

THE MALIGNED GOD

By Carsten Johnsen

The Untold Story Publishers
Center of Christian Realism
Mezien, 04200 Sisteron, France

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: SOME CRUCIAL NOTES OF INTRODUCTION ON GOD AND THE ORIGIN OF EVIL: HOW COULD LUCIFER CONCEIVE THE IDEA OF A RIVALRY WITH JESUS CHRIST

1. Was God Ever Alone?
2. Creation -- The Heart Affair of God
3. Is There a Divine Self-Centeredness?
4. Among Whom Do "We Sensible Men" Pick "Our Favorite Rivals?"
5. The Strange Risk Incurred by the One Who Humbles Himself
6. Jesus Christ, An Angel Among Angels
7. What a Strange Formulation: He Thought it not Robbery
8. Illuminating Details in Lucifer's Drama
9. A Secret of the Heavens, Finally Disclosed Under Dramatic Conditions
10. Gratitude -- The Christian Realists Only Alternative to Pagan Vanity
11. For Meditation and Summary

CHAPTER TWO: THE INVISIBLE CREATOR REVEALING HIMSELF INDISPUTABLY TO ALL INTELLIGENT MEN THROUGH HIS VISIBLE CREATION

1. The Concept of Order Versus Disorder Taking on New Significance and Enormous Dimensions
2. The "Mysterious S" of Modern Thermo-Dynamics and God
3. The Concept of Order in the Realms of the Human Soul
4. The Demon of Automatism versus the Free Dependence on a Living, Personally Intervening God
5. The Spirit of Subordination versus the Spirit of Insubordination

CHAPTER THREE: THE MYTH OF A DEMIURGUS EMERGING ONCE MORE

1. Who is Here Suggested as the Originator of Evil?
2. Is God's Very Nature a Potential Source for Evil Coming Into the World?
3. Historical Glimpses of a Violent Controversy Over the Origin of Evil, the Nature of God, and the Nature of Man
4. Is God "Not Yet Fully Omnipotent"?
5. Augustine's Concept of God and the Origin of Evil
6. The "Daulism of the Christian's "TWO NATURES"

CHAPTER FOUR: THE RENAISSANCE, AN "APOLESCENCE EPOCH" IN THE HISTORY OF WESTERN CULTURE

1. What traits of Character Does This "Adolescent" Manifest?

2. Luther's Harrowing Experience with the Abysmal Depths of Human Nature?
3. The Man Who Knew No Bargaining
4. Is the Christian "Partly Just" and "Partly a Sinner"?

CHAPTER FIVE: CALVIN'S ANTHROPOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

1. How Calvin Insisted on Vindicating God
2. The Bound Will
3. The Third Alternative

CHAPTER SIX: THE "TANGIBLE FACTS" OF A DUALISM IN MAN'S ETHICAL NATURE

1. Dualism as a Merely Tentative Theory
2. The Daring Suggestion of a "Co-Operation" between "Two Wills"
3. Man's Only Ability and Only Right So Far: To Be a Slave
4. We Must Be Willing to be Made Willing
5. How Subjugation Turns into Freedom

CHAPTER SEVEN: ARE FAITH AND WORKS SEPARABLE ELEMENTS IN MAN'S LIFE ACCORDING TO BIBLICAL ANTHROPOLOGY?

1. Dualism Still Going Strong
2. Does Faith Need a Body to Live and Move in?
3. Was Faith Ever "Alone"?
4. Could it be that the Very Presence of a Vehement Debate on Faith Versus Works in a given Church is an Ominous Sign that an Anti-Protestant Philosophy of Platonic Spiritualism is Trying Hard to Extirpate all True Spirit of Reform?
5. A Fundamental Inquiry: What Does "Works of the Law" Mean in Paul's Vocabulary?
6. The Basic Qualities of the Works of the Law
7. The Deeds of the Law -- a Simple Corpse
8. Are Paul and James in Disagreement?
9. Is Man's Faith "more Meritorious" than his Works?
10. Does James Have a Poor Evaluation of Faith?
11. Repentance: The Consummated Perfection of Oneness in Faith and Works
12. The Kind of Perfection Mortal Men Can Already Reach
13. Do Works "Follow After" Faith?
14. What Saves Man? Is it his Faith, his Works -- or Jesus Christ?
15. Could it Happen that "My Faith" might "Jack itself Up" to become the Worst of All My Idols?

CHAPTER EIGHT: WHAT IS GRACE, REALISTICALLY CONSIDERED? BIBLE HERE PRESENT A CONCEPT OF GOD THAT IS FAIR AND MEANINGFUL?

1. Definitions
2. Was Grace Known to any Creature Before Man?
3. The Unique Gift of God
4. Grace, One Sufficient Thing
5. Is Grace a "Perfectly Fair, a Perfectly Realistic Device"?
6. Grace as Power
7. The "Sufficiency" of Grace Realistically Interpreted
8. What does "Weakness" Mean in 2 Cor. 2:19? Is it Understandable Without Having to Resort to the Paradox Lover's "Great Leap" into Absurdity?

9. Summary

CHAPTER NINE: WHO DETERMINES MAN'S DESTINY? IS IT GOD, OR MAN, OR BOTH?

1. What is the Principle of "Double Predestination"?
2. A Predestination of Categories, Not of Individual Men
3. An Intelligent Understanding of the "Hardening" Happening to Human Hearts
4. Summary

CHAPTER TEN: WHERE CALVIN'S LOGIC COMES SHORT, TURNING GOD INTO AN ABDOMINABLE MONSTER

CHAPTER ELEVEN: GENERAL CONCLUSION

1. The Goal of Goals and the Reality of Realities: God's Vindication
2. The Eschaton of Eschata
3. The Biblical Child's Jubilant Longing for Judgment

INTRODUCTION

Was God ever maligned? Who would dare to divulge any story of slander against Him behind His back? And if so, was there ever any serious attempt to vindicate His name, wash it clean again? What is God's vindication?

It is the most exciting drama in the history of this world. That demonstrative vindication of God's true character is essentially undertaken by the Creator Himself. But His creatures are also destined to have an important part in it.

And now, what are the special traits of character thereby so spectacularly drawn into focus? God is shown, not only as the blameless One, but as the Creator whose character shines out with an excellence and beauty going far beyond anything His finite worlds have ever known, or could otherwise manage to know.

Is this demonstration worthwhile? Yes, it is the one worthwhile thing in the whole wide universe, -- to you and me, as well as to God. Our entire happiness is at stake. In fact, our very lives as conscious creatures depend implicitly on God's justification of Himself. For His justification and our justification are virtually one and the same thing; so closely are the two knit together. Small wonder that God's great message Book to the world is filled with this one theme from cover to cover: vindication (justification, judgment).

But, you may inquire, is there not something negative, after all, connoted with this term of "vindication"? In a perfect world we would assume all negativity to be excluded, wouldn't we? A certain note of something severely militant seems to be trembling in the balance here, causing overtones of sadness, rather than gladness, to linger in the air, as it were. A terrible challenge against God must be a historical fact.

Indeed, this is a shaking reality. And what has been challenged is not only the excellence and unique beauty of the divine character. No, rather a directly criminal activity by God has been suggested.

The very justice of the Creator has been called into question. Serious doubts have arisen in the universe regarding the blamelessness of God.

Now, do not misunderstand me. I do not say that the fiercely militant attitudes here adopted are the worst thing that could happen. Many men tend to react in a rather neutral way toward this controversy regarding the character of God. Are they any better because of their cold neutrality? Not necessarily so. They seem to be saying: "Relax, dear friends. What is there, after all, in this matter to be so passionately excited about? Don't we have anything closer and more existential to quarrel about than the nature of God? What can we really hope to know, with any degree of accuracy, about God anyway? Please come down to earth now and be calm and reasonable."

If you think this is a commendable attitude to adopt, you are mistaken, and your mistake is the saddest thing that could ever happen. For what you then recommend is an attitude of utter indifference. To man's destiny there is nothing more tragic than that. And to the honor of a personal God there is nothing more offending. Even the hottest hate would not have been as bad as that. Nor would it have been as unrealistic as that. For the one who hates does at least have the chance of still realizing, however vaguely, that there may be something basically wrong with himself. He is not the self-evident master of the situation. This he vaguely realizes. So he is to some extent guarded against the supreme degree of self-sufficiency and humanistic pride. The totally indifferent man, on the contrary, is tempted to look at himself as perfectly self-possessed. So he can afford to be crushingly indifferent. The road from such indifference to utter contempt is a dangerously short and down-hill one. And the contempt fostered in a proud creaturely mind is more insulting to the Creator than the hottest antagonism could ever be. Self-sufficiency is the most hopeless condition any creature can drift into.

That is the reason why there is less hope for an established pantheist (or any man who has permitted spiritualist ideas to wipe out the distinctive outlines of a personal God in his mind) than for the crudest blasphemous of God or the most militant atheist.

It is manifestly indispensable for the well-being of a personal creature that he should have a personal knowledge of the personal God who has called him into existence. This is the clear philosophy of uncompromising meaningfulness penetrating the whole doctrine of creation and re-creation, as the Bible presents it from Genesis to Revelation.

Jesus Christ in Person, as the great Self-Revelator, is here making His mighty strides from chapter to chapter, from Testament to Testament. And all the time one single theme recurs: The vindication (justification) of God; that is, concomitantly, the vindication (justification) of man. Now then, if the great leitmotif of the Scriptures, from beginning to end, is God's vindication, then this must constitute the message above all messages to you and to me. But exactly how does it come to pass that His vindication is so inseparably connected with our vindication? How does His justification become our justification?

A solemn word of the Lord to all men is this: "Those who honor me, them will I honor." (1 Samuel 2:30). Now it stands to reason that the only way any man can honor an unjustly dishonored God, is to do all he possibly can to help take away the dishonor. If we do know God's name to have been wickedly slandered, pulled down into the mud of defamation, and trampled upon with the hard heels of merciless cruelty, we should immediately know our simple duty. We should do the little we can in order to have that name washed clean again. Did I say the "little" we can? I am not so sure this is the

correct expression. Sometimes our modesty is out of place and basically false. It must be left to God to decide how small or great a part we are allowed to play as contributors toward the mighty work of His vindication.

But this is not here the important question. In fact, even though, in our only too well-known human weakness, we might not be able to contribute one single bit realistically toward "helping" God here, still the simplest decency and the most elementary fairness would demand one thing at least of us: We would have to demonstrate our willingness to stand whole-heartedly on the side of that innocently slandered One.

By the way, here the Bible has another interesting message to convey to us. Our very willingness to help, is--in itself--a help to Him. It is realistic enough. We should not take it for granted, like Calvin did, that our contribution is nil. What a puny human creature can still do to gladden the Saviour's heart--so, realistically helping Him--may be of priceless value. In the drama of God's vindication man has actually, from the beginning, been favored with a role of tremendous significance. In fact, he has been made a "spectacle" for the universe, to angels as well as his fellowmen (1 Corinthians 4:9). He is a tiny little actor on an enormously large stage.

In my ministry for the young I have constantly found that there is one safe and unfailing way they, too, can have true zeal for noble ideals and brave exploits swelling in their breasts. They can have something a thousand times more realistic, right here and now at the eventide of a modern world culture, than any sentimental search of the Middle Ages for a Holy Grail that was nonexistent. The first condition is that they be personally enlisted and actively engaged in the great vindication of the name of the downtrodden One, the unjustly calumniated One. Nothing could ever have a greater appeal to the youthful heart than the gallant warfare in favor of the innocently maligned and patiently suffering Lamb of God.

But there is one realm here in which we must radically change our method of procedure. We must be consistently God-centered in our approach. In other words, we must abruptly discontinue our traditional trend of a foolishly man-centered perspective.

I like to take the problem of evolutionism as an example. How do we traditionally go about handling this crucial obstacle to the idea of meaningfulness in our universe in terms of divine creation? You must know to what incredible degree the evolution theory has permeated the minds of average men today. How could a generation having such ideas lurking in the hidden depths of their conscious, or at least their subconscious lives, be expected to make their way toward harbors of meaningfulness? If the evolutionist's way of gradual creation is the historic means by which we have all come into existence, then the search for true meaning, in a theistic sense of the term, is bound to be an agonizing experience. We may be in perfect agreement on that point. But my question now is: How do we, as adherents to an opposite theory, the creationist one, usually go about fighting that utter meaninglessness in biology and cosmology? Is it God's reputation we are most worried about, or is it our own? We are furiously upset about one thing: Evolutionism reduces man to a miserable status. We ourselves turn out to be little more than a pack of evolved animals according to that theory, and this hurts our self-esteem tremendously. "What a sad ancestry," says proud humanity. "What an impertinent insinuation against me as a person," says the creationist Christian. "I am not going to take this shameful down-grading of my name much longer." (Notice: "my" name!)

Now, what kind of reaction is this? It is a typically anthropocentric one. And anthropocentric in this case corresponds exactly to egocentric. What offends the creationist theologian in the evolutionist interpretation of biology, is the degradation it causes to him and his clan. The last thing he seems to be concerned about is what it causes to God and His reputation as a Creator. But please, friends, be a little cognizant of dimensions in calumny: God is here the monstrously calumniated One. For if this is the way He creates (the evolutionist way), what an abominable type of Creator He must be! Of course, the biologist does not mention God at all in this connection, but the theologian is bound to do so, for he is supposed to have a certain "God-talk" in his mouth all the time, at least when he pronounces himself from the pulpit ("ex cathedra") about the essential items in life. So he is under a kind of professional obligation to secure some flavor of theological meaningfulness, even for "creative happenings" as rigidly automatic and as frigidly devoid of any fatherly compassion as this evolutionism; that is, a theory of generation which he, too, as a common citizen of a science-intoxicated modern world, otherwise thinks he is obligated to espouse uncritically in spite of its godforsaken implications, not to mention its inverisimilitude, scientifically speaking.

