is a theory of the mode of action of

God's grace. That divine grace is a necessary condition of the living out of the Christian morality I have, of course, insisted; Christian morality is part of the redeemed life. I have not developed this aspect because it would take me beyond ethics into theology, which is not my sphere. If I may be allowed a trespassing opinion, the theology of grace seems to me to have subtilized intolerably a divine promise and the human experience of its fulfilment. Bishop Nygren has brought it back to simplicity: in the love of one's neighbour that is wholly self-giving, it is God Himself who is loving. He emphatically means this in a literal sense. Hence his insistence that the Christian morality is entirely a religious one. The moral philosopher in me compels me to maintain that there is no *morality* where the agent is not human, free, and accountable. I can only construe the Christian call to a man as one that *he* shall repent, *he* shall expose himself to God's influence, and *he* shall love his fellows. If in the redeemed life his attitude and acts are no longer his, his self is not redeemed but suspended. Bishop Nygren is, of course, trying to do justice to St Paul's authentically religious exclamation, 'Not I, but Christ in me'. The question is whether this should be taken into a precise conceptual theology in the form that when a man becomes a Christian he ceases to be an agent and becomes *only* a channel or sphere of operation of God's activity.

This instance of a difference between a theological and an ethical approach to religious problems is so characteristic that the next lecture will be devoted to further instances.

LECTURE FIVE

The Religious Dimension

I

ONE OF THE guiding threads in these lectures has been a particular way of distinguishing religion and morality. In defining the former as our facing towards God and the latter as our facing towards our fellow-men, I may have made the distinction sharper in thought than it is in fact. Nevertheless, there are in fact those two different directions of awareness, attitude and behaviour; any serious discussion of a religious morality, under which heading Christian morality obviously falls, must concern itself with the problem of their due relation to each other; and in my attempt to seize on the moral content of the teaching of Jesus and of Paul I have found the distinguishing and relating of the two directions helpful. I now want to suggest the relevance of the distinction to some parts and forms of theology. I must excuse this transgression into a field beyond my competence by saying that my purpose is to indicate how certain theological pronouncements affect one who looks at them from the point of view of Christian ethics and with the bent of mind of a moral philosopher.

Between religion and morality there are four possible relations, each of which has been realized. (a) They could be kept apart, each being pursued without reference to the other, the religious side not generating from its own nature any directions appropriate to the behaviour of humans with humans, and the moral side not reaching upwards to the religious level. Something very like this first possibility

seems to be the position of the ancient Greeks; it is hard to see any connection between their public religion and their gnomic moral wisdom. (b) The religious side could usurp the moral, in the strong sense of imposing rules about the behaviour of humans to one another without any reference to conscience. Perhaps most religions slip into this position at some points. The settling of a moral question by simply adducing a sacred text or a sacred tradition is an instance. In the narrow sort of Pharisees criticized by Jesus, the religious usurped the moral in the sense that their engrossment in a petty detail of daily ritual, all done to God and for their own righteousness, crowded out, and blinded or blunted them against, any direct interest in what they should do to and for their fellows. (c) The moral life could usurp the religious by reducing God to a moral Governor, and the service of Him to morality, as most of the English deists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did, and as many Anglo-Saxons, Americans as well as British, have done since. Voltaire seems to have leaned more to this position than to atheism. (d) The moral and the religious could be brought into close connection, by seeing each as involving the other. That this last possibility is the one realized in the Christian scheme I have felt obliged to maintain.

In the teaching of Jesus the connection was expressed with an elemental simplicity: love one another, because, as you well know in your hearts, love is good, and because God loves you. The chief reason why He expressed it so simply is that He had a genius for simplicity, but another reason is that, speaking to Jews, He could presuppose the long background of their precociously developed ethical religion, debased indeed in practice but with its nobler notes still sounding, and still listened to with respect. Paul amplified the connection between the religious and the moral with the ideas and motives that sprang out of the belief that Jesus as the Christ belongs to the nature of

God, the belief that first produced a sect within Judaism and then a new religion that absorbed and transcended the Judaic line. Under the inspiration of Paul, the first few affirmations of the original apostles, which could be compressed into a baptismal confession, were expanded into a loose body of doctrine and doctrinal suggestions. As the Church grew, and in the East won over men trained in philosophical rhetoric, and in the West men trained in forensic rhetoric, doctrine came to be subjected to a clarification and explication of an intellectual kind, partly to provide an argued case for pagans educated in the Graeco-Roman culture, thus giving rise to apologetics; partly to satisfy the irrepressible mental needs of the new class of Christian intellectuals, thus giving rise to theology; and partly to set up, above the different teachings of the multiplying Christian schools, a standard of orthodoxy, of officially sanctioned doctrinal statements, thus giving rise to such conciliar promulgations as the Nicene Creed and the Formula of Chalcedon.

It is to this changed scene of a large and organized Church, with firmly crystallized dogmas and with outstanding thinkers whose pronouncements acquired almost the status of dogmas, that we must now turn. At this high level of thought the interest was overwhelmingly religious, that is, about the nature of God, and about men regarded primarily as souls to be divinely saved. The message of the New Testament about how men should consider and treat one another was apparently thought to be something that could be left largely to the practical sphere of preaching and pastoral control. As I noted earlier, the Church has never framed a formal moral creed, and her systematic theologians have only exceptionally given to the Christian moral life the critical thought they have given to the religious life.

There have been, however, some dogmas and near-dogmas either about or based on the religious reference, that had strange implications about the moral aspect of

man, which despite their strangeness were allowed to stand. In the language of these lectures, there has been some theologizing that appears to realize the second of the above-mentioned four possibilities, namely, settling moral matters entirely by religious ones. Some scriptural basis for such a way of thinking was found in the letters of St Paul; the first to fasten on it and develop it was St Augustine; it was revived at the Reformation; and it has been pressed again in our own day, with an influence that is fading in this country but continues to be extremely powerful on the Continent. A line of thought so recurrent, and represented by thinkers so great as St Augustine, Luther and Calvin, with Barth and Brunner as its living spokesmen, is entitled to attention. Does it reconcile Christian theology and Christian ethics, or divide them? Does it respect our natural moral sensibility or defy it? Does it enable us to see our relation to God and our relation to one another from the common centre of love? These questions might not receive the same answers if we examined successively the thinkers named, with a care to interpret their writings fairly. Such an examination could not, of course, be summarized in a single lecture. I shall therefore detach the line of thought from its several representatives, and try to articulate the impression it makes on me as a student of moral philosophy. To anticipate, the impression is that it is religiously strong, ethically weak, and theologically incoherent. So far as the impression is personal, it will be worthless, but I want to make it the vehicle of two contentions, first that there is a difference between the religious sensibility and the moral one so deep that they *can* be made to clash, and secondly that theology should do its best to reconcile them without doing violence to either.