Statistically you need not bother at all about that vanishing minority, still so utterly out of date that they believe implicitly in the creation story of Genesis. And still some expect this generation to possess some natural basis for a meaningful outlook on God and on human life. How can they? Fortunately some catacumists are sincere enough, and outspoken enough, to tell their pastor how inconsistent he is, when he pretends to maintain evolutionism, and a meaningful conception of God, side by side. They themselves are incapable of any such inconsistency. And who could blame them? It does not help one bit if their spiritual father assures them that evolutionists, as well, have a most idealistic vision of a tremendous perfection, reached by the forces of life at the end of those long evolutionary periods. "Well," say the young iconoclasts, "you pastors speak so eloquently about an almighty God who is a real Person, but what decency do you assume in a personal God who arrives at his goals of 'perfection' along a road so cruelly stained with the suffering of endless generations of feeling creatures?" They are referring to evolutionism as a commonly accepted theory of origins, even among Christian theologians. Seen from this angle there seems to be some merit still in the conclusion made by certain cynics: "If God exists at all, He must certainly be the devil!" Or what else could you say about a personal Creator who chooses such principles as that of the "struggle for life," or that of the "survival of the fittest" as his favorite tools of creative progress? That God certainly cannot be the God the Good Book endeavors to teach us about. For if He does have any feelings whatsoever in His divine breast, and still does this, then He must at the same time be the greatest sadist of all ages. A God of that caliber ought not under any circumstances to waste His time and energy trying to "vindicate His name" in front of intelligent creatures.

Frankly, I do not at all blame young idealists who fail to feel particularly attracted to a "God" like that. Still it is the only God most modern theologians have got to present to their parishioners. No wonder their efforts seem doomed to become a resounding fiasco.

What is wrong with present-day youth is not at all that they demand minute consistency and elementary logic on the part of their teachers and preachers. On the contrary, it is with legitimate scorn they ask one simple question of those liberal theologians who have the boldness to set themselves up as teachers of "meaningful" religion among a secularized youth who cannot, for the life of them, stand anything that is phony: Where is the logic of your message, they ask. Where is the elementary human decency of the religious creed you are attempting to foist upon our minds? If that jumble of meaningless phrases and controversial facts is what you call religion, then we have no use for it. We are going to have nothing at all to do with you as our guides toward a "higher spiritual world."

Now, the One we Christians proclaim to be the Originator of all things, is Jesus Christ. What hopes do you think we have of making Him attractive to a youth so relentlessly sincere and at the same time so tragically misinformed?

None whatsoever, unless we start over again precisely at the spot where we have left matters in such a mess: Our primary task will consist in washing the Name clean, --the Name above all names: Jesus Christ, the Creator and Maintainer of all worlds. We shall then be surprised at the miraculous change taking place in the hearts of that "lost generation" at the end of the end-time. You need to inform them duly about one single thing regarding the God of the Bible: The most beautiful image ever known to intelligent beings has here been maliciously marred and misrepresented by a vicious Diabolos, the great slanderer of the universe, the back-biter!

Please, let us make the experiment before it is too late--for them and for us. As a result we might see a hitherto unknown zeal, for good against evil, something we hardly imagined possible in this modern super-sophisticated age. Youthful hearts will again be on fire for the vindication of God. Once more it will be evidenced: There is no cause coming more effectively home to young people's minds than that of vindicating the innocence of the truly Innocent One, the Man of matchless charms, who was so cruelly maligned and so viciously covered with shame.

The origin of evil in our world is the age-old problem throwing the question of God's vindication into focus. Within the framework of the Biblical canon there is hardly one page, from Genesis to Revelation, where the question fails to flare up, giving us glimpses of a mighty drama.

But as a historian of ideas I have had the duty--and I should add: the privilege, although the fearful hazards as well--to roam far and wide in the weird world of human thought, englobing all realms of ideas. However, I must confess that nowhere in that vast field of world literature, where the historian of ideas looses himself, have I found any document dealing with this problem of good and evil as exhaustively, in terms of meaningfulness in human life, as the first chapter of Ellen White's work Patriarchs and Prophets. The way that book, and that chapter in particular, reveals God and vindicates His name, has struck me as outstanding and truly astounding.

And what more significant topic could we ever choose for our study than this? It is God who has to be revealed to us, if we shall have any chance of finding any practicable passage out of the maze of our own problem complexes. It is His character we must get to know. We must be accurately informed about the way He looks upon the question of perfect justice, for instance. What is His basis for a tenable code of ethics? In Him, if anywhere at all, there must be a sense of righteousness which does not conflict with the other attributes of His being, or with the totality of truth and goodness as infallible values. Did you ever read that first chapter of Patriarchs and Prophets: "Why Was Sin Permitted?" Have you noticed how absolutely surprising is the way God's ethics comes out in His dealing with Lucifer, the great covering cherub who fell?

I see no reason why we should feel uncomfortable, and timidly apologize for finding ourselves right in the field of theological

apologetics. That is what historians of religion call "theodicy," a systematic effort to defend God's position as the righteous One, righteous in spite of the fact that He permits evil to exist, or just therefore righteous. Nowhere in this classical field of theology have I found those questions, so crucial for tenable meaningfulness, answered in a more illuminating way. But then I must also at once announce the appearance of a particularly curious item in that mentioned chapter: The very solution it suggests,

proves to be, in its turn, suggestive of one further remarkable idea. That idea, put forth in our next chapter, may not have been articulated by Ellen White in full spelling. But please see for yourself if it must not be assumed as a logical implication. You need not agree with me in this. But if you don't, then please try to explain the given facts in a way you find more plausible.

Chapter I

SOME CRUCIAL NOTES OF INTRODUCTION ON GOD - AND THE ORIGIN OF EVIL: HOW COULD LUCIFER CONCEIVE THE IDEA OF A RIVALRY WITH JESUS CHRIST?

1. Was God Ever Alone?

God is unthinkable as a person staying alone all the time, --or any time. There seems to be something disharmonious about loneliness (or aloneness) in the case of God. For God is Love. And love makes aloneness an intolerable state of being. So love seems bound to constrain God to embark upon some act of creation. It goes without saying that "constraint" must here be understood in the only way that is compatible with love. This is known to apply even to men, insofar as they are conquered by God: "The love of Christ constraineth us." II Cor 5:14.

As a loving Being, God needs "the other ones," those whom He can really love. He needs creatures of such intelligence and freedom that they can return His love, serving Him out of sheer affection, not just because they have been commanded to do so. He needs the love of those who love Him of their own accord.

But saying this, we do realize that we have somehow exposed ourselves to the acute logical problem of the following question: How could God get along, as long as He did, without any creatures?

How long was that, by the way? Eternally long, -- that is the only answer given by plain philosophical logics. For God is from eternity, whereas the first creature created was necessarily a creature created at a definite time. And if--possessed with your simple philosophical logics--you want to go back from that moment to the "origin" of God, you will never be able to go far enough, for God is the eternally Existing One, the Self-Existent One, the Being without an origin. In other words, God was without any creatures around Him during an endlessly long time, during a whole eternity.

Does this mean that there is no meaningful answer whatsoever to our spiritually meaningful question as to how the God of love could "bear" to be "alone" for an eternity? No, it does not mean anything as bad as that. There is an answer, and it is a meaningful one. Will the cold philosopher find it meaningful? Maybe not. But the warm religionist will. For while philosophy seeks the answers of the sharp brain, religion seeks the answers for the tender heart.

The answer is: God was never alone. At least the Bible's concept of God is not a concept of aloneness, of singularity. It is a concept of togetherness, of eternal plurality in personalism. It is the concept known as the "trinity," the doctrine of the "triune God." Here you may object that the curious idea of three persons in the Godhead is one that develops in Christian minds, so only during New Testament times.

It is not! Already the first pages of Genesis release the idea of a togetherness, a plurality, in God. The notion of more than one Person in the Godhead occurs, remarkably enough, in connection with the creation of a first intelligent creaturely "other one" on this earth:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." (Genesis 1:26).

So this much is revealed to us, here already, about the unfathomable Elohim (plural!), and what they undertook to do as late as some 6,000 years ago.

To my `Doctrine of God' students, as well as in my ancient philosophy classes, I have tried to express in the following way something I like to call the alterocentricity (or other-centeredness) of Christian theology. It is this which sets Christianity apart from any other theology or philosophy ever conceived by our world: Other-centeredness means being mainly concerned, not with oneself as the great center, but rather with the other ones. This alterocentricity is the fundamental motif of all Biblical religion. But how could it be technically possible at all during that eternally long time when God had not yet called his creaturely little "other ones" into existence? The Bible's answer is: God was, from everlasting, His own "Other One." In other words, God was never, never alone! On the contrary, they were always, always, together. So the great motif of Agape (or perfect alterocentricity, perfect othercenteredness) was in operation all the time. Throughout all eternity the Father loved the Son, and the Son loved the Father. And from eternity, in the depths of their mind, there was this incomparable plan: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." (1Mohammedans boast of having a concept of God superior to that of Christianity. They do not know what they are speaking about. Their God is the summit of all absurdity. This is what happens when men have the boldness to make religions. They then commit blunders of logic. Islam was foolish enough to think a Godhead consisting of just one single Person was the summit of all spirituality. In reality, that concept of the deity reduces both eternity and Agape to meaninglessness.)

Now, you may, of course, persistingly abide by your own human viewpoint: "What an eternally long time it took, though, before that plan of creating other ones came to be realized!" You almost seem to be imagining yourself, or some other observer, waiting impatiently through trillions of years for the great thing to happen: "Why did it take so long?" That reminds me of a proverb. "Never does anyone wait too long, who waits for a good thing".

Was creation so good a thing that it was worthwhile waiting for, even that long?

2. Creation--the Heart Affair of God

Why does creation take such a capital place in the religion of the Bible? Because creation is nothing less than a "heart affair" in the life of God. Perhaps it is the most spiritual thing that has happened in His life? I could not imagine a more decisive step taken toward the perfect realization of togetherness. Togetherness, however, is the very opposite of aloneness. In fact, we can hardly understand the importance of perfect togetherness except against a background of the idea of absolute aloneness. That monster of aloneness is a concept we have already mentioned as a theory, but can never fathom as a practical reality. Still, it is well-known by Scripture. It is a most real eventuality of the future for some beings. The Bible calls it hell. That is the absolute separatedness; first and foremost a separation from the One with whom we need most desperately to be together!

It is interesting to note that some Germanic languages have a most descriptive expression for this absolute or desperate way of being alone. Here is a very human word. The German adjective is "mutter-seelenalleine". That suggests: as heartbreakingly alone as an abandoned mother. In the Bible's language the tradition would say Father. God did have a Son, as we have pointed out. So he was never "mutterseelanalleine,"—or "vaterseelenalleine." (Christ was His only-begotten—"monogenes," the Only One of a kind, the Unique One. John 1:14, see also 5 BC 902.).

Still he did long for other sons. That is evident enough. And here we certainly have to do with a most curious case of longing. In the life of God this longing must be closely concatenated with what we shall observe as His willingness to "go down," nay, His veritable passion for going down. For just as surely as God longed to create beings with the freedom of will necessary for true personal communion with Him, He did know, as well, another possibility inevitably implied in such creaturely freedom: that is, the potential event of a fall into sin: He was fully aware of the creature's possible choice of a course of disobedience (sin) rather than a course of obedience (sinlessness). This eventuality would be a cruelly painful blow against the tender heart of God. But His love and His longing for an infinitely extended other-centeredness were strong enough to take all the risk here implied.

I would say without hesitation: the most conspicuous deficiency in pagan thought, by and large, is its failure to have a due appreciation of creation. It is not without reason that creation takes such an important place in biblical theology.

Now, precisely God's determination to "take the risk," is what so many critics charge against Him. What they fail to realize is the boundless significance of creation. In fact, the most tragic deficiency in pagan thought, is its fatal failure to have a due appreciation of the marvel of creation. Not only creation on the highest level, the calling into existence of intelligent beings, is an infathomably great event, but even the creation on a lower level with its endless variety of species and forms, is beyond all measure significant!

Against this background we discern vaguely what creation means in Christian theology. Hence even an eternity cannot be considered as "too long a time" to plan, and put into practice the plan, of divine creation. For even the smallest thing created testifies to the infinite greatness and the absolute uniqueness of God.

This leads us naturally to the capital Christian question: Just how does the Creator reveal Himself to His creature? Here a strange detail should be carefully noticed. It can be rightly said about the pillar of cloud of the exodus, for instance: it both revealed God and concealed Him at the same time. Revelation and concealment go hand in hand in the mysterious plan of God's approach to man.

Why does God conceal Himself? For the same fundamental reason that He reveals Himself. Out of sheer love, out of sheer mercy. Now, then, can love and mercy manifest themselves through concealment? Is God forced to make Himself small and pale in order that we may comprehend Him? Something very close to that seems to be the case. And He has to limit Himself, as it were, in order to make place for our freedom. Divine absolutism is circumscribed in order to provide a sphere of elbowroom for human will.

Now, the One who has undertaken to reveal God to man—and to the whole universe—is Jesus Christ. He reveals God to us by revealing Himself (see Christ's answer to Philip's curious pleading, John 14:8-10).

But how did He go about that Self-revelation? And how has He revealed Himself from the beginning until now? This is the most incredible of all stories. Am I right in saying that it is, from the beginning to the end, a story of lowliness, as the great characteristic of God? Here I include the time of His revelation even prior to the creation of our world.

Is there a mysterious sort of self-reduction, or self-erasing, in the sense of self-sacrifice and self-denial, in the way God revealed Himself from the earliest time of which we have any knowledge at all? This is the curious question to which I would here like to have some kind of answer.

3. Is There a "Divine Self-centeredness"?

First, we do have, in contrast to this, the impression of some students of OT theophany. Theologians sometimes seem to think that there is a strange trend of "divine egocentricity," if I may dare to suggest such a term, coming out in biblical theology. God is portrayed as doing whatever He does for the sake of His own glory:

"I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another" (Isaiah 42:8).

"For mine own sake, will I do it: For how should my name be polluted? And I will not give my glory to another" (Isaiah 48:11).

And Solomon provides us with a still more problematic text:

"The Lord hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Proverbs 14:1, see also 16:5).

As far back as the days of Augustine, and certainly much earlier still, this somewhat "austere" aspect of theocentricity (God-centeredness) has obviously caused Bible readers to have a queer feeling of something problematic and almost disharmonious. I like Gabriel Marcel's saying that, for the true child (in this case, the child of God), there exists no problems, only mysteries. On the other hand, you may just wonder how ingenuously childlike or "problem-proof" a Christian should have to be in order not to feel a "problem" and a "disharmony" in what the French expert in thomism, Etienne Gilson, calls "une generosite interessee" (self-centered generosity).

"The Lord hath made all things for Himself." Does this mean that the principle of alterocentricity ends where divinity begins? In other words, does the theocentricity of the Bible actually swallow up the whole motif we have considered to be fundamental to Christianity: the alterocentric trend? In one way, we must admit that this would seem to be nothing less than an ontological necessity. For how could God even find the ultimate purpose of his creative act in anything outside Himself? So, does this mean that the essence of the God of the Bible brings us right back to that "self-sufficiency" we have otherwise characterized as paganism in a nutshell, the proud motif of Autarkeia, the titantic ideal of the Western World?

Why do we have such difficulty in understanding this? For the simple reason that we have never really understood what glory means in God's vocabulary. We have not even begun to understand in what God glories, in what He finds his pride. God finds the peak of His pride in lowliness. Let us try to prove this important point. For it can be proved. And for that purpose we are not going to be satisfied with scanning the history of man. It is too evident that God reveals Himself there as the One finding His

pride in humility. But we shall go much farther back. Here the Spirit of Prophecy can give us precious glimpses of some astounding facts.

In the first chapter of Patriarchs and Prophets, Ellen White tells us about some strange remote events that had been shown her in vision. This was before the time when our world had, as yet, been called into existence.

For a long time certain things in that report never failed to strike me with astonishment. There was something I could not bring to rhyme with other things. I am sure the same enigma happens to you:

How could Lucifer hit upon the strange idea of comparing himself to Christ? He ought to be perfectly aware of the fundamental fact of his own creatureliness. Secondly, he ought to know the infinite distance there is bound to be between Creator and creature. Any intelligent creature does. But how then could he fall into the incredible error of considering his relationship to the Son of God in terms of any rivalry whatsoever? To us this would immediately appear so foolish--so contrary to elementary common sense--that we are not offhand able to grasp it rationally at all.

Now, of course, these reflections might be just that boastful "you-ought-to-know-better" attitude we all so easily display when we have the good fortune to consider a matter in retrospect. We so elegantly base ourselves on a profounder stock of enlightenment which we assume to have been there all the time. We forget that we are just dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants.

But did not Lucifer have elementary enlightenment? Did he not know who had created him? If he did not possess this fundamental element of light, then why was he called Lucifer, the Lightbearer?

Let us only say--with the caution of the ones who happen to know that they know nothing, or next to nothing, themselves--that just the most elementary and fundamental truths, such as those about generation and regeneration, are the most difficult ones of all to grasp. The very light they radiate may be the most dangerous thing in the world. They remind us of the intensive concentration of lazer beams. What might happen to a being exposed to these spiritual lazer beams? The result of such unprotected exposure might be certain destruction.

Let us admit one thing: We human beings have little to boast of in regard to our knowledge of essential things. What does man know today about facts as essential as his creation and redemption?

How many millennia of gradual revelation from God has it taken for that little group of relatively receptive souls, God's church on earth, to gather the tiny bit of knowledge they possess at present, regarding the three main issues of all true philosophy: Whence? Why? Whither? (Where do I come from? -- Why am I here? -- Where do I go?)

If we have managed at all to grasp some glimpses of light regarding the mysterious paths of God's love for us--the only thing that really matters for our lives--we certainly should not be so rash as to consider this an intellectual performance of consummated masterliness on our part.

4. Among Whom Do "We Sensible Men" Pick "Our Favorite Rivals"?

So back to Lucifer and his incredible idea of rivalry -- with Jesus Christ? How could it happen that he was so totally blind to the immeasurable greatness of his Lord and Creator?

Or is not John's solemn introduction to the gospel account to be taken quite literally, after all: "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Do not these words apply to the vast realms of divine creation outside the earth and its special kind of intelligent beings?

We ask these questions in all candor and sincerity. How could it enter into Lucifer's head to compare himself to Christ in the first place; I mean, in the spirit of a possible emulation? For even to the most envious, the most perverted and downright foolish among us, there is, after all, a certain limit to what can arouse our envy: There is a limit to our perversion, or our foolishness; or at least there seems to be.

The ones we compare ourselves with, are generally our peers. Those who are infinitely far above us do not really disturb us. We are simply not able to feel them as our serious rivals. Otherwise, there is certainly no lack of envy among us. Even most serious missionary workers may be tempted to establish certain comparisons that completely disturb their peace of mind. What is my reaction if I learn that my good colleague in our common mission field, Brother So-and-So, has been favored with the blessings of such-and-such an apartment; while a definitely inferior one has been allotted to me? At the end of the campaign season, I even have to swallow the "bitter pill" that he has been able to list twice as many souls won for the truth as I have. Oh, that fellow always keeps half a horse-length ahead of me! In fact, it started way back in our college days. Did he not then snatch the nicest girl of the class away from me right in front of my nose? But what about Elder So-and-So? He is a veritable "star" among evangelists. Last year he won 1,000 souls. Strange enough, however, I have no feelings of animosity whatsoever toward him. Why not? I do not at all compare myself to him! He is too far above me for comparison.

And take the case of raises in salary. This year a colleague of mine got an additional fringe benefit of \$50. I was sick with envy. At the same time the President of the United States got a raise of \$50,000. --I did not feel a bit hurt. Why not? I simply do not compare myself to the President of the United States; that's all.

Is this strange? Not very. The rule is simple. There must be some reasonable closeness for reasonable comparisons to be made, and for passion-stirring envies to be nourished. Rivalries have their limits, their proper confines.

Now, what about Lucifer? Was he entirely outside the rules of common sense and common sentiment? Hardly. But how, then could he hit upon the preposterous idea of having a case of "rivalry" with Jesus Christ, the maker of the universe, the creator of the heavenly hosts, including Lucifer himself?

I do believe in the law that wickedness makes foolish. This was certainly a law asserting itself in the case of Lucifer, as well.

But part of the explanation may lie in something remarkable about the very nature of the Godhead. What do we know about God's essential nature? Too little, indeed; let us admit it frankly. What we do know, and perceive, is only the glimpses we catch here and there, as "through a glass, darkly" (1Cor. 13:12). One of these glimpses is the one we are trying to evaluate in the Spirit of Prophecy texts.

Are we wrong in saying that there is a tremendous risk involved, on the part of God, at the moment when He determines to reveal the supreme secret of His glory? We have already suggested that this glory consists in something no one of us would, of himself, assume: It is His characteristic of

"going down". Obviously this "going down", in terms of going into creation, is a matter of such momentum that man has no inkling of its far-reaching implications. This is why he fails to understand why the Bible attaches such a unique significance to this very theme: Creation. A human brain alone is utterly incompetent for these depths. It is more a matter of the heart's perception than of the brain's perception. For the sense demanded is the sense of love. And the surprising summit of this love is humility. Although it may offend many, we must dare to state that God is, above all, this: He is humble. The practical unfolding of that quality in God was His going all the way down.

Here we must now point out one thing that is seldom properly understood: It was not only at the moment when such "going down" became a desperate necessity, for the salvation of fallen man, that the Eternal One began to manifest this peculiar essence of His being. Thanks to the simple testimony of the Bible, already, it becomes evident that God has been "like that" all the time. The foundation of the plan of salvation is from eternity. And the Spirit of Prophecy adds fascinating specificity to this fact by giving us a glorious glance into things happening prior to the earth's creation.

To understand more easily, it might be duly emphasized as a general rule: Any person who abounds precisely in the qualities and practical acts of humility, obviously takes tremendous risk in so doing. Of course, this is bound to become apparent when the person in question makes such self-humbling his specialty. Christ was that kind of person, excelling in humility and self-sacrifice.

Probably one reason why we find our dogs so sympathetic, is their "humble" behavior in front of us. This permits us to feel more important ourselves. We can adopt a condescending attitude. Finally, we can afford to be generous. Is it possible that dogs, through generations of gradual conditioning, have managed to please their vain masters by a trick of simple flattery, -- a most efficient trick, indeed, if it is one at all?

Christ's approach of humility certainly is no mere trick. It is a realistic going down, if such has ever happened in this world. I can only shrink back in awe and admiration before the virile realism beaming forth from that key text of ours, Matt. 11:29,30. What a treasure of wisdom, for the one who wants to dig for eternal depths, in the nature of God.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Of course, Christ is the one who keeps on revealing God to His creatures. But how does it come to pass that the core of this revelation is simply: God as the Meek One? Has God always been like that? Will He always go on being like that? Or is it just a mode of momentary crisis, a transitory phase?

Let me hurry to say: I do not believe it is a mere transition. This is among the most permanent features in God's nature. He IS "like that."

There is evidence enough to establish this as a fact. The attribute of "going down" is not an attribute of God developed only at the critical moment when such "going down" became a desperate necessity, an emergency measure for the sake of our salvation. It is not limited to the accident of our father Adam's fall into sin, in the Garden of Eden. It is an effulgence of God's very being, all the time. God's descent into the depths of creation and redemption is an expression of His constant nature. He goes all the way down to the lowest levels because His essence is lowliness. And this is not by virtue of an automatic principle. He is the One who goes down to me, because He loves me, and that is a love that makes separation an unbearable atrocity to Him. And His going down to me was a personal heart

affair, involving fatal personal risk. In fact, God's act of creation and redemption never avoids being an act of destiny-laden drama. It is high time we become more anxious to look into the elements of that drama.

Creation is, indeed, a most many-sided thing. It is God's supreme glory in a double sense. And this is, indeed, a mysterious doubleness.

(1) In the first place, it is mysteriously glorious, in the sense of that boundless going down. God never makes a new world without going down into it Himself. Is not this in fact the great difference that has been established regarding Eros versus Agape? While Eros, the pagan principle of "love," fails in love with a value that is already there, just becoming ablaze with passion for that value, in order to enjoy it in what I have preferred to call the egocentric way -- Agape, the unique heaven-born principle of a Christian love, has an entirely different attitude: Agape creates the value, miraculously calls it into being, where it never existed, as yet. That is how Agape manages to love me, an entirely unloveable creature. It creates the value, as it loves, and this creativity is part of its essence.

Love cannot help creating. Does this mean that God's love is unreasonable? We shall discuss that question thoroughly in another book, a book on Love's IQ, a book wholly dedicated to the mystery of divine Agape, in terms of meaningfulness to the realistic mind.

(2) On the other hand, if God's act of creation is this mightiest of all demonstrations of His unfathomable lowliness, His bottomless going down, to the deepest depths of the absolutely valueless, which is made valuable by so doing, then it is at the same time an equally salient demonstration of his "remaining all the way up." God is, and remains, above His creation. He stays outside of it, and is entirely independent of it. He goes on forever and ever, to be the absolutely Self-dependent One; in fact, the only Self-dependent Being ever known.

To tell the truth, this "aboveness" is the very presupposition for His going down! His absolute supremacy and autonomy is just what makes it possible for Him to realize that whole generous trend of a most efficient condescension and intervention in the creature's behalf. His very platform of absolute self-dependence, in the divine sense, is what enables Him to do the strange thing he actually does: He makes Himself dependent on the "other ones," the little ones, the definitely impotent ones. This divine other-dependence is one of the most incredible things that have happened in the universe. I am referring to the way He makes Himself dependent today; for instance, on you and me, for the purpose of having certain essential things done in the world. This is indeed incredible and incomprehensible. The only sadness is that we so often fail to be the dependable ones we ought to be. We prove ourselves to be undependable, unreliable servants. We put to shame the trust of which He has deemed us worthy.

Well, you may say, all this applies to our world, to Christ's historic "down-going" at the time when the Father agreed to the Son's proposal to sacrifice Himself in man's behalf on this earth some 2,000 years ago. Then, to be sure, some foolish men did misjudge the generous Supreme One's inscrutable plan to condescend, to walk the painful path of the humble Lamb of God, right on to the slaughterhouse. Then, to be sure, we did avail ourselves of every possible chance to misunderstand His condescension. We displayed the full range of foolishness forged by wicked hearts: We were as ungrateful, tactless, impassive as we could be. We said, in unison with the Pharisees: "That dumb fellow over there is no better than I am. His extraction is the most poverty-stricken one in Nazareth. True, I do become somewhat uneasy sometimes. I begin to wonder whether He may be above me, after

all -- in some respects. He attracts followers I never reach. But then I establish the pleasant fact of 'human equality'. He is a man, like myself. I am fully justified in comparing myself to Him, compete with Him--perhaps outstripping Him completely. I cannot afford to be below anybody. My principle of self-sufficiency forbids it. My way to rise above the others is to cut the others down." Do you hear the voice of the Pharisee?

This is the law of a wicked world. Here humility is seen as the one unpardonable weakness--together with pity, that is! The deliberate plan is to ignore the other one. The other one is dead, or ought to be. Even God, the Great Other One, is dead. God has died of His pity with man. Thus spake Zarathustra. Let us proceed to our next deeds -- the deeds of the Superman. Let us prove to anyone who cares to look on, that we are the superior ones, that we are above all gods and all 'God-talk'!"

But that is the reaction in a wicked world, you still object--we are not speaking about a wicked world. We are speaking about the world of Lucifer, at the time when the heavenly host joined in song -- "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" Job 38:7)

Where was Christ then--and how did He reveal God then? What do we know about the time prior to our world's creation? Do we have any evidence that Jesus Christ, the One equal to, and co-eternal with, the Father, already at that juncture, had the strange habit of "going down", of concealing His glory in humility?

6. Jesus Christ--an Angel Among Angels

From the Bible already, we have evidence enough that God identified Himself with human beings, going down to their lowly level. Do we have any evidence that He ever identified Himself with the state of angels?