Put very barely, the line of thought that causes misgivings in a mind that approaches theology from the side of ethics Christian and natural is as follows. We are born

depraved, being now so helpless that we should give up trying to be good; all effort to be good is useless, for we can originate nothing good, and is impious, for the hope of any self-mending is a refusal to acknowledge our total dependence on God. But God made man good? Yes, but Adam, or Satan, working through the flesh, undid the race, which has added so much to the original entail that the possibility of natural goodness vanished long ago. We can become good only by the action on and in us of God's grace, which must move us even to the step of first desiring or receiving it. Without grace, man's nature and life are wholly evil; with grace, every good motion within and every good act without is not our doing but God's. With varying qualifications and enlargements, these contentions have been put forward from time to time as an essential part of the doctrine of our salvation.

They look like a very grim setting for the 'glad tidings' that have warmed and changed innumerable minds; and they suggest that all conversion is bound to be abrupt and convulsive. There is undoubtedly a big disparity between our nature and our 'calling', but is it quite so great as that? It is, however, a sound principle of method, sound both psychologically and ethically, first to try to appreciate and only then to proceed to criticize. We shall certainly not appreciate those contentions unless we look at them from the religious side, for they are motivated by a religious shrinking from attributing to man, as a mere creature, (a) the independence of freedom or power, (b) little sin, (c) any merit that could ground a claim on God, that is, be a morally coercive entitlement to His favour.

Consider the religious attitude in itself and give it full rein. We are then facing God, and in any awareness we may have of ourselves we see ourselves only in contrast with Him. The contrast is devastating. The more we apprehend and feel the vastness of His being, the illimitable qualities that make Him God, the wider and deeper

yawns the gulf that divides us from Him. As the vision of Him waxes, the picture of ourselves wanes. Compared with His infinity, our littleness dwindles to nothing; measured by His perfection, our highest attainments look like sins, and what we call our sins become unbearable. In the phrase made current by Rudolf Otto, God is the 'Wholly Other'. This had been said in the old 'negative theology' in the form that everything that can be affirmed of man must be denied of God, if we are not to unseat Him from His deity by making Him only bigger and better than ourselves; even the highest terms we can apply to ourselves, such as wise and good, are so utterly inadequate when predicated of God that we ought not to use them in a scrupulous theology. It would probably be truer to say instead that He is everything that we are not, for we are then putting the positive and the negative in their right places; the positive surely belongs to Him, as existing originally, independently, unlimitedly, perfectly, so that it is we who have to be described by negatives, since we are in all respects at so great a remove from Him that in us existence is near to exhaustion, not far from nothingness. It is only when we compare ourselves with one another, and with the creatures below us, that we can get any sense of stature or merit. So long as Job was conversing with men he could protest that his heaped-up calamities were undeserved, but when, at the end of the great book, he was confronting God, his stout conscience gave way to creaturely humility: 'Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes' (42⁵⁻⁶). So long as the purely religious mood is in sole charge of us we spend ourselves in the extreme exaltation of God and the extreme disparagement of man. I doubt if anyone who has not done this spontaneously and sincerely knows what religion means. The hyperbole of the language of worship is inevitable and proper—that is, in the actual experience of worship it is not hyperbole at all. In the judgement we

make on our knees we feel that we are miserable sinners, and rightly say that we are.

II

When, however, theology tries to articulate the insights of worship, it leaves the peculiar logic of worshipful thinking for the entirely general logic of the intellect. It turns what is well said in adoration and prayer, in hymnal and other liturgical felicities, into sharply shaped propositions with firm conceptual implications. It can then pass very naturally into the line of thought to which I have drawn attention. Some of the ways in which the intellectual logic here works must be sketched, if the ethical comments I wish to make are to have any clearness.

By one route we start from the sheer greatness of God, from His sovereignty, His utter supremacy. This we intellectualize into the virtually quantitative notion of omnipotence. When this notion is explicated, it is seen to mean that God cannot be limited by anything outside Himself. This illimitable power in Him implies that there is no power elsewhere, and one part of this conclusion is that all humans are powerless, *necessarily* incapable of being independent sources of activity. A similar conclusion has sometimes been drawn from His omniscience: what God infallibly foresees is bound to happen. If everything His subjects did were not determined by Him, His sovereignty would not be absolute but limited, and therefore not really divine. Man, then, is not free. In some such way certain theologians have rivalled the scientists by laying down a doctrine of determinism (not always in the special form of predestination to salvation or to damnation). It will be noticed that nothing distinctively Christian enters into the arguments. These are of the quite general sort that belongs to *natural* theology. Further, they are not logically watertight; for example,

they do not consider the possibility, compatible with omnipotence, that God could endow humans with real power, asserting His own by punishing them for the misuse of it and not by controlling them as puppets. The cogency in the arguments comes from the religious experience from which they start. The thinkers who have framed or approved them have been trying on the plane of intellect to do justice to that utter sovereignty of God which from the viewpoint of worship is undeniable.

From the viewpoint of morality the conclusion that man neither has nor can have power and freedom is disconcerting, for it leaves no room either for the basic conviction of natural morality, that there are some things we ought to do in a sense of 'ought' that implies 'can', or for the conviction of religious morality that we are not merely subject to God but are accountable to Him. Where there is no power and freedom there cannot be obligation or accountability. When the datum of religious experience that we are dependent for our whole being and continuance on God is intellectualized into the proposition that we are wholly determined by Him, so that all our acts are not ours but God's, or rather are God's effects, the very possibility of morality is excluded. The general philosophical observation to be made is that a conclusion is drawn about morality without allowing the witness of conscience to have any say. Within Christian circles the question has to be raised whether the conclusion is compatible with the moral *appeals* of Jesus (and of Paul), and with the distinctively Christian experience of God.

By another route we start from a qualitative datum. In our wholly religious moments the contrast of God's perfection and our sinfulness can become oppressive, in some minds obsessive. We cannot blacken ourselves too much. If we had offended God but once, we should feel the sole offence to be shocking; in Jewish terms, to break a single command of the Law is to break the whole Law.