An identification in terms is something we know well enough, both from the Old and the New Testament. Many readers have marveled, in fact, that the Scriptures qualify the Messiah as an Angel. The reaction among men is here sometimes one of downright offense. It is looked upon as a certain depreciation of the great Yahweh.

Is there a feeling among us almost similar to the fear known to lie at the very root of Arianism in the history of the church: Theologians and laymen alike seem overanxious to point out that Christ is the true God. Consequently, they finish by not daring to pronounce, in clear words any longer, that He is true Man at the same time.

One thing is here remarkably characteristic of man's reasoning: and the same comes out in his constant failure to understand the simplest fact about Agape: From age to age, the great descent--God's fabulous going down--was something men never seemed capable of taking. Obviously our human way of reasoning is so entirely different from God's way of reasoning. Our value scale is so entirely different from His value scale. The result of this is our complete inability to grasp one plain idea: GOING DOWN is God's supreme glory. Humility is Love--short and sweet.

Let us mention briefly some passages presenting this Christ-Angel identity in the Old Testament. The aging patriarch Jacob pronouncing a blessing on his sons and grandsons before his death, identifies the Angel (or Messenger) of the Lord with the Redeemer.

"The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and let my name be named on them" Gen. 48:16 (See also: Ex. 23:20; Mal. 3:1 (b); Acts 7:35; Dan. 10:13,20; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7; Gen 18:3; Ex. 3:2; 12:29; 1 Thess. 4:16; EW 164; John 5:28,29; 4BC 860--Michael, Like God (your Prince)

In other words, the great divine Leader of the people of Israel, the Rock who followed them all the way, Jesus Christ, does not think it below His dignity, by any means, to call Himself by the name of an Angel: That is the Messenger of God (1 Cor. 10:4). Not for one moment does He fear to descend to the level of those who are "sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation." (Heb. 1:13)

Now we happen to know, don't we, that Christ was to go to much lower depths than that of the angels. He was to identify His destiny with that of fallen mankind. This ought to throw some brilliant light also upon what happened in heaven at the crucial moment when Lucifer went through his decisive trial.

No creature at that time, of course, had any notion to what degree Jesus Christ was going to abase Himself. Nor did any creature have any notion to what degree He was going to be elevated--to what degree He had been elevated all the time. This is what we find plainly evidenced by the Spirit of Prophecy. But we find more than that. In a general way, we might state the outstanding fact as follows:

In order that intelligent creatures on various levels should get to know His glory, and enjoy the supreme happiness that is implied in that knowledge, a remarkable pattern of communication is followed: Christ comes down, it seems, to the respective levels of those whom He has determined to heap with His blessing. There is always sacrifice involved in Christ's approach, sometimes an infinite amount of sacrifice. Obviously, infinite love can only be expressed by infinite humility. Concealment is bound to be part of the revelation process.

That gradual revelation of infinite glory, not for the purpose of self-glorification, but to the benefit of other ones, the not-so-glorious ones, this is the delicate considerateness Paul sets forth as an example for us to emulate. He does it in the following illuminating words:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." (Phil. 2:4, 5)

7. What Strange Formulation: He "Thought it not Robbery"!

He thought it not robbery to be great. So He made himself small--for the other ones" sake--for the small ones" sake. The risk of an "over-exposure" to God's naked, unveiled glory was to be made as small as possible. The crowning glory of the Son of God was soon to burst forth in its own unobtrusive way. What was the culmination, in fact, of that same trend of exquisite glory? Our usual name for it is the incarnation. But the Scriptures also call it the mystery of godliness. The precious pearl of exquisiteness here crystallizing out, was, no doubt, the result of a crucial experience. The gist of the whole matter is this: God's essence is mercy. It is humility, in terms of the utmost humiliation and self-sacrifice. No creature should ever think that he has come to the bottom of that mysterious glory.

"Science is too limited to comprehend the atonement; the mysterious and wonderful plan of redemption is so far-reaching that philosophy cannot explain it; it will ever remain a mystery that the most profound reason cannot fathom. If it could be explained by finite wisdom, it would lose its sacredness and dignity. It is a mystery that One equal with the eternal Father should so abase Himself

as to suffer the cruel death of the cross to ransom man, and it is a mystery that God so loved the world as to permit His son to make this great sacrifice." (Bible Echo, Feb., 1886)

Now, what is the diametrical opposite of this mysterious humility? That must be an equally mysterious pride. Quite right, the inspired Word gives us remarkable information about it. That pride came into the world with Satan. And what curious name has it got, as it assumes its gigantic dimensions of stubborn titanism? The Scriptures call it "the mystery of iniquity". (2 Thess. 2:4-7; contrast: "mystery of godliness"--God-likeness, Christlikeness, perfect humility, 1 Tim. 3:16.)

This mystery started with a creature who did think it "a robbery" to be equal with the Son of God, the Eternal and Unique One. Precisely that was Lucifer's reaction at the time when Jesus Christ had the generous approach of coming down to his level. He constitutes the first and classical instance of how completely generosity can be misunderstood, when a substratum of good will is lacking in the heart. The most exquisite tactfulness, and unheard of modesty, are then like pearls thrown before swine. Did Lucifer discover anything whatever of the matchless greatness of Jesus Christ, flashing out like brief glimpses of discrete sunlight behind a veiling cloud? Did he discover the greatness taking such endless pains to make itself small, unobtrusive,--that is, not the proud greatness of standing aloof, but the humble greatness of being together. No, not a bit of it, for he himself had already become enamoured with that cold type of greatness which enjoys to bask in its own glory. This is precisely the greatness of aloofness, not of togetherness with the other ones. He was on his way to become the robber above all robbers, the great usurper of divine rights.

However, what is the fascinating thing we should discern here, far out into the vague distance of a pre-terrestrial past? It is rather the contours of Christ; that is the Anointed One, assuming for the first time, His role as the great Mediator. Of course, there are questions here to which we do not know the answer: How long a time already had the Son of God been carrying on his mediatorial function? How long a time had He kept "going out of His way" to reveal the love of His Father to the heavenly hosts? Obviously there are mysterious gulfs to be bridged even where sin has not yet penetrated its work of splitness in creaturely minds? Obviously a tremendous act of mediation is needed, simply in order to cover the infinite distance inevitably existing between the Creator and the created ones.

What we know for sure is the fact of our own history: One creature had yielded to the temptations of self-aggrandizement, a mighty Mediator was desperately needed. But even for angels, whom could we imagine as qualified to have charge of a mediatorial office, apart from Jesus Christ? Who, other than He, could be fitted for the task of bridging the gulfs of infinity. And eventually, as we get to know by means of the Testimonies, even in the heavens this was no longer a matter of that normal gulf between the finite ones and the Infinite One, between the created ones and the Self-Existent one. No, it is soon the tragic question of a veritable abyss between a God of righteousness and creatures of iniquity.

The Spirit of Prophecy makes it very plain, that God was willing enough to forgive, even angels who fell into temptation. Whatever might be the sacrifice here involved, we know that Christ was willing to make it. And why should we marvel at this? I see no more reason to doubt that Christ would even have died for the salvation of those angels. In fact, the Spirit of Prophecy clearly informs me that He would have died for me, even though I happened to be the only lost one in this world. Now, what am I, compared to myriads of angels? What is my tragedy, compared the tragedy of between one half and one third of the entire angelic host?

8. Illuminating Details in Lucifer's Drama

What interests us above all, in Ellen White's report, is a series of incidents throwing a fascinating light on the character of Jesus Christ. Take the moments when the heavens were breathless with tension, anxiously watching the perilous game Lucifer was playing with his own life. His decisions were laden with destiny. Not only his own fate, but that of myriads of angels seemed to be weighing up and down in the balances. And this was not just a passive on-looking. Ellen White informs us that everything was being tried in order to influence the rebellious ones and save the situation: "In heavenly council the angels pleaded with Lucifer." (p. 36). And this was not all. Christ Himself as the most outgoing, the most anxious of all to save this Lightbearer, whom He loved so dearly:

"The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness and the justice of the Creator (sic; emphasis mine), and the sacred unchanging nature of His law." (Patriarchs & Prophets, 36).

It appears here that Jesus did not at all refer to Himself as the Creator on this occasion. He distinctly refers to the Father. We who have read the gospel, however, know perfectly well, what strong title He would have had--in accordance with the actual facts of creation--to stress His remarkable oneness with the Father, just in this respect. Was He not the incomparable Artist and Architect to whom the Father had delegated the whole task of calling into existence a marvelous universe resplendent with beauty? The testimony of John 1:1 is indubitable: "Without Him (Christ) nothing was made of all that was made."

But what about Lucifer, then--the Son of the Morning? Who had created him? Could there be any doubt about that in our minds? It was Jesus Christ, of course. Then why did He not tell him so? Why had He not made this clear to that rising "Son of the Morning" a long time ago?

Christ had more important missions than that of demonstrating in front of His heavenly associates His own remarkable might and external glory. He had the mission of demonstrating His love--the small, still voice of meekness and mercy, of spirit and grace.

But at this extreme moment any amount of that sweet delicacy on the part of the definitely "Down-Going" One, the utterly Self-Abasing One, seemed to be of no avail. Lucifer's heart had too long brazed itself against the fragrant and tenderly touching mildness of God's appeal, the God who had created him and loved him with an infinite love. That outgoing love seemed like nothing to the wayward one who needed it so desperately. Every sweet little manifestation of it was taken in evil part:

"The warning given in infinite love and mercy, only aroused a spirit of resistance. Lucifer allowed his jealousy of Christ to prevail, and became the more determined." (Ibid.)

The self-abasing meekness of Christ's appeal became a trial to Lucifer in a double sense. It is the same that happens to you and me in the destiny-laden moments of our lives: How could our Maker apply a more perfect means of trying us? But this means that our very life is on trial. If your heart is not melted by it, it is definitely hardened. There is no neutral alternative. The day of judgment (crisis) is at hand, it is a day of clear discrimination, an either--or.

9. A Secret of the Heavens, Finally Disclosed Under Dramatic Conditions

It was only at this tardy moment that the Father Himself, in His turn, made His inevitable decision. For the sake of the sincere and loyal angels, whom Satan was trying to make his accomplices,

God was forced to lay bare all the facts. This took place under conditions of a dramatic tension. That certainly was not a revelation wholly in accordance with the ideal plan of God. But there simply was not any other way it could be done under the prevailing circumstances.

"The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son, and show the relation He sustained to all created beings. The Son of God shared the Father's throne, and the glory of the Eternal, Self-existent One encircled both. About the throne gathered the holy angels, a vast unnumbered throng." (Ibid)

And now, what, exactly, was the "relation He (Christ) sustained to all created beings?" The solemn declaration made by God the Father on this occasion was bound to be a significant one. It simply brought out the full truth about "the position of His Son:"

"Before the assembled inhabitant of heaven, the King declared that none but Christ, the only begotten of God, could fully enter into His purpose, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty council of His will. The Son of God had wrought the Father's will in the creation of the hosts of heaven. And to Him, as well as to God (the Father), their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of earth and its inhabitants. But, in all this, He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself, contrary to God's plan, but exalt the Father's glory, and execute His purposes of beneficence and love." (Ibid.)

Lucifer, on realizing the stupendous fact of Christ's condescension, finally had a most realistic reaction: He was for some time overwhelmed by a sense of true admiration.

But the fight as a universally engaging drama has not ended with this. It has rather only begun. Now follows the most dramatic balancing of all, between good and evil decisions in intelligent creatures' minds. The inspired description of that battle in Patriarchs and Prophets is as conformed to the significance of the topic as any piece of world literature could be. This is the giant controversy between Humility and Pride, in its most breath-taking disclosure:

"The angels joyfully acknowledged the supremacy of Christ, and prostrating themselves before Him, poured out their love and adoration. Lucifer bowed with them: But in His heart there was a strange, fierce conflict. Truth, justice and loyalty were struggling against envy and jealousy. The influence of the holy angels seemed for a time to carry him with them. As songs of praise ascended in melodious strains, swelled by thousands of glad voices, the spirit of evil seemed vanquished: Unutterable love thrilled his entire being" (Ibid.)

Notice two phases of this battle, which actually go together, forming one single whole: On the one hand, one may distinguish an "intellectual phase." Remember that Lucifer, as well as the whole heavenly host, had now received pointed information about the relevant facts of the matter. Christ's capacity of Creator, that is, His self-evident title to every creature's homage and allegiance, had been solemnly established by the Eternal Father Himself. In other words, such sober considerations as "truth, justice and loyalty" would henceforth, without any reasonable objection, have to be registered in favor of the wayward child's "coming to himself" (as the story of the prodigal son expresses it). On the other hand, however, there is a "sentimental phase." That is what becomes evident when it says that those virile qualities of "trust, justice, and loyalty" had to struggle against "envy and jealousy." We do realize the fierceness of the inner conflict. It is again, first and foremost, a conflict between the stern realist and the sentimental illusionist. But in order that the issue of such a conflict is to be a victorious one for the cause of realism, the fighter's heart, above all things, must be "right with God". In this sense, any

"intellectual" battle, even, is bound to be decided on moral grounds, on spiritual grounds, on what some scientists will tend to consider with serious suspicion as "subjective" grounds.

Let us look at this "subjectivity" in terms of its decisive influence, as regards the ultimate issue in Lucifer's case. The truth as a definite spiritual value, was intensely active on the side of good. Thanks to the interceding prayers of thousands of angels, who still loved Lucifer dearly, this truth was on the very verge of gaining a decisive victory in the insurgent's soul. The triumph of good over evil seems to be right at hand. Triumph, here as always, means "bowing down". Will Lucifer, in the depths of his heart, bow down? This is the question that still keeps weighing in the balances. It means destiny to Lucifer, and to many others with him. Conditions are as promising as ever; the good influences are in the majority, and the incredible thing seems about to happen:

"His (Lucifer's) soul went out in harmony with the sinless worshipers in love to the Father and the Son".

To me there is something striking in this "went out" in Ellen White's formulation here. It brings out a definitely "alterocentric" note in the ascending part of her description. But unfortunately that turning outward is a trend soon abandoned for the opposite one. Lucifer's gaze begins to turn inward in that exclusive way which spells defeat. That is a turning to the place in which there is no hope, no salvation: the abyss of egocentricity and sentimentality in creaturely beings. God has given His creatures the prerogative of a free will.

The "other ones" may carry you on the wings of holy song and interceding prayer, but they cannot make the final decisions for you. Those decisions are yours. They may go straight against the most compact majority. To the numerous observers of Lucifer's drama comes the pang of seeing the triumph turned into abrupt defeat. The pendulum has struck over to the wrong side. This is Autarkeia still winning the day in the last round. Looking back at himself (an empty stare), instead of out to the other ones, and to the Other One (a sacred vision), Lucifer sinks into the billows of gloomy perdition.

"Again he was filled with pride in his own glory, His desire for supremacy returned, and envy of Christ was once more indulged."

Ingratitude is here indicated by Ellen White as the direct cause of a destructive process now taking its wild course. This deadening poison of the self-centered soul is described with masterful insight, as regards its deleterious effects on living minds.

10. Gratitude--The Christian Realist's Only Alternative to Pagan Vanity

Ingratitude versus gratitude! Do not miss the significance of these qualities in the present context. Gratitude is an attitude of sober-minded realism, of grasping the facts outside oneself. The opposite of this is pride, vanity. That is the attitude of illusionism. It is the sentimental emptiness filling your soul when you insist on closing yourself up in the darkness of your own mind. It is willful irrationalism. The mechanism of that irrationalism is well described by Ellen White:

"The high honors conferred upon Lucifer were not appreciated as God's special gift, and therefore called forth no gratitude to his Creator. He glorified in his brightness and exaltation, and aspired to be equal with God."

How different from Christ's own fundamental attitude. The Lord of the universe who really did have something to glory in, a glory entirely His own, He actually makes conscious efforts to hide His glory, as long as it is not profitable to the other ones to have it revealed to them, as yet. He who was, from eternity, the Self-sufficient One, the truly Self-dependent One,--He, of all beings, deliberately makes Himself dependent-- heartily dependent--on the other ones. For their sakes, intentionally and systematically, He veils the radiant glory of His absolute supremacy, His divine Self-sufficiency.

How pitifully contrasting to this is not that "self-sufficiency" which Lucifer introduced into the universe. In fact, self-sufficiency in connection with mere creatures is not only a miserable sham phenomenon It is an abomination. It is a mocking of God, an affront against His divine uniqueness.

So it appropriately maintains its position, becoming the symbol par excellence for man making himself into a god, assuming all the sacred prerogatives of God. That is self-exaltation, self-deification. It is the creature's proud way up, in marked contradistinction to the Creator's humble way down. Briefly, it is paganism versus Christianity.

There should be no difficulty, then in pinpointing this as related to our key text, Phil. 2:4,5. The pagan titan insists on making himself equal to the Divine One: Nothing less than that. This is the great "robbery". It is simple usurpation and presumption. The mildest terms of interpretation one can find for this is foolishness, illusion, self-deceit. We should know that these qualities are fateful. But it should also be noticed what makes them particularly fateful: It is a certain atmosphere of "romanticism," perhaps the most dangerous trend in this universe. Let us notice the following words:

"The spirit of discontent and disaffection had never been known in heaven. It was a new element, strange, mysterious, unaccountable."

In how far unaccountable? -- It simply could not be accounted for by any substantial logical reason. Sin has no reason. Therefore, no one can explain why it happened. If it had had a reason, it would have had an excuse, says the Spirit of Prophecy. But it has no excuse. It is entirely unwarranted. A special dispensation of grace is necessary in order to obtain forgiveness for it. And this grace has become available to us through Jesus Christ.

That strange "unaccountableness" of sin is exactly what has tended to make spiritualism so dangerously attractive as a tool in Satan's workshop. There is something here surrounding the schemes of the evil one with a weird lustre. Sin, from its very entry upon the scene, had something inexplicable to recommend it.(-That is, to the hearts of creatures indulging in the temptation of self-contemplation, egocentricity.) Its very novelty rendered it fascinating, exciting, filled to the brim with a strange promise. That promise is vain. It is arch-false. But on first views even that vanity and spuriousness do not present themselves as utter disadvantages.

Upon illusion, however, follows disillusion. And that is a bitter experience,--not "bitter-sweet", but just bitter. Satan very soon had this experience of disillusionment. No intelligent creature is so mad that he does not eventually realize the heavy loss he is suffering, due to sin. But in Lucifer's case that realization came too late. For the first time in creation's history, this idea becomes a destiny-laden one: "Too late!" Ellen White says: "He nearly reached the decision to return, but pride forbade him." (PP 39).

The wayward one had a last opportunity, a gracious offer on the part of a Mediator, a Redeemer, to come back, -- but "pride forbade him!" What a dictatorial, tyrannical master pride is!

Later on he did "decide to come back", but this "decision" in itself was nothing but a delusion. There was no coming back:

"He had now gone too far to return". (PP 41) It would have been unrealistic to "take him back". God cannot afford to be unrealistic. In his pity and grace He goes as far as there is any realistic coverage for going. Not one inch farther. Christianity has no quarrel at all with radical realism.

And what is the trend of disposition Satan now discloses? A new stage of his warfare with God is reached. He goes into open battle. He avails himself of every unfair argument which is the apparent advantage of the unscrupulous evil-doer in his work of misrepresentation. Most eloquent in this respect is the argument he now uses in order to alienate the other angels from God: He points to "the long-suffering of God as an evidence of his own (Satan's) superiority" (PP 39). In other words: God's going down is represented as a sign of His "inferiority". As the Spirit of Prophecy puts it: "His mercy was misrepresented". (PP 39).

The trend of "reasoning" is strikingly uniform: "That person over there, who I feared was superior, has finally come down to my level. So this is where he belongs. It is exactly as I thought all the time: I am certainly a match for him in anything. Perhaps I can even climb far above him. That is what I am going to do!"

3 What a pitiable set of logics, -- the logics of envious minds, a frantically distorted pattern of thought. Particularly pathetic becomes the tragedy of the present case when viewed in the light of what was due to take place shortly afterwards, -- and did take place, according to the plan, a divine, irrepressible plan.

You certainly recall what was the great issue to be agreed upon by that divine council to which Lucifer was not invited: According to the Spirit of Prophecy, it was precisely when the great cherub discovered that he had not been deemed worthy of taking part in the deliberations of this divine council, that he permitted his jealousy to burst out into open flame. So we have good reason to be curious about the agenda of that council. What was the great question at issue? It was whether God the Father and God the Son should now put into practice their eternal purpose of going down as they had never gone down before, and take all the risks involved in this most radical going down! We happen to know today something about the suffering and sacrifice implied in pursuing, with divine inflexibility, and to the bitter end, the original plan of creating the planet Earth and the creature man.

If there is not an irony of fate in this, then an irony of fate has never occurred. What was the precious glory and exaltation from which Lucifer imagined that he had been "shamefully excluded", "treacherously bypassed"! It was simply the glory of going down, absolutely all the way down.

It should here be underlined that there hardly was a time in all the history of intelligent free-will creatures, when they were refused the life-inspiring revelation that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the great Creator of all things. Even from the first moment when He came down to this earth in the form of a lowly human being, that glorious truth was evidently the great light of a gradually dawning day. It was immediately available to some whose hearts were already receptive to just this kind of humble revelation selected by Providence. I am thinking of such persons as Mary and Joseph, Anna and Simeon, etc., etc. So, the main fact we should hold fast to, is: Christ's favorite method of revealing himself, to angels as well as to men, has evidently been the humble alterocentric method, of pointing to the Other One, in this case, the Father, as the great and glorious One. On the other hand, to whom does the Father in His turn, constantly refer us, as a demonstration of divine glory? To the Son!

Still it remains an indisputable fact that the King of Heaven did come down to this planet. The first time, not as the King of Glory, but in the form of a little human baby. This lowliness manifestly was the best point of departure from which He could reveal God and vindicate His name.

So definitely, once more, the principle of alterocentricity becomes the adequate methodology; according to that, you do not proceed to point at yourself, but at the other one. Christ availed Himself of the great pedagogical principle of revealing God to man objectively. This objectification is what happens whenever one Person in the Godhead reveals to His creatures (His "students", if you like) the great Creator as One He can point at outside Himself, as it were. In other words: "Please look over there, dear disciple of mine, I am showing you God in all His admirable beauty".

It is obvious that this was the favorite method of instruction in heaven among the angels as well. Of course, there was nothing here, either, that prevented the creatures from getting to know the full facts about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Maker of worlds and of all living creatures. We remember how Anna and Simeon were enabled to see divine glory as it flashed through humanity in the form of a tiny babe. So Lucifer also had the privilege to detect majesty through the outward display of divine lowliness. But we know on what the perspicacity of Anna and Simeon depended. That was the attitude they themselves, as free-will agents, chose to adopt toward what they saw. In a similar way, a test of obedience and goodwill toward God was placed in the pathway of angelic beings. They had the privilege of intelligent creatures to say "No, thank you" to what they did see, from the beginning. But it is the positive answer of an eager "Yes, thank you" which is the obvious intention of all volitional freedom. It is the blessed possibility of loving freely.

The heart is the sense perception instrument through which an intelligent creature is able to see the most essential truths in life. And that heart is a totality. It comprehends will power, love feeling, humble submission to objective facts, everything that is basic for total perception.

"My teaching is not Mine," said Jesus, "But His that sent Me. If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." John 7:16, 17 RV

The question of these cavilers Jesus met, not by answering the cavil, but by opening up truth vital to the salvation of the soul. The perception and appreciation of truth, He said, depends less upon the mind than upon the heart. Truth must be received into the soul; it claims the homage of the will. If the truth could be submitted to the reason alone, pride would be no hindrance in the way of its reception. But it is to be received through the work of grace in the heart; and its reception depends upon the renunciation of every sin that the Spirit of God reveals. Man's advantages for obtaining a knowledge of the truth, however great these may be, will prove of no benefit to him unless the heart is open to receive the truth." DA 455-56

11. For Meditation and Summary

Why then--to get to the real depths of it--did Christ veil His divinity in the case of Lucifer and that angel's fellow creatures? For, as we do know for a fact today, this veiling was to occasion a misunderstanding in Lucifer's mind and in the minds of so many of his fellows--a fatal misunderstanding, you might safely say. For their part, the result of the whole development was that they simply came to think: "Christ is as 'low' as that. He is not just lowly, humble. He is, as it appears, 'LOW'." And they treated Him accordingly: That is, in accordance with their own fatally wrong conclusion.

The same problem could be formulated in a different way: Was not this unique plan of Christ, of going down, a manifest failure, a sad mistake?

No. First we may here remember that all the angels were faced with the same testing experience. But did they all react to it in the same way? No, there is a significant distinction between two different ways of reaction to that lowliness of Jesus Christ, as He made His historic encounter with them in their lives. In fact, there are principal and widely different ways in which creatures may react in front of the tremendous phenomenon of lowliness. Lowliness is a most forcefully decision-provoking thing. It simply forces a line of distinction to be drawn, majestically and irrepressibly, between some things that must be distinguished. At the moment when lowliness appears upon the scene, crisis is there. What kind of crisis is that? It is crisis in terms of a most necessary test. That is, the test that knocks at the door of every creature who has been called to the unfathomable privilege of being endowed with personality. Personality, or will, means the solemn fact of being called upon to make a choice, the choice of life?

There seems to be something inevitably attending upon any demonstration of lowliness here. It is a mechanism of acceleration. It precipitates you toward a final decision. You are never the same after it. You are either a thousand times better or a thousand times worse. You are most precipitously on your way up, or on your way down. And in the very condition of the world there is an urgent desire for that ultimate determination. In Christ's own heart there is this urgency:

"Think not that I have come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." (Matt. 10:34) "I am come to send fire on the earth: and what will I if it be already kindled." (Luke 12:49)

We have had a glimpse of God, as a peculiar scene of special revelation makes His dazzling contours stand out in our visionary hearts. Let us also have a look at Him from other angles. For instance, what portrait does nature and nature's laws give of the great Other-Centered One?

CHAPTER II

THE INVISIBLE CREATOR REVEALING HIMSELF INDISPUTABLY TO ALL INTELLIGENT MEN THROUGH HIS VISIBLE CREATION

"For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Romans 1:20

Among the millions of honest men who strive heroically to find sound sense and some kind of spiritual meaningfulness in human life, many grapple in vain with one particular problem. It is a very special facet of the problem of evil in man's world: Philosophers and theologians have tried to convince them that this is the "best of all possible worlds".

And Christianity assures them that when the God of the universe created, he did a perfect job. "But how can this be true, in view of the present irrefutable facts?", asks the problem-haunted human

observer. "If God created all things good and perfect, then how could evil and imperfection manage to come up at all in our world?"

Personally, I do not any longer feel that this is so difficult to understand at all. The simple knowledge of some fundamental facts in nature has been entirely sufficient for me to make the existence of both good and evil in this world understandable to a large extent, even on purely common-sense grounds. But first I had to grasp something essential about the inherent nature of order and the nature of automatic happening. Please go with me now for a fairly simple tour of reasoning.

1. The Concept of Order Versus Disorder Taking on New Significance and Enormous Dimensions

It is here elementary to know something decisive about what order actually means, and how it is related to other-centeredness, that is the basic spirit pervading the very core of all life, temporal and spiritual. Let us start with something absolutely basic to the world of human beings; What does it actually mean to "come to order" in one's elementary existence? I have summed up my whole thesis of harmony and happiness in human life as follows: Harmony and happiness depends on man's faculty--or his willingness--to turn outward and find his values where they really are to be found; that is, outside himself. The Value above all values here is God. To be "other-centered" is to have the center of one's life, not in oneself, but in "the other ones", and particularly "the Other One". We have simply been made that way. There is, therefore, no chance of any happy, well-ordered life apart from other-centeredness.