Religiously, something like this is virtually self-evident. A religious experience from which the extreme contrast of the divine holiness and human sinfulness is absent is gravely defective. Yet by itself it can be so devastating as to take all joy out of religion, so enervating as to unfit us to walk effectively among our fellows, and so shattering as to send some minds to the mad-house. Christian experience includes it, but just as it can be felt exclusively in practice, so it can be stated one-sidedly in theology, and has been. The theologians who have done this would claim that they have balanced their disheartening doctrine of sin with their equally heavy emphasis on the doctrine of divine grace. The impression they leave on me is that they have aggrandized sin in order to aggrandize grace. This denigration of man for the glorification of God is hardly avoidable, is indeed appropriate, in our most narrowly religious moments, and it can be effective preaching, needed at times to shock us out of low standards or complacency. Even as preaching, however, it can discourage moral effort. This is precisely what some theologians intend it to do, in order to throw us through total despair of ourselves into total reliance on God. As doctrine, it is more than is required to condemn either excessive self-reliance or pride in moral achievement. Further, as doctrine it is subject to the test of truth. Are we in fact as bad and helpless morally (for it is sin as *moral* evil that I am concerned with) as those theologians assert? Is their intellectualization of the religiously felt enormity of our sinfulness just? Their reply takes two forms, some theologians asserting only one, others both.

One of them is the doctrine of original sin, which has been so generally taught (on the basis of Romans 5¹²⁻²¹, and with the authority of Tertullian and St Augustine) that it may be regarded as orthodox. In some sense it must, I believe, be retained. It does justice to a gross fact

of experience, the ubiquity, tenacity and versatility of sin. The more sensitive our conscience, the more we are aware of the difficulty of breaking away from evil tendencies. Education does not conjure them away, neither do social improvements. Lop off one sin, and another takes its place. Remove its known opportunities, and it finds or makes others. Dam up its present streams, and others begin to flow. Particular sins come from a fount of general sinfulness, and the fount continues to bubble and burst through somewhere, so that what we need is a cleansing of the fount, or, to risk a pagan metaphor, something that 'strikes not off a head but the whole neck of Hydra' (Sir Thomas Browne). These are facts of experience. They can be fairly summarized, and proximately accounted for, by saying that a propensity or bias to evil is an innate part of human nature. In this form the doctrine of original sin is certainly required, as true to experience, whether supported by texts or not; and it might be extended to cover also the empirical fact that we are corrupted by the *consequences* of our predecessors' sins, through the sin-stained traditions and institutions which they have left to us. In its commonest historical form it says more than that, for it takes original sin to mean original *guilt*. Here it comes into direct collision with our moral sensibility. We have to stifle this if we are to believe that what is inborn is something for which we can be held responsible, or concerning which we can in any sense tolerable to conscience be held guilty. In that specific form the doctrine is motivated religiously; and in that form it goes against conscience. Which is to triumph in theology, the religious or the moral sensibility? This question cannot be suppressed when we are dealing with a religion so deeply moral as that of the New Testament. The notion of original guilt has come to be widely discarded, but it is still sometimes reasserted as scriptural, and even when not it lingers on as a half-conscious

presupposition. *If* it is typical biblical doctrine, the point remains that it clashes with conscience, and so sets a problem in an ethical religion.

The other doctrine, less frequently asserted, but recently reaffirmed in certain quarters, is that of 'total depravity'. If the term is rhetorical, it ought to be dropped, from preaching as well as from theology. It is, however, sometimes seriously intended. It follows when sinfulness is declared to be not simply an inheritance but our sole inheritance: we are all born with nothing but evil propensities, are by nature ('fallen nature') incapable of conceiving, desiring, willing or executing anything good.¹ The indictment covers all our faculties, reason and conscience included. As covering reason, it has been used as a ground for rejecting all natural theology, and could be equally used to discredit all *systematic* theology (since system is a rational ideal), and all science. As covering conscience it means that by our natural equipment we are unable not only to choose or to carry out, but even to think, anything good, in the sense of recognizing it as good. In a somewhat mitigated form of the doctrine, the presence of a conscience is allowed in the natural man, but a conscience so deeply impaired by sin original and acquired that when it clashes with revelation (usually identified with Scripture) we should follow the latter—more precisely, the *Christian* should, other people being unable to do so since they are at the natural stage, lacking the influx of grace. Here is yet another doctrine of determinism, not now that all of us alike are entirely controlled by God, but that all of us are born into bondage to sin, and remain completely in

¹ It is, of course, a fact of experience that actual sin strengthens sinfulness, lessening freedom in certain directions. When, however, freedom is *destroyed*, we regard the case as pathological. If we were wholly impotent, the distinction between the normal and the pathological would be meaningless. The issue is not whether we are completely free or completely bound—unless we leave experience, become doctrinaire, and *define* freedom as something unsusceptible of degrees.

this bondage unless and until we are liberated by grace, the special grace of God in Christ.

The doctrine of total depravity reads more like a caricature than a description of the natural man. Whether it rests on sound biblical exegesis must be settled by those who are competent in this field. The difficulty with it from the point of view of the philosopher is that its upholders refuse the test of total experience. If we plead that in pagan secular circles, before and since the coming of Christ, instances of good impulses, convictions and deeds have been frequent, we are told that we cannot read the secrets of the heart, this being God's prerogative, and that what in such cases seems to be good is not and cannot be. Where conscience detects goodness and loveliness in relations among people who have not accepted (whether through refusal, carelessness, or ignorance) the grace of God expressed in Christ, conscience is wrong, is bound to be wrong. Here is a doctrine about man that declines to be checked by men's experience of one another, on the ground that both our natural powers of observation and the most careful judgements of our natural conscience are too generally and deeply polluted by sin to yield truth. Confronted by that, a secular moral philosopher would shrug his shoulders and walk away. In Apologetics, the doctrine would be disastrous. In theology, its extremeness might provoke another reaction of Pelagianism, which really is a heresy so far as it means that man is capable by nothing more than the use of his natural powers of achieving such a degree of moral and religious excellence as to deserve, and therefore to get, ultimate salvation. If it be maintained that these comments are merely pragmatic ones, and that the doctrine still stands as *theologically true*, I must again say that it is based on a narrow though genuine experience of man's relation to God, and does not allow our sense of what is appropriate in the relations of men to one another to contribute to a doctrine about man.

Speaking empirically I do believe that the virtues of the natural man are usually stained by evil, but not always and all over. I have observed many instances where there was no evidence of such stain—instances of duty that looked wholly selfless, and of love that looked as though it desired only the wellbeing of another. A doctrine, not itself based on the observation of man, that could require me to deny the appearances or the honest reading of them by my natural conscience would have to have a peculiar authority. Does it rest on Scripture? On a few texts only, not on the general sense or message of Scripture. On the deep sense of sin we feel in the presence of God? Yes; but that this deep sense can be conceptualized without more ado into such a doctrine is disputable. The doctrine of total depravity, even in its mitigated form, may be fairly described as a forced extension of an idea from the religious sphere into the moral one, the moral sphere not being allowed to give its own account of itself. I cannot help feeling that it is an intellectual extravaganza on the religious theme of grace, overstating the extent of natural wickedness in the desire to do full justice to the greatness of grace—as though this were not made evident enough by the way in which it deals with the empirically known magnitude of sin. Indeed, by regarding every man as unable by nature ('fallen' nature) to do anything good, and by applying the term 'good' only to what is wholly the work and gift of the special grace that comes through Christ, the doctrine reduces the love of God to a capricious selection, from the whole sin-bound race, of those to whom the first divine impulse is unaccountably given. If it be objected that I am here using the term 'capricious' where reverence would say 'inscrutable', I should have to reply, first, that within an ethical theism such a selection *would* be capricious, and, secondly, that the difference between the two terms is yet another illustration of the difference between the moral and the religious

standpoints.² My misgiving about the doctrine of total depravity is not that its framers have failed to reconcile the two standpoints (for that can at some points be very difficult), but that they have apparently seen no reason for trying to do so. Religious judgement rides *roughshod* over moral judgement.

I must add a further misgiving about the tendency of the proper religious horror of sin to determine the shape and content of an entire theology. When, disdaining the control of observation and conscience, certain thinkers write of a completely fallen man, some also of a completely fallen universe, they are locking up the whole realm of the natural in sin and are restricting the appellation 'good' to what comes into man from God through the special channel of Christ. In so doing they rule out the possibility of a natural theology—which seems to go against Romans 1¹⁹⁻²⁰. Modern philosophical arguments to the existence and nature of God have been based largely on the characteristics of man as we naturally know him; but if either it or he is thoroughly bad, or both are, and bad indeed ever since the days of Adam, no ground is left for any reasonable inference to God, since the notion of a generally evil universe or of a generally evil human race does not require for its explanation, but on the contrary forbids, the notion of a perfect Being. That there is a good God, and that Nature (at any rate the earth and man) when it *first* came from His hands displayed His goodness, must then, be knowable and known only through revelation, and through the particular revelation of parts of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

² I can read Romans 9²⁰⁻¹ only as a strictly religious utterance: 'Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?' Paul is meditating on God's rejection of the Jews (to a Jew almost incredible) and acceptance of the Gentiles. Yet elsewhere he clearly regards the Jews as having *made themselves* evidently unworthy of their election.

This conclusion has been drawn, and even emphasized. It gives a hostage to fortune. It requires us to tell all those who are outside the strictly Christian fold that so long as they remain outside, and therefore in a state of depravity, they cannot know God and cannot think, feel, will or do anything good. They may take us at our word, not take the step we have in view, and be content to live by impulse or by prudence. It also requires us to tell philosophers that, so long as they continue to use only natural reason, natural conscience, and common experience, they can throw no light at all on the existence and nature of God and on men's due relation to Him and to one another. They too may take us at our word, and give up the quest for God and the good. The old two-way bridge between theology and philosophy has, indeed, already been blasted, from both sides, and neither side seems anxious to rebuild it. Here is an improper rent in the commonwealth of learning.

LECTURE SIX

The Christian Contribution to Morality

I

IT IS NOT a Christian prejudice to divide history—at any rate the social history of the West—into Christian and pre-Christian. With the foundation of Christianity a change began which in fact became immense. Whether the change be judged to be for the better or for the worse, its immensity remains. A new sensibility came in, a new kind of character, new ways of conduct, new standards of values, public as well as private. A novel idealism loosened its wings, which turned out to be strong ones, carrying a tired civilization into a fresh adventure; and new scruples managed to put powerful checks on the raw virility of inpouring and conquering barbarians. Not that the change passed with complete continuity and consistency over the whole of restless Europe's life. The demands of the Christian faith were too exacting and too comprehensive to be responded to eagerly and steadily by either the demoralized progeny of the dying civilization or the daredevils of the supervening barbarism. Further, there was a frequent shift of peoples: when the Church had brought one horde, settled in its new land, under her discipline, she had to cope with another inrush of wild men from the North, the process going on for centuries. Again and again the Church could only tame and civilize, not really convert, and that was presumably what the Christian emperor Charlemagne was doing when, for the peace of his realm and borders, he forced whole tribes to profess Christianity under the threat of the sword.

Moving masses, and human material too crudely vigorous to be quickly tractable, set repeated obstacles to the work of deep conversion. Time and again the Church had to start her work again from the beginning. Indeed, in some degree she has to start afresh with each generation, for conversion is of individuals, not of tribes or nations, being an affair of personal choice, not of governmental decrees or of ecclesiastical dominion.

For these reasons, Christian influence has always been uneven, zig-zag, incomplete, and so remains. Nevertheless, it has been huge—spreadingly pervasive and enduring, only in very few places short-lived, as in the Middle East and North Africa, where it was killed by the conquests of the Moslems. We should have to be blind if, looking over the inhabited earth, we failed to recognize great areas of society stamped with the peculiarities that oblige us, for simple truth of description, to group those areas together as Christendom. There is a Christian world in the same descriptive sense as there is a Moslem world, a Hindu one, and a Buddhist one. Like these it is distinguished by its visible ways of human behaving, and by the standards and sensibility operative in them.

What has the Christian change been in its moral aspect? To handle the question briefly, we must confine ourselves to Europe, measure it by its Graeco-Roman background as its only civilized predecessor in this area, and state it in general terms instead of by the accumulation of historical social detail.

On this general plane it is all too easy to be unfair. It would be monstrous to suggest, for example, that chastity, or pity, or kindness, or generosity, first came into Europe with Christianity—though *male* chastity probably did. Man's created nature includes a capacity for goodness, and this was realized in various forms and degrees long before the Christian faith began: natural love, for instance, is presumably as old as man, if only in a crude form, and

when it developed showed sporadic and fitful approximations towards some features of Christian love, which is one of the reasons why I have not severed this entirely from it. Some of the distinctive moral expressions of Christianity are distinctive, not as being in every respect peculiar to Christendom, but as being far more evident there—for instance, not incipient but mature, normal instead of abnormal, versatile or adaptive instead of rigid, and present at the bottom of the social scale as well as the top. Christianity has drawn some things out besides putting some things in.