Now, here comes an important question: What about the natural condition of those indispensable values man is bound to seek outside himself? Are they all presented as a "perfect package", something "ready-made" he can exploit immediately? Are they all like some kind of ripe fruit dropping into his lap all of a sudden? No, no, far from it. More often than not, the values must be gradually explored. They must be appropriated, "dug out" piece by piece, as it were, or "built up" fragment by fragment. Often it costs no end of strenuous labor to "create" the values, -- in us and around us. And it may cost the same amount of labor to maintain them in that state of value. Here we are actually facing one of the greatest problems of the "ego-altero" relation, the gigantic problem of order versus disorder. May that problem rise up before us in all its primitive grandeur.

But for the purpose of knowing what order means in the lives of men, it is very helpful to have some elementary knowledge first about our material world: How does the principle of order comport itself in the world of common things? We feel that certain discoveries of natural science may throw a most interesting light upon the topic of order in spiritual life as well.

What is order? And what is disorder? Let us consider those phenomena in a simple, unassuming way, as they are known to behave in inanimate nature.

We take the loose and disordered pieces of a mosaic and put them together in such a way that they form the figure they have originally been cut off from. We say that an element of order has been introduced. It takes considerable time and effort to arrange those pieces on the plate we have before us. But now we hold the plate askance, letting the pieces glide back into the box where they are usually kept. That is quickly and painlessly done. The beautiful and ingenious order we had a moment ago, has shown a striking tendency: It is so easily disturbed, so rapidly disrupted, perhaps even totally dissolved. What we see in front of us is a clear example of the prompt relapse into "chaos".

Certainly here and there some few pieces may occasionally "arrange themselves" again, by mere accident--in such a way as to form some "meaningful" figure. But, generally speaking, we shall have to assert this rule: Order has an obvious bias towards getting lost.

Now, do not think we imagine we have made any sensational discovery of some rare new phenomenon. Where is the housewife who has not taken note of that same sad behavior on the part of the element "order" quite a long time ago? Or ask any person, anywhere, who decided to exercise the laudable task of "keeping order", if his experience has been a different one.

Alas, no! If ever scientific arguments have seemed superfluous, that must certainly be the case here. Nevertheless--"for order's sake"--we want to have this matter indubitably settled by modern science. The British chemist, R.E.D. Clark, begins by stating.

"Common sense and common experience suggest that order always tends to disappear if things are left to interact with themselves."(1)

But, of course, the first impressions arrived at by common sense and popular experience are not always quite reliable. The natural scientist places us in front of a scene which he invites us to observe from a not-quite-so popular and common point of view. To be sure, the scene itself is popular enough, and common enough: It is a billiard board. All the billiard balls in front of you happen to be very quiet, so far, except for one. That one is just rushing into the field of the quiet balls with great force and velocity. The balls immediately start colliding with each other and with the sides of the board. Gradually the initial force and velocity is equally shared among all the balls. At least approximately, the average speed of the different balls is the same.

What is it that has taken place here? In fact, there has been a development from order to disorder, not popularly speaking this time, but just from a scientific point of view. That first ball, with the unique force and speed it had, just prior to the shocks, represents order. Then something happens to this concentration of order: The great force and speed of that originally moving ball becomes equally distributed among all the others on the table. This represents the gradual dissolution of the element of order.

1R.E.D. Clark: The Universe and God, 1939, p. 29.

But perhaps the most interesting characteristic about this equalizing process is this: It is absolutely irreversible. That is to say, no single ball on the board will have any chance of winning back any position similar to that of the first ball at the moment when it started its work of waste and dissipation. That original state of force and velocity is one from which there is only a moving away, not a returning back. Why not? Because this is precisely the nature of order: It is so easily squandered, dissipated, lost in the yawning gorges of infinitude. To win it back again is a desperately difficult task, a fateful impossibility.

2. The "Mysterious S" of Modern Thermo-Dynamics and God

A similar irreversibility was found by physicists in what they called entropy. They soon observed that any amount of energy could be converted into heat. (And any man who, on a cold day,

has a sufficient store of that precious quality (energy) in him to exert his muscles a little, will undoubtedly make that same pleasant experience: He gets warm.) However, at a very early date, man felt a curious desire to try the opposite way as well. Possessing abundant sources of heat in nature, he simply wanted that heat to do some special piece of work for him. Even a long time before anything like a steam engine had yet been invented, human beings must obviously have had a certain weakness for reducing their own efforts to a minimum by the use of ingenious devices.

In the present case, however, they were disappointed to find that only a small fraction of the heat available could be effectively converted into energy; that is, do the work it was supposed to do. Something was constantly being lost on the way, as it were. This "something", so inevitably doomed to the fate of disappearing, was order; but that was a fact scientists did not realize till much later.

One thing was discovered relatively early, however; The loss could be determined very accurately. It was found that a certain mathematical quantity, called the entropy "S", and defined by a well-known relation (1), had the enigmatic property of increasing in all physical changes. This is known in physics as the "Second Law of Thermodynamics," or the "Law of Entropy".

But what this entropy "S" really was, remained very much a mystery for quite a long time. It was realized that it must have some definite relation to the impossibility of constructing a perpetual mobile machine. For if that had been possible, S would not have been permitted to increase as seemed to be its unfailing habit.

Only comparatively late did the full meaning of the "mysterious" function dawn upon the scientist's mind. It was now seen to be simply the scientific expression of something that everybody could observe happening everywhere and at all times: It was a mathematical formula for the continual loss of order. It was the scientific confirmation of the general validity of a phenomenon hitherto observed only in its particular cases. It was irrefutable evidence that disorder is constantly increasing, and is bound to increase, wherever things are left to themselves and to the hazards of an indifferent material world.

This is a truth, by the way, whose general validity it may be important enough to get confirmed with scientific infallibility. For on first view, and superficially considered, we are sometimes tempted to believe the very opposite. Don't some things naturally tend to "arrange themselves" in a way suggesting an increased order, rather than disorder? Clouds of certain types are among the things "ordering themselves". They are seen to form definitely well-ordered rollers. Crystals automatically take the form of exquisite patterns, and so on.

$1 S = (T)/(Q) (dQ)/(T)$ (where DQ is a small amount of heat added to a system at a temperature called T.)

But in each one of such cases, that "automatic orderliness" is a delusion. Our inverted commas here have a particularly deep significance. For in the realms of human life, to which we have particularly applied our study, we have consistently found that automatism and order never go together. But let us, so far, stay in the realms of natural science. And here it is certainly worthwhile noticing the conclusion of the conscientious investigator: In all cases of the above-mentioned type, order is far from being increased. On the contrary, it is being consistently lost in the process of physical change. What really happens is, for instance, that a highly ordered chemical energy is converted into highly disordered heat.

So there is absolutely no exception to this rule: What is truly automatic is the loss of order! What cosmological perspective does this open? It may be essential for an understanding of the

importance we have attached to our idea of automatism, that we should have a glance at the perspectives opened in various fields; we shall begin with a look at the field of cosmology.

Through long ages, people kept basing themselves on a mere common sense intuition of that mysterious "disorder S". So the mere facts of existing order in the universe repeatedly led up to ideas of the theodicy kind; that is, profoundly religious views on the genesis of all things. Today man faces that theoretical law as an inevitable scientific certainty. The mathematician and the physicist have proved its general validity: All existing order is doomed to a constant process of passing away, wherever things are left to interact with themselves.

So, more than ever, one great question is bound to force itself upon the attention of intelligent minds: If, with the inexorable necessity of a natural law, everything ought to be steadily moving toward a state of increasing disorder--wherever things are left to themselves, how, then does it come to pass that, right in front of us, in our everyday world we do experience a certain degree of order, after all?

Could it be that what here passes under the name of order, is no real order at all? Is it only some sufficiently naive Berhardin de Saint Pierre who has fooled us into believing that this is order? At least numerous critics will eagerly and contemptuously cry out: "I don't take much stock in that kind of order. It is too imperfect, indeed, to impress me!"

But remember, there is no need of producing evidence of perfect order. Even the smallest amount of consistent order ought to be sufficient to cause an actual sensation in scientific circles.

We find that concept strikingly emphasized in a passage from Gilson's work: *l'Esprit de la philosophie medievale*:

Take the case that the sum of disorder outweighs by far the sum of order; take even the case that only infinitesimal bits of order remain ; still one would have to seek the cause of that order.(1)

Personally, we have all witnessed same very sad instances of salient disorder in nature, haven't we? Still, we would never think of denying that the amount of notorious harmony and order upon which a human being here and now may feast his eyes--and gladden his heart as well--are simply overwhelming.

Immediately, the question presents itself with irrepressible force to the most critical and intelligent minds: How has this order--great or small--come into existence in the first place? And, secondly, how could it really manage to maintain its position as order, once it was there?

To us that buoyant breaking forth of order, in vertical defiance against the hardest and coldest stringency of a natural law (the law of barren automatism), becomes an adequate symbol of the alterocentric spirit itself. So much has it got of the outstanding characteristics of active transcendence in terms of a purposive intervention; you just cannot remain unimpressed.

1p. 62, italics ours.

And here it is absolutely irrelevant to refer to the alternative of blind chance. Of course, we do admit that once in a while a certain degree of "order" seems to come into being "by pure chance". In the case of an avalanche for instance, some stones may certainly happen to "arrange themselves" in such a manner as to form some fairly nice figure, an undeniable symmetry, a suspicion of order. But that is no consistent order. That is not the kind of order that strikes a profoundly reasoning mind with wonder.

But precisely this real order, is to be found almost wherever we turn our eyes. Our science of today keeps on revealing entire worlds of astonishing order. I am not only referring to the great cosmos, but to so many a microcosmos, which was not recognized as a treasure house of marvelous order in an earlier period. Think of nuclear physics and the store of tremendous energy contained all around us, in the form of mass.

How could so many things have "ordered themselves" in the freakish fashion mentioned a moment ago? What are the chances that this elementary order--let alone the higher forms of order--may have come about quite casually--or "spontaneously"? In fact, they are as close to zero as any calculation of probabilities could ever come. Such ratios would not be seriously considered by any realistic research expert in any science. It would simply be incompatible with his dignity as a scientist to take them into serious account.

On the contrary, there would be unlimited evidence that all present order, if it behaved "decently",--I mean what that great inexorable law of inanimate nature (a nature "left to itself") would demand as "decent behavior"--actually ought to be disappearing. No, we must apologize for our understatement: For even that is not a sufficiently realistic formulation of the facts. Real order should never have entered upon the scene. The very fact of its existence--at any time, in any place, or in any quality-- is a downright contradictory situation, considered from a "purely scientific" point of view. For it is in glaring defiance of the clear law which science has formulated. So, it is not an occasion for surprise that men throughout all ages have been puzzled at the factual existence of order. It is rather surprising that they have not been more puzzled at it than the history of ideas now reveals. But if every theory of an automatic ordering (a "self-ordering") must be excluded, there is only one alternative left. That is the theory of an interference from without. Outside nature there must be a Force that is not subject to the same law of an automatically increasing disorder. So the way that Force interferes must be, not only intelligent and intentional, but entirely independent. Whether man, the spectator to this marvel, calls that Force "Life" or "Self-existent Reason" or "God", that does not make so much difference, as far as understanding it is concerned; for it cannot be understood; it can only be experienced.

However, just in that striking light of these relations, we may have an intuitive glimpse of some other connections we have particularly alluded to on previous occasions. We have briefly hinted that a remarkable transformation happens to man at the very moment when he commits himself to the peculiar act of alterocentricity; that is the act of turning outwards, of finding his center in the others, in the Other One. Concomitantly, with that act, man becomes whole. It actually looks as if that very orientation outwards, suddenly (one may be tempted to say "automatically") releases an inward process of total reorganization in the sense of a thorough integration.

Of course, that has nothing in common with automatism at all, as we understand it. On the contrary, we rather think it can be aptly illustrated by what happens to the heaps of iron chips in the physics lab at the moment when they approach a magnetic field. Just a moment ago, in the heap, there

was the wildest disorder, one chip turning this way, the other one the opposite way, or any position the great disrupting and dissipating "deity" of pure chance might have given to them. But then the magnet suddenly makes its nearness triumphantly felt. The ball of chips has immediately found its great organizing center, right outside itself! We almost imagine we perceive the rustling and the shaking that Ezekiel perceived in the heap of dry bones, suddenly becoming alive and organizing themselves into living units.(1)

In a Christian's life, the "Magnet" is nothing but the Other One par excellence; that is, Jesus Christ, who said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32).

In this case the "lifting up" was certainly no self-elevation. It was the extreme self-abasement, another aspect of the Agape mystery. The Cross of Christ was destined to become the mysterious Magnet of the ages, a power of attraction and re-integration which the world had never known before. Evidently man has generally taken great care not to place himself where the attractive force of that Magnet could reach him. But once he has come into the magnetic field where its attraction is strongest, his egocentric orientation--and also his disruption--will be gone. Then he will also have this peculiar characteristic of alterocentricity--or theocentricity--he will be "as true to duty as the compass needle is to the pole". The force of that fidelity is not in him; it is in Jesus Christ.

1Ezekiel 37

3. The Concept of Order in the Realms of the Human Soul

But are we justified in stepping so lightly and so confidently from the field of natural science to the field of morals and religion? Suppose there does not exist at all, in the moral world, anything really corresponding to that hard law of automism and increasing disorder we happened to find in the physical world. Anyway, it would be wise to move onward with caution.

Some viewpoints certainly do seem generally applicable to all kinds of order versus disorder. For instance: Order immediately appears as a good; disorder appears as an evil. To our work on the totality in human life, from the first to the last volume, evaluations of good and evil are an inevitable viewpoint. Thus, we have also considered it quite naturally as part of our task, to follow--and to evaluate--the development of an idea surging up in the cultures our study comprises. That is an idea converging in this conclusion: disorder must be, in our world, the natural, the automatic, the self-evident phenomenon, even in the realms of the human mind, or particularly there. Order, on the other hand, is invariably the result of a concentrated initiative, an intentional interference on the part of extrinsic forces.