Let me illustrate this by quoting, in close, unembellished translation, two examples of high moral sensibility among the Romans, taken from the letters of the younger Pliny, written round about A.D. 100. The first used to be well known, and I hope it still is. It is about the lady Arria, whose husband was condemned in the reign of Claudius to end his life:

‘Her husband, Paetus, was ill, her son too was ill, both of them gravely. The son died, a very handsome boy, at the same time very modest, and dear to his parents as much because he was their child as because of his good qualities. She so prepared and carried out his funeral as to keep her husband unaware of the matter. Further, whenever she entered her husband’s sickroom, she pretended that their boy was still living, and even somewhat better, and to his frequent inquiries about how the lad was she always replied, “He is resting nicely, and taking his food readily”. When she could no longer hold back her tears, she would go out and give herself up to her grief; but when she had wept her heart out, she returned with dry eyes and composed face, as if she had left her bereavement outside. Splendid indeed was that other act of hers [after Paetus’s condemnation], when she drew the dagger, plunged it into her breast, drew it out and handed it to her husband with the unforgettable and almost

divine remark, "Paetus, it doesn't hurt". This she did with fame and eternity before her eyes; but how much greater it was when, without the prospect of everlasting fame, she hid her tears, covered up her grief, and acted as if she were still mothering her boy' (*Ep.* III.16). Both incidents are typically Roman—superb wifeliness. But more significant for our purpose is Pliny's ranking the quiet virtue above the truly magnificent one. His comment reveals a tender sensibility which Christianity was to enlarge and multiply.

The other example shows this tender sensibility in his own domestic concerns: 'I am worn out with the illness, even the death, of slave after slave, some of them still young. In this grief I have two consolations, very inadequate but nevertheless consoling. One is the ease with which I can set my slaves free, for I do not feel that I have lost them early when I have lost them free. The other is my allowing them to make wills, which I honour as if they were legal: they dispose and request as they please, and I obey as if commanded; they apportion, donate and bequeath, provided it be within the household, this being in effect the slaves' commonwealth or city. Still, although I get relief from these consolations, I am weakened and broken by the very humaneness that leads me to do such things. But I would not on this account wish to harden my heart. I am not unaware that some men call such domestic misfortunes nothing more than material losses, and for making this estimate regard themselves as great and wise men. Whether they are great and wise I do not know, but they are not men. It is the nature of a man to feel grief, yet also to defend himself against it; to open his heart to consolations, not to be above the need of them' (*Ep.* VIII.16).

Pliny was not, of course, the only Roman who at some points approached the Christian. We have to bear him and his like in mind when we see the disgusting picture

of Roman life painted by Juvenal, his contemporary, and to remember that Juvenal painted it in angry denunciation. Nevertheless, other records seem to indicate that the gentle Plinys were rare, and the men and women depicted by the bitter Juvenal by no means uncommon. The Romans were in general coarse and cruel. Their coarseness cannot now be described in public. As for their cruelty, think of a legal system which allowed masters to torture and kill their slaves; and think of a social temper that found regular delight, for all classes and both sexes, in the bloody agonies of the amphitheatre. That these public shows survived for centuries—with Christian women and men thrown sometimes to the beasts—is a firm proof of the depth of the savage strain. In St Augustine's *Confessions* (vi.8) we have an account of their fascination as late as the last quarter of the fourth century. He describes the reactions of one of his pupils when he was a teacher of rhetoric. Met one day in the streets of Rome by some fellow-students, this lad, Alypius by name, was playfully but forcibly carried off by these to a gladiatorial show, despite his protest that while they could drag his body there, they could not make him watch the show. When they were seated, he fixed his mind on other matters and kept his eyes tightly shut. Unluckily not his ears, 'for when, on the fall of one of the fighters, a great shout from all the spectators smote him, he opened his eyes—to be worse wounded in soul than the fighter he was impelled to look at was in body. . . . For along with the sight of the blood-covered man he took in a dose of savagery, and, instead of turning away, fixed his gaze, and willy-nilly drank up the horrors, delighting in the shocking fight and intoxicated with the bloodthirsty pleasure. He was no longer what he was when he came, but was now just one of the crowd. . . . He watched, shouted, was inflamed, and went away with a mania that forced him to return, and to do so not only with those who had dragged

him there but even ahead of them and himself dragging others.'

The Greeks were less cruel, by ancient standards, than the Romans, and were not coarse; but their refinement, judged morally, resulted in their being able to throw a veil of grace and gaiety over their vices, which romped in public, and in private to everybody's expectation—which means that they were not regarded as vices. Outstanding among these were sexual looseness in general, and homosexuality in the special form of passion for handsome youths. The other peoples of the Empire both gave to and received from the general pool of cruelty and vicious indulgence. From time to time a lonely voice of protest against this or that practice emerges from the ancient records, but the distinctive features of that hard and licentious paganism remained until the Church became a social and political power.

II

Thereafter, the face of society began to show a change, and never since has anything like such cruelty and vice been, for any length of time, a prominent and accepted part of the mood and habits of any large society within Christendom. True, under the changed face there have been many unchanged hearts, but these have usually had to trim their conduct to the changed structures and standards. One consequence has been a spreading of hypocrisy. Even so, the contrast stands, since under the several centuries of the pagan Empire the hypocrisies of Christendom were not required, either by public propriety or by bare prudence. The French epigrammatist, La Rochefoucauld, was right when he said that 'hypocrisy is the homage which vice pays to virtue'.

To attribute the obvious change in the public scene, and in the private sensibility that demanded and produced it, and has maintained and developed it against regular

evasion and occasional rebellion—to attribute that change to something called ‘natural evolution’ is to talk with inexcusable vagueness, since in this context the term means a *postulated* something, left entirely *unspecified*, in human nature, as either *necessitating* or *inclining* to moral advance. To become an intellectually respectable hypothesis the *x* must be given a content, and some empirical evidence be adduced for giving it that content. Avoiding postulation and keeping to experience, I can find only one general law of moral advance, and it is a law of a tendency, not of a necessity, namely, that when new moral insights are published and practised, they tend to spread and last by the process of being recognized as insights, supported by the mechanism of habit, the latter breaking down when the former is weakened or suspended; or, put negatively, virtue not appreciated as virtue does not become an enduring habit. To return to the special advance with which we are concerned: for the historical fact that European society underwent a very large change after Christianity became dominant in it, no evidenced explanation has yet been offered except the historical fact that it was Christianity that became dominant in it. The ancient classical moralists failed in their own period; for nearly a thousand years they remained almost unknown; and when they then became influential, as they certainly did, it was only among the educated minority of society, and that minority had, more consciously than the rest of society, a mentality modified by the long centuries of Christian tutelage.

What, then, were the chief changes in moral sensibility and valuation which Christianity introduced? They might be classified as changes in which some things that had been accepted as good or right were condemned as bad, some that had been despised were brought into honour, some that had been ranked high were given a humbler place, and some that had been acknowledged by very few to be

good were seen to be such by multitudes; to which we must add that the class of the morally *élite* spilled over the ancient boundaries of education and social standing, the much advertised range of Stoics from the freed slave Epictetus to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius being within those two categories, and trivial in proportion to the social range of Christian saints. To follow out that classification would require a treatise. I shall select the changes that can be sketched briefly and without a heavy lumber of learned reference.

The most novel change was probably the ideal and practice of humility. Men had always been humble before their gods—their common religious virtue. The innovation was the extension, on religious grounds, of this religious virtue to the realm of morality: the one God before whom we cannot but be humble requires us, when He is seen in and through Jesus, to be humble with one another. The Christians spread this novelty by practising it, in a form that revealed a hitherto unsuspected excellence among the attitudes which a man could adopt towards his neighbour. For the Greeks and Romans humility was a vice in the sense that in their view it was incompatible with excellence or virtue. It was more than condemned; it was despised. It was synonymous with littleness, insignificance, meanness, want of spirit, and, in a man of any parts, want of just self-esteem. Even their advanced thinkers failed to see it as good or comely. Cicero clearly had no room for it; it was incongruous with both the doctrine and temper of Stoicism; I cannot recall any passage in Plato that commends it; and Aristotle, besides explicitly excluding it from his list of virtues, pronounces it to be worse than vanity, for it is lack of self-respect (*Eth. Nic.*, IV.3). It was a badge and proof of inferiority. True, a place was given—by Aristotle with emphasis—to what a dictionary would translate as ‘modesty’, but the illustrations given of it by the ancient writers show that

it was the pride in self that does not show itself off in vulgar ways. I doubt if, before Christianity came in, the Greeks and Romans ever saw a man whom *we* would call humble—neither cringing nor unctuous if of lowly status, and, if well placed, when able to command only requests, when unable to avoid privilege carries it unselfconsciously, and is not proud of his good fortune, accomplishments and virtues, but *grateful* for them.

It was such humility—here less than half described—that Christianity both preached and produced, and produced steadily, doing so by providing powerful motives to it, namely, that God had humbled Himself, setting the pattern for us all in Jesus, that we are all brothers, and that we are all sinners. The novelty of the motives accounts for the novelty of the virtue, for man seems to have no natural propensity to humility. When this quality was exemplified by Christians (the wholehearted ones) of high birth and low, men and women, the gifted and the average, more and more of the rest of men came to *see* that the new thing was good, and good in the double Greek sense of being both right and comely; and even in our own day, despite its rampant and encouraged vulgarities, humility, when seen embodied, is admired by those who have none of it themselves, only the affectation of it being despised. That in proud Europe it is ranked as a virtue is a wholly Christian achievement.

The ideal of childlikeness was another new revelation to the pagan mind, civilized as well as barbarian. There is nothing quite like it, and a great deal utterly unlike it, in the records of the Mediterranean world to which I have any understanding access. It includes humility, of course, but includes also—because the thoroughly Christian virtues go together, springing from the love of God and man—such qualities as simplicity, trustfulness, spontaneity, and eager devotion, which the natural man assumes to be things to be grown out of, incompatible with

adult intelligence, knowledge of the 'world', and strength. Our need in English of the two words 'childish' and 'childlike' to express two very different meanings (like *kindisch* and *kindlich* in German) has arisen out of the Christian mind. In this one ideal of childlikeness several of the values of the ancient world were turned upside down, and a novel type of character launched into it.

One of the consequences was inevitably a rise in the social evaluation of children. To natural love for them was added the moral dimension of respect. From that time onwards in Christian circles (gradually extending), children could no longer be regarded as at best simply darlings or playthings, or as having all their real value in their being the adults of the future, or at worst as burdens to be disposed of soon after birth, but were honoured as holding something unspoiled that ought to be carried into and allowed to pervade the mind of the adult. *This* valuation had no rootage in Greece, none in Rome, and little if any in the tradition and practice of the Jews, which is presumably why Jesus, to bring it home to His disciples, passed beyond precept to a vivid object-lesson (Mt 18⁵, 19¹³⁻¹⁵). From that new attitude came the mentality that eventually stopped those horrors of the Graeco-Roman peoples, widely practised and socially approved—abortion, infanticide, and exposure. In the second-century *Epistle to Diognetus* the writer had to point out as one of the marks of his fellow-Christians that 'they do not expose their offspring'. It was Christianity that wrote and enacted the children's charter.

This charter was in particular the salvation of girls. They were as valuable spiritually as boys. By the pagans they were the children least wanted, and therefore the most commonly exposed as infants. Not all of them perished in the streets or fields, the collection of them there being a regular trade, for future prostitution. At this point we are again led to the open sexual licence of the

pagan world. The ending of it is one of the miracles of Mediterranean history. The wonder of it has not been sufficiently appreciated. Little pockets of men and women separated themselves radically from their environment when they took marriage as a sacrament and dedicated their infants to God in baptism, and when husbands accepted for themselves the fidelity which their neighbours, often with the cruellest sanctions of law, imposed on their wives. The pockets grew and multiplied, slowly spreading the new notion of the sanctity of the entire family; as the Church in her institutional aspect waxed, her disciplinary power increased; and when the imperial throne became Christian, the external props and provisions for fornication, concubinage, prostitution and festal orgies for the remaining pagans could be reduced and then withdrawn. It is as impressive to think of such sinks of vice as Ephesus, Corinth and Rome becoming seats of strong bishoprics as it has been in our own day to see a cathedral rise on the very site of the slave-market of Zanzibar. The shape and feel of that old Mediterranean world disappeared not under Roman law and not under Stoicism, but under Christian control, and it has never since returned. Male sexuality has chafed under the change, and often rebelled, but even today, when large vested interests in entertainment and journalism are pandering to it, it remains publicly bound by the Christian conventions, and in the great majority of people inwardly too. In the West it is Christianity that has made *men* see that chastity is not a freak but a virtue.

An ample and tenacious forgivingness is undoubtedly a Christian characteristic, and the call to it one of the most emphatic notes in the New Testament. It is grounded morally as being appropriate in the commerce of humans who, every one of them, have many failings; and grounded religiously both in the recognition that all men, as children of God, are brethren, and more warmly in the

concrete logic of the heart (for it does not follow in the formal logic of the intellect) that since the Christian has been forgiven by God, he should forgive others. Being, then, not a marginal but a central requirement, forgivingness was expected as a matter of course within the Christian community, towards those outside the fold as well as towards one another. Failure to practice it was regarded as a scandal. The scandal happened, and not infrequently, for human nature was refractory, but the standard by which it was judged to be a scandal was not questioned.