As a suitable point of departure for our discussion of order and morals we shall quote a simple passage:

Evil flourishes and needs no culture, while the good seed sown needs to be watered, carefully tended, and continually nourished, or the precious plants will die.¹

Is there anything so remarkable at all in that passage? Many readers will probably regard it as a truism, a tedious commonplace. But to our topic on the nature of order and its essential relation to alterocentricity and totality, it seems pregnant with stirring ideas.

1E. G. White: Testimonies, Vol. 1, p. 318

And the theorists of human idealism--both idealism in the Platonic sense and idealism in the common humanist sense--ought to find it far from commonplace. In fact, they might have considerable temptation to object protestingly: Is it not the good in the universe that possesses real buoyancy and an inherent force of triumphant survival? Ought not this good--quite automatically, as it were--to win the upper hand, in the long run? Why should it not--as a matter of course--assert itself so thoroughly, by and by, that it would finish by simply crowding out any germs of evil,--and this in sheer virtue of its imminent moral superiority?

What is the testimony given by the immediately accessible facts of human experience in this field, and what is the message conveyed by Christian anthropology and Christian theology?

Some will say we have hitherto limited our outlook to the realms of inanimate matter. It would suffice to rise from physics to biology to have a very different picture. In the world of living beings, order amply demonstrates its "inherent" power to burst forth, to grow and propagate itself indefinitely. Isn't that undeniable?

I fully agree that it would suffice "to rise from physics to biology." But who has ever realized that rise? I do not mean just in mente: I mean in re. Neither the New nor the Old Testament envisages the power of procreation as an "inherent power," residing as an independent faculty in the essence of the living creature. On the contrary, it is conceived as an intervening force, divinely imparted at every moment. And if any man feels called upon to disprove this view of what actually takes place, then he is welcome to do so.

Of course there is no denying: What modern men do face, as a fait accompli in this continually extended wonder of present life, is the diametrically opposite of those barren facts of chaos and automatism, observed in inanimate nature. Holy Writ has always had only one way of expressing this, namely divine creation. And the believers in that simple message of divine revelation never imagined this was a thing they could explain. They simply accepted the axiom of total dependence upon God, for order of any kind whatsoever to develop.

There is, of course, also an opposite doctrine, the doctrine of independence; that is the doctrine of "spontaneous generation." This is the idea that inorganic matter (dead matter) suddenly one day can turn into living matter all by itself. Indeed, a quite sympathetic conception of automatism! So a genuinely idealistic view, as Plato or any pagan humanist would see it, a view based on the most pleasant optimism romantic human minds could ever devise: the doctrine of total self-dependence. On the day when the tenability of that view has been proved, the biblical view of a radical dependence will have been dis-proved. On that same day, but only then, will there also be conclusive evidence that the law of an automatically increasing disorder, which has been seen to apply inexorably to dead matter, does not apply to the "superior sphere" called human life. Will that day ever arrive? The accumulated evidence of millennia is not in favor of such a thing ever happening.

Let us now have a realistic look at a "peculiar life", the life of the human "soul". So first this question: Is it a manifest reality, even in that "supreme sphere" of the human being, that "evil flourishes and needs no culture, while the good seed sown needs to be watered, carefully tended, and continually nourished, or the precious plants will die"?

It is remarkable to see, in our Western humanistic culture, how readily we accept the facts of inertia and chaos as inherent qualities of inanimate matter, while we ignore or deny that same law of inertia in moral life. In other words, we are reasonably realistic, as long as we consider the sciences of pure mechanics. We Western men do admit--and with eager readiness--that the perpetuum mobile machine was doomed to be a failure; for, as physicists, we realize that inertia is a fact. Nothing but an initiative-possessing force from outside can set matter in motion. But what happens when we come to sciences of the more humanistic type, such as "higher" biology and psychology. Then we become so incredibly optimistic in our thinking--sometimes sublimely philosophical, downright spiritualistic. We are, for instance, definitely reluctant to admit that a similar inertia, a similar automatic chaos, and virtual not-life, rather than genuine life, are the immanent characteristics of a human mind.

We seem to think we can let things in our intimate spiritual lives drift and shift for themselves, and still have order perpetuated within us. But this is a tragic mistake.

On the contrary, a disorder just as real and inexorable as the one threatening to undo every morsel of ordered conditions in the world of matter left to itself, will, under similar circumstances of simple abandonment, grow up automatically in the human soul. It will develop into an infernal, God-forsaken reality, gradually annihilating the forces of buoyancy and survival in man. In fact, disorder is the essential evil menacing our very lives with certain destruction. Automatism is our lethal danger.

Anyone who begins to think about automatism viewed from that angle, may have a most curious experience. The very concept of the "automatic" begins to adopt an entirely new tinge in his mind. Otherwise these concepts tend to awaken rather favorable associations. The typical child of this formidable age of technological wonders is apt to have emotions of pleasure and enthusiasm, as soon as he has been told that this or that device is "wholly automatic". So the general concept of automatism becomes enshrouded with a mysterious halo of absolute perfection and omnipotence. An infatuated world of onlookers will always tend to consider the astounding robot man coming shining new out of its inventors workshop, with a certain thrilling sentiment of secret delight. If, however, at times of war, he has happened to see the block next to the one he lives in, blown to pieces by a similar robot, his associations may change. And to a more enlightened and thoughtful person, who has finally begun to fathom the dark abyss of automatism in him and around him, any robot may become a phantom full of terror and death. Automatism is revealing itself to him as what it really is: the great tragedy of "things left to themselves."

4. The Demon of Automatism versus the Free Dependence on a Living, Personally Intervening God

Just the tragic deluge of a rapidly growing interior disorder, closing upon a human soul, exposing itself to the God-forsakenness of all things left to their own devices, is a common theme of biblical prophecy. God alone is seen as the absolutely Independent One, the Self-Ordered One, the Inexhaustible One, whose order has the property of increasing endlessly. Therefore, God alone is capable of helping His creatures to proceed from chaos to cosmos, in those micro-worlds that have been entrusted to their care, their own lives, temporal as well as spiritual.

It is, in fact, a remarkable trait of the anti-fatalism and the anti-automatism of the Christian religion that a position of personal responsibility is granted to every single intelligent creature in God's universe. That presupposes an implicit trust in the individual's dependability as a person. In fact, the supremely Independent One has had the unfathomable plan of making Himself dependent on the others! And notice: the ones He has here chosen as His alteri, His responsible, dependable alteri, are mortal humans, imperfect creatures like you and me.

So the strange situation occurs: Those totally dependent ones are actually depended upon! What an incredible system of God-man inter-dependence! This is what the Infinite One and Omniscient One has devised as an adequate form for His relationship with finite man. It is an remains one of the great inscrutable mysteries. It is the wonderful secret of divine Alterocentricity.

Notice also, that Christianity is unique among the religions of the world through another feature of definitely alterocentric character. Right in the realm of its very Godhead, this religion has something which we are not able to describe more accurately than as a system of the "alter-alter".

The Son is, in a mysterious way, the "alter" of the Father, and the Father is the "alter" in His relation to the Son. And this relationship of the One to the Other One exists in spite of--or perhaps rather in perfect unison with-- the fact that the Father and the Son are one, in Counsel and Intention. So, right in the midst of this perfect one-ness of the Godhead, the possibility of an "Other-One" relation is left open; and this not as a pure abstraction, a mere facon de parler, but as a living reality. Thus a peculiar opportunity is afforded of consistently and realistically having One's center outside Oneself. Christ's love of God was not for a moment any fool's play (Narrenspiel), any virtual self-contradiction, where love suddenly turns into self-love, as it were. No, it is a marvelous reality, an alterocentric summit, an absolutely meaningful thing.

But certainly the most signal feat of divine alterocentricity is this incredible fact that God hit upon the idea of regarding man--you and me-- as His favorite alteri. I say incredible, for we were certainly creatures who did everything in our power to place ourselves outside Him, in the most negative sense. And still He deemed us worthy of being the center par excellence of His Joy, His endlessly outflowing tenderness and love.

No less startled are we at what Christianity shows to be the details of the carrying out of this "alterocentric" plan. It testifies to extreme and total dependence, but at the same time it constitutes a message of extreme and total dependability. God is dependable, of course. But--strange to observe-- man, too, has been called upon to be dependable, fully responsible towards his Creator, as well as to his fellow-creatures.

5. The Spirit of Subordination versus the Spirit of Insubordination

The supreme manifestation of order in human life is what we express through the term subordination. We also call it discipline; that is, a person's faculty to put his own life to order.

Just how important this element of order is for a dynamic unfolding of totality in man's existence, receives a spectacular demonstration through contrast at the moment when the opposite phenomenon enters upon the scene. That is, insubordination, or bitter rebellion. And here it is definitely the biblical revelation which has managed to give us the clearest vision of the satanic

character of some savagely disrupting and disorganizing forces far down in the sombre depths of intelligent minds.

The great religion of our culture knows a person called Satan. Small wonder that Occidental men down through the centuries--whether Church Fathers or Christian laymen, or even notorious non-Christians-- have been so deeply impressed by the story about Satan or the devil, as the Bible tells it. With this titanic genius the whole tragedy of spiritual disorder in our world had its genesis, and with him it reaches its ultimate abyss.

I dare say that no writer in the West, who has ever given his poetic talent to a stirring description of human tragedy, has been uninfluenced by the biblical record about Lucifer, the Light-Bearer, the brilliant cherub, who transformed himself into a Satan. In our artistic environment this was bound to remain, after all, the arch-type, as it were, of that imposing "Titanentrotz", so vividly depicted by any "Storm and Stress" movement anywhere. I think this applies even when the Titan is entirely humanized. Sometimes he is, in fact, idealized by fanciful romantic authors. Notice, for instance, how the great storm-and-stress announcer, Herder, enthusiastically describes that titanic rebel:

Sitting on the top of a high rock, at his feet storm and furious breakers, his head above it all, turned toward the rays of the heavens.

After all, this does remind us somewhat of Isaiah's passage about a titan who is portrayed in strong, although certainly less admirable, colors:

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning? How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations; for thou hast said in thine heart: I will ascend into Heaven. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." ISA 14:12-15

The great "Sturmer and Dranger" Goethe--sometimes characterized as the "arch-pagan" of modern Occidental letters--certainly tends to see the great titans, at least those of his youthful production, rather in the flattering light that his teacher, Herder, had suggested.⁽¹⁾

Yet there has always lingered, in the minds of Western men, a disturbing consciousness that this titanism may contain something very serious, or even fatal to the totality and to the peace of a well-ordered life. In our culture the Bible is mainly responsible for this consciousness.

According to the Holy Scriptures, the tragic outburst of egocentric disruption had, for its first theatre, not the Garden of Eden, but the banefully fertile garden of an arch-angel's heart. And this is the essence of the drama taking place in that heart: The wild weeds germinating in its secret corners were simply permitted to grow so high and so rank that the last germs of goodness, the ultimate sprouts of an ordered existence, were finally crushed out and died. The final result of this incredible neglect of a beautiful and promising garden is the sad condition of evil prevailing in our world today.

¹Examples: Kain, Prometheus, Mohammed, Caesar, Faust, Egmont, Goetz von Berlichingen.

In order to grasp the gospel hope of an eventually reestablished wholeness and harmony in human life, it seems indispensable that a negative fact of abysmal dimension must be recognized:

The course of insubordination--as well as the internal disintegration and total decay inevitably following in its wake--is the most natural and the most effortless course any human life can take.

In order to make my heart into a nest of vipers, or a fortress of rebellion, I have no conscious effort whatsoever to make; I have just one thing to do: fold my hands and leave things "to take care of themselves". Then I will unflinchingly and without delay find myself avalanching right down the rapid slopes of self-indulgence and stolid indifference. Yielding to these inherent tendencies toward disorder and indiscipline means the triumph of automatism in the life of any individual man, as well as in the life of any world culture.

CHAPTER III

THE MYTH OF A DEMIURGUS EMERGING ONCE MORE

1. Who Is Here Suggested as the Originator of Evil?

We have now come to the most momentous issues of the topic of moral dualism. This obliges us to face one crucial question at the present juncture: Is true totality in man's internal life a simple impossibility, and this for the plain reason that Christianity is Christianity? In other words, does Christianity agree with zoroastrian dualism on one important point, namely its contention that there is, and has to be a relentless and hopelessly ineradicable fight, in human life, between good and evil?

Let us start by establishing an interesting historical fact: Even in the theologies of present-day Christendom there are certain tremendous reverberations left from the ancient radical dualism of zoroasterism. Such manifestations have perhaps been more violent in Protestant than in Catholic environments. The reason for that unequal distribution, however, is hardly to be sought in any inherently greater tendency toward such dualism in Protestantism than what is seen in Catholicism. It would be more natural to infer, as a plausible explanation, the far wider range of non-conformism possible to Protestantism as compared to Catholicism.

We may cite the case of the French Protestant theologian, Wilfred Monod, and his monumental work: *Le Probleme du Bien*.

To our mind Monod's breaking out from the traditional framework of Christian orthodoxy is reminiscent--at least remotely--of Marcion. Admittedly, Monod's theology does not have the openly and offensively heterodox from we find in Marcion. Still it does represent a heterodoxy reintroducing the pagan principle of some demiurgus, as it were--some inferior and foreign God--into Christian theology, a despair-inspiring God, besides the hope-inspiring one.

The fact that there is something rather sympathetic in the way this is done, does not necessarily make the concept less dangerous. The intention is apparently good, admirably good, when Monod

places definite limits to the almightiness of his God. For the aim of that limitation is not at all to reduce God in actual reality. It is rather to furnish an eloquent apology in God's favor.

In Monod's opinion we err when we place the almightiness of God at the beginning of all things. According to him, it is only at the end of the world that God will be really almighty. So there is a God who "will be manifested," but who "has not yet been manifested." Hence, the real God is the "God to come".