The standard was new, and so too was the scale of the practice of it. It would be hard to maintain that forgivingness, and still less forgiveness, was a mark of the pagan Empire. So far as the various peoples were children of Nature, they were quick to resent, and not very moderate in retaliation. So far as a small minority of them were sophisticated by either a sense of the responsibility of office or by philosophical doctrine, they could sometimes temper legal justice with a little mercy, and in their private capacity could occasionally scorn to take notice of an insult or injury, or to trouble themselves to return it; but neither that public clemency nor this personal dignity, nor the impulsive magnanimity which every now and then can surprise us all, comes near to what the New Testament and the Church meant by forgivingness, namely, abstention from inner resentment as well as outer retaliation, and, when the situation made it possible or seemly, passing further to positive kindly action. Anything like this was extremely rare. Epictetus tells an instance of it in Lycinus the Spartan, which may be as legendary as most of what was said of him (it is doubtful that he existed at all), but shows that the *notion* of steady magnanimity was not unknown: 'When a fellow-citizen who had blinded him in one eye was handed over to him to punish as he pleased, he forbore, and instead trained the young

fellow and made a good man of him. He then brought him before the assembly and said to the astonished Spartans, "This man whom you put into my hands as insolent and violent, I give back to you as a decent and normal citizen" (Fragment 67 in Schweighäuser's edition).

What was then extraordinary, rare even as the content of an improving tale, came to be in the Christian community a widening fact, with the eventual result, not indeed that everybody steadily forgave, but that forgiving was recognized as a duty. This recognition remains. What first came to the notice of most people as a tenet and example of the early Christians has become part of the code of the western world, an element of the moral sensibility of even the modern secularized man.

It would be a glaring omission not to mention a special concern for the unfortunate and the wayward as another of the Christian attitudes that have made Christendom visibly different from the social system and manners of the age and region in which it was born. This attitude is part and parcel of love in the Christian sense, and mirrors the example of the Master who went about healing, and moved by choice far more among the sinning poor than among the righteous and the well-to-do. The cruelty of the ancients took the form not only of inflicting suffering easily but also of being able to bear the sight of it without the will to mitigate or remove it. The gladiatorial shows were simply the most concentrated expression of this unfeelingness. Life was cheap. The sick, the widow and orphan, the poor and the prisoner, belonged to their families and friends; only exceptionally could they get help elsewhere, as when the sick were near enough to go, or be carried, to one of the few temples of Aesculapius. The Christians had an inner constraint to help the unfortunate who came their way, and to seek out others. Particular and practical philanthropy was their *métier*;

they exercised it individually, and the Church organized and exercised it corporately. The work was limited by sin and historical circumstance, but it never ceased to be an acknowledged part of the life of a Christian society. After long centuries of such example, and the extension of it through sacrificial missionary service (think of Father Damien with his lepers, and the gifted Albert Schweitzer), it is now taken for granted in Christendom, by the non-Christians as by the rest, that the healthy, the happy, and the respectable cannot decently go their lucky way without lightening the burden on others' shoulders and helping them over their moral and other stiles.

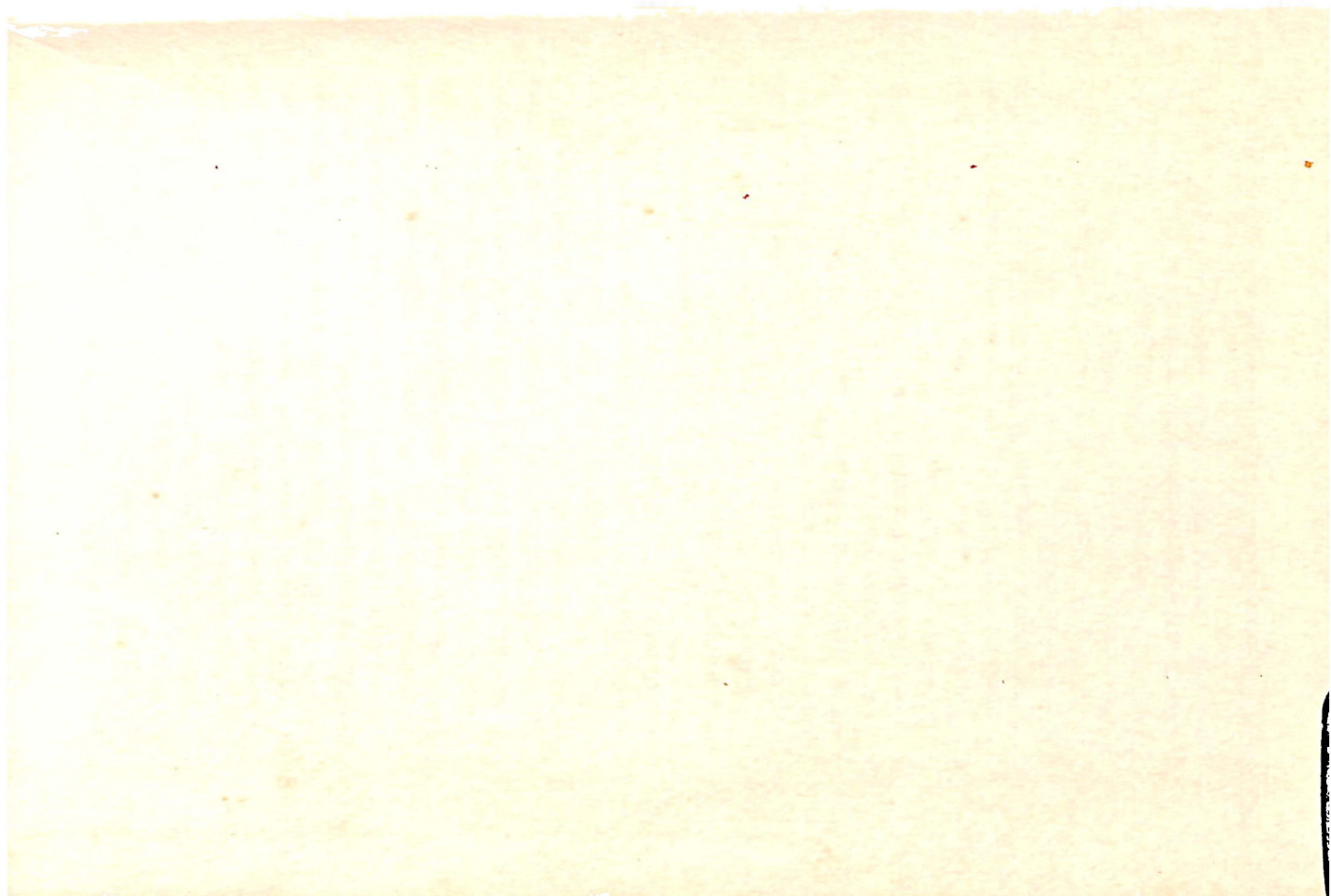
We who look back on the record of Christian philanthropy tend to see little more than its limitations. We should get proportion if we started from its pitifully small beginnings, and moved forward along its unsettled way. We should also then understand why that philanthropy passed so late into the extremely general benevolence that has been one of the expanding aspects of Christendom within the last hundred years. By that very general benevolence I mean a concern for the peace, health, material and mental standards of living, of the whole world. Before this concern could arise and begin to flow, certain historically conditioned circumstances had to be fulfilled. For example, the world had to be known by exploration, exchanges of trade and contacts of culture; regular means of communication had to be established and quickened; technological skills in engineering, agriculture and medicine had to be developed; and a machinery of international governmental collaboration set up. General benevolence was late as a dream, if only because most people were unknown to each other; and its realization has had to wait for a high stage of civilized accomplishment somewhere, and inter-governmental co-operation nearly everywhere. Only recently could a famine in India or an earthquake in Japan become speedily known across

the world, open hearts and pockets in the wealthier West, and be effectively relieved through already prepared agencies. The means are new, and benevolence has widened as its instruments have increased.

Did it all, however, start in Christendom simply because the Christian West was materially the most developed part of the world? Or because, when the material instruments were produced, there was already an accumulated fund of benevolence ready to use them? If the latter, how did the fund come to be there? It was not a legacy of Roman law or custom; or of the classical Greek philosophy, high-minded but esoteric, and not interested enough in the common man to sound the call and sketch the programme of compassion; or of the un-Greek Stoicism, which was given its chance under the Roman sway, for its cosmopolitanism was intellectual, and its ethic thrust suffering outside the sphere of moral concern, with the emphasized corollary that compassion has no moral function and should be suppressed, though it might for sociality's sake sometimes be simulated. The fund of benevolence in Christendom, so far as it was more than the fickle impulsive sort that seems to belong to nearly every man, may be fairly attributed to the religion of Christendom, since the pressure of this has been long, and since part of the very heart of it is pity. The sympathy that jumps across the world has sprung, so far as I can see, from the Christianized conscience.

In such forms the Christian moral way has written its signature largely on the nations of the West. We may regret that the religious faith behind that way has lost much of its hold (not necessarily for long), and that the higher levels of that way are unattempted by the majority of those who remain within the Church. But we should be churlish to begrudge the wide adoption of some of the Christian moral attitudes by people who fail to see the grounds and feel the motives that originated them; and

we should not be lovers of men, but only agents of a curious God, if we insinuated that nobody has a right to stand for humility, forgiveness, chastity and philanthropy except a confessed Christian. We should be glad, for our fellows' sake, that Christianity has troubled, quickened and educated the western conscience, and has begun to do the same in non-Christian nations elsewhere. I take this to be a weighty pragmatic proof of one line of thought in these lectures—that the law of love is not *only* a dogma brought from religion to morality, but a declaration of what really and plainly is appropriate in the relations of men to one another; and conversely, that the religion from which the law follows acquires some confirmation from the evident rightness of its distinctive moral requirements.

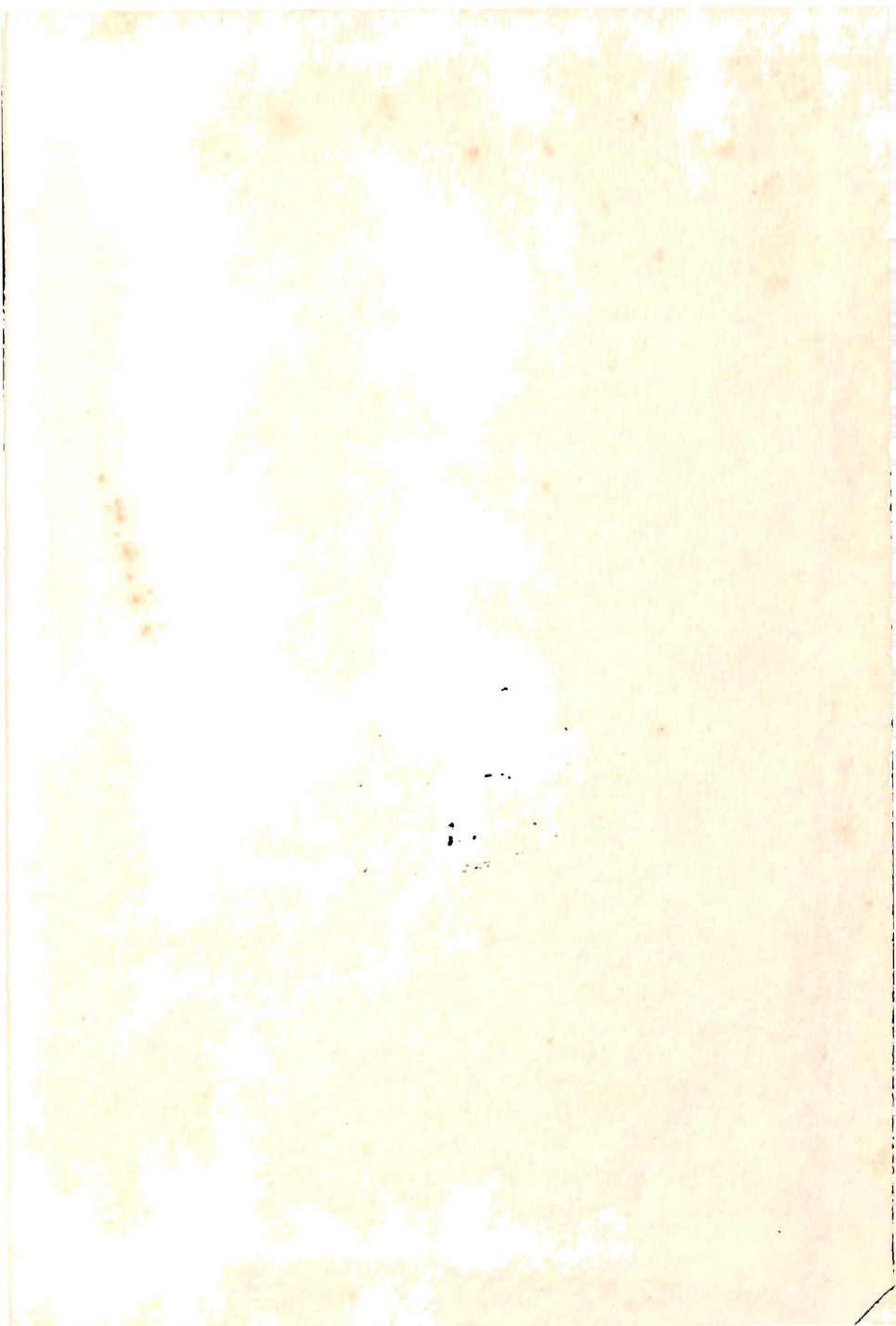


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