I am not astonished at Monod's ideas in this respect. In fact, his notion of God is just the one any theologian, as far as I can see, is simply bound to have, at the very moment that he actually accepts the full "theological" implications of modern evolutionism: The concept of a creation in advancing stages, automatically suggests the idea of a Creator himself advancing with difficulty, a Creator "evolving," rather than advancing. And that evolving God is bound to be, from the beginning, a poor struggler, forced to fight his incessant battle against conditions which he is only able to transform with the gradualness of endless ages. It is an almost desperate battle against all that really exists. For all that exists is evil. Here we have come to the great crux of Monod's ethical dualism, if we can call it dualism at all. For what is the place of good in this dualism? Allegedly, good is the thing that does not exist at all. As yet, at least, it does not exist. Hence the title: *Le Probleme du Bien* (The Problem of Good). Good is a dream of the ages. It is going to exist-- some time in a distant future.

Is there a glimmer of optimism in this pessimism? Maybe there is a dim light flickering at the far end of an almost interminable tunnel: *Le probleme du Mal glisse lourdement, d'un poids atavique, vers la nuit des origines et des questions insolubles. Le probleme du bien s'eleve et s'elance, avec une palpitation d'ailes, vers une clarte victorieuse des tenebres.*

So it would be wrong to say that there is not one ray of light flickering through the general gloom of Monod's *Weltanschauung*. On the other hand, it would certainly be wrong to deny the eccentricity of his theological doctrine. It is eccentric. It is non-biblical. It would be perilously wrong to maintain that his views are in harmony with the childlike confidence of the simple Christian in a personal God who has "the whole world in His hand".

2. Is God's Very Nature a Potential Source for Evil Coming into the World?

Did not even the most orthodox Church Fathers have a battle to fight against a certain lurking diffidence with regard to matter? Did not they also, at the moment when they "came of age", have a secret intimation that things tended to "go wild", as it were, in a world of mere matter, that is: "left to itself", as we described this in the scientist's rather hypothetical terms a moment ago? Perhaps the best answer to that question is this one: The true children of the primitive church did not have cognizance of anything that might be described as "mere matter". They did not know any world that could rightly be characterized as "left to itself". To them, matter-like all other things in a world, created and controlled by the almighty One--was still in the hands of that same Creator; that is, Jesus Christ, the Creator and Sanctifier at the same time. The nature of matter simply could not be inherently evil by any chance. For that would assume that its Framer, Himself, was evil. But He is good. So man may be entirely confident. The nature of matter as such must be exactly what God intended it to be. After having made it, He pronounced it entirely good.

But the great problematic question still remains to be answered: How did evil come into being? How did it come to happen that the great separation from God became a historical reality? How could a world God had created good, and for Himself, a world perfectly connected with Himself, eventually become separated from Him?

Of course, this is nothing but the old question asked over and over again: How was it possible for evil and imperfection to come into existence in a world entirely good and perfect in all respects, a world created by a God equally good and perfect in all respects?

To this question, on the part of the critical inquirer, a counter-question, however, might be added, and nobody could ever deny the Christian apologist his full right to ask that counter-question: "How could this surging up of evil have been made impossible?" The history of the Church shows that the defender of the Bible's God did avail himself of that right to make this logical counter-attack, if we may put it that way.

The answer He gave, Himself, to that strategic question, launched in the course of the spiritual battle, was simple: Under the prevailing circumstances, there was no chance of making that surging up of evil impossible. It was bound to be a possible course of things. What circumstances? It will suffice to mention one: As long as God was the one He was--and we cannot imagine Him otherwise, nor do we wisely want to have him otherwise--that possibility simply was there, inevitably.

But how is God then? He is the God of endless love. We have also expressed this circumstance in different terms: He is the alterocentric God. That means: He finds His main pleasure in making the others the great center of His preoccupation. This is essentially the same as saying: He, the only positively Self-dependent One, finds His most exquisite pleasure in making Himself dependent, dependent on those little other ones whom He has called out of nothing into the unfathomable wonder of conscious life, personal existence. His heart finds satisfaction in one thing only; that is, in making His whole happiness dependent on their love for Him, as well as His love for them.

But this being so, there was only one thing left for Him to do: He was bound to make creatures in His own image; that is, creatures who were able to love as He loves. What kind of love is that? It is voluntary love, a love given the most absolutely perfect freedom of unfolding itself. At the moment when the Creator had determined to share with His creatures the highest felicity attainable for any being throughout the worlds of His making, He could give them nothing less than this: perfect freedom to choose an alterocentric course of life. That freedom is the delight of delights. It is the ability to serve the other ones; not a service that is rather servitude, but the service of perfectly un-imposed affection. Without that element of perfect freedom in it, the service will not be the summit of heavenly delight. Its exquisiteness will be essentially reduced, both to the servant and to the person served.

But now the crucial issue turns up: What does such freedom immediately involve as a tacit presupposition? If the concept of freedom, and its indispensable corollary, the power to choose, are to have any meaning at all, there must, of course, first necessarily be some different things to choose between. Sheer common sense demands this as a self-evident assumption. Now, the thing worthwhile choosing is good. And what would be the thing really different from good? Evil, of course. In other words, if the only thing that could possibly be chosen at all, were good, in what would then the "freedom of choice" consist? We insist on a concept of "freedom" and a concept of "choice" that really makes sense, don't we? So if "freedom" is the thing we want, we must take it with all it intelligently stands for.

Of course, no one can prevent the critical judge of God's dealings from taking his stand against that option: One might argue as follows: "Man should never have been granted the freedom of choice. How much better would it not have been for the present state of the world if neither man nor Lucifer, nor any other intelligent creature, had ever been made with that innate possibility of choosing evil!" (We shall presently see some interesting patristic reactions to this standpoint.)

Theoretically that alternative for a plan of creation must, of course, be admitted as perfectly imaginable: God might have created only beings without the power of personal choice; so without the possibility at all to transgress His law of goodness and love. Why did He not, for instance, in the garden of Eden, "withhold the hand of Adam from touching the fruit"?

But the inevitable issue of such a reasoning is also perfectly clear: A person created in that way would not be a free moral agent. He would be a mere automation. So the ultimate question will have to be: Do we want to make our option in favor of automation? Do we imagine this to be the one desirable thing--the summit of God's creation? Now, I have already noted that people in our culture do seem to appreciate gadgets they see produced; in the same degree as it can be assured that those gadgets function "automatically". So the admiration for the automaton is, indeed, a formidable one in our milieu. Still there does seem to be one thing most people would not like to see reduced to an automaton; that is their own selves.

Now what delight could man find in rendering service to God, in obeying His command, if that obedience were nothing but an automatic necessity, the line of action man was forced to take? And what delight would God find in being obeyed in that rigidly automatic fashion? An obedience brought about simply because there is no power or possibility to disobey, how could that be worthy of the name of obedience? What sense would it make to speak about "intelligent" persons at all, if "intelligence" and "personality" mean so little? It would all turn into nonsense if these concepts came so alarmingly close to sheer automatism. There must be a limit to the homage we can intelligently pay to automatons.

The peculiar blessedness the whole Bible connotes with the God-man relationship is invariably conceived in terms of a voluntary (free-will) urge of affection. On man's part there is bound to be a voluntary subjection to the will of God. That is an act of piety, springing up freely in the heart of a true person. Either God takes the strange initiative of creating persons, with the full advantage--and the full risk--that personalism involves, or He does not. It would be strange, indeed, if man's Creator should be found guilty of a lightmindedness He describes as hardly imaginable in His intelligent creatures: Why did He not, for instance, in the garden of Eden "withhold the hand of Adam from touching the fruit"? God knew what He was doing. He had taken every possible detail into account. And that is what He expects normally intelligent men to do.

Would any of you think of building a tower without first sitting down and calculating the cost, to see whether he could afford to finish it. (Luke 14:28).

In the building of God--the most magnificent ever made--personalism (or the freedom of the will) is that kind of "tower". In the whole history of creation, nothing more boldly towering has ever been ventured upon--and that venture was made for the sake of love, and for the felicity which only supreme love, in its free unfolding, can bring out.

Now, however, since that very love is the main concern of God, how could He help taking the risk involved? How could he refrain from calling into being, creatures endowed with that volitional freedom, which is the essence of personalism and the prerequisite for love on the highest level? There

was only one other alternative facing the Creator, that of limiting His creative activity to the production of mere automatons. Such an alternative means eternal impersonalism and eternal dumbness on the part of the created world. God being God, that alternative must be screened out as impossible. For His essential nature is love.

So we have the only answer we could ever reasonably imagine, to our original question: How could the great calamity of a fall into sin ever happen to God's perfect world? This is self-evidently implied in His very perfection--and the perfection He insisted on communicating to that world of His creation. He desired His creatures to possess the bliss that He Himself enjoyed: the ability to serve the other ones freely-- out of a generous heart. This was the logical reason why volitional freedom, with its two possibilities was granted. Hence the door to that calamitous intermezzo of sin, as a possible event, was bound to be left ajar. Creatures who had originally been made perfectly good, simply perverted the gift of volitional freedom, generously granted to them, thus willfully severing their connection with their Creator. From that moment, their minds were naturally abandoned to the hazards of automatism! They were then at the mercy of the downhill trail, where there is no need of anyone to make you evil; you just turn evil all by yourself. That is what automatism means.

The answer, then is simpler than we commonly think. Not the Creator, but the creature took the decisive step down the steep road of separation, alienation, and perversion. And he could take this initiative of turning away from God precisely because God had made him essentially free, from the beginning. And the reason why He had made him that way, and no other way, is evident: God, according to His very nature, has a boundless respect for, and concern about, the other ones. His boundless ambition in behalf of His favorite other ones is that He, the eternally Independent One, may actually depend on them. That is an incredible worthiness conferred upon creatures. Now, some of these infinitely privileged creatures did show themselves quite unworthy of being thus depended upon. But that was a risk in the process of things that God was obliged to take, if He was to have any chance of realizing His tremendous plan at all.

3. Historical Glimpses of a Violent Controversy over the Origin of Evil, the Nature of God and the Nature of Man

Now we shall see how the doctrine of "Liberum Arbitrium" became a decisive weapon in the patristic arsenal during that controversy. There were some interesting patristic reactions to the issues we have been discussing that are worth our looking at.

Let us start with the Manichean heresy. Wishing to make the statements of Christians appear ridiculous, the Manicheans kept asking the same hard question we have already dealt with to some degree: Why did God create man, they asked, if He really knew that His creature would fall into sin?

Augustine valiantly answered them that God was able to make many good things result from that evil event.(1)

The Manicheans asked another pointed question, too, by which Christians have been haunted ever since: Who made the devil?(2) Here Augustine retorts that he made himself a devil. The idea is, of course, that the Creator rather made him a glorious angel, namely Lucifer, the Light-Bearer. Augustine makes it clear that it was in sinning (Peccando) that this Light-Bearer turned into a devil. Moreover, here too, he reminds us that the Omnipotent One is not reduced to the necessity of letting the whole situation end in universal tragedy. On the contrary, His goodness and His omnipotence are so invincible

and so wonder-making in their nature that even out of the incorrigible wickedness of the devil, God causes good and righteous things to proceed.

Not that the evil one himself will derive any benefit from that wonderful quality of divine providence which has mercifully managed to turn plans of wickedness into results of goodness. No, Satan will have to reap the full fruits of his own willed wickedness.

In fact, generally speaking, volitional freedom plays a most important part in Augustine's theological argumentations. In his discussion with the Manichean Fortunatus, for instance, he stresses the axiomatic spiritual fact that there can be true responsibility for sin only where there is a free will. If there existed such a thing as a Nature contrary to God, as the Manicheans claimed, then how could sin be imputed to man? The fact is, however, that God has made all things "very good". In other words, the evil things are not naturally (i.e., by their inherent nature) evil. Everything bearing the name of evil is either sin or the punishment for sin. And there is no sin unless our free will wickedly consents to do evil, as we bow down toward the things prohibited by justice, and from which we are perfectly free to abstain through the power of God made available to us.⁽¹⁾

1De genesi contra manicheos, II, 42 (XXVIII): "Quare fecit Deus hominem, iniquiunt, quem peccatum sciebat? Quia et de peccante multa bona facere poterat."

2Ibid.: "Iterum dicunt: Quis fecit diabolum? Se ipse: non enim natura, sed peccando diabolus factus est...Imo malus in quantum diabolus est; sed bonus et omnipotens Deus est, qui etiam de malitia multa iusta et bona operatur. Non enim diabolo imputatur, nisi voluntas sua, qua conatur facere male, non Dei providentia, qua de illo bene fecit."

4. Is God "Not Yet Fully Omnipotent"?

Now we are better prepared to see more in detail where Monod (Le Probleme du Bien) was wrong. Theologians--particularly in modern times--have been quick to say that God today is not fully omnipotent. In my opinion, this well-intentioned formulation is a dangerous one and not to be recommended. The Bible never senses any need of limiting the time during which it describes God as omnipotent. This attribute of God is never reduced by any maneuver of divine apologetic. It is we men who are anxious to "admit" that "God is not yet fully in charge of the universe;" so the epithet "omnipotent" may be "a little exaggerated", we seem to say.

But to the Bible writers the absoluteness of divine omnipotence is unquestionable. If there are absolutes at all, this is one. Therefore, we must see to it that our definition of the term accommodates itself to that absoluteness. If we find that our definition of omnipotence conflicts with the teaching of the Bible, we must alter our thinking, and not change the words of God. It would be hazardous for us to operate dogmatically with a concept of omnipotence which has a depth limited to the ability of non-omnipotent man to think about omnipotence.

1De gen. ad lit. imperf., lib.I: "Ecce autem amnia quae fecit Deus, valde bona: mala vero non esse naturalia; sed omne quod dicitur malum, aut peccatum, aut poenam peccati. Nec esse peccatum nisi

pravum liberae voluntatis assensum, cum inclinamur ad ea quae justitia vetat, et unde liberum est abstinere."

Having set forth these limitations and cautions, let us seek for a definition of omnipotence that follows these guidelines. How shall we define omnipotence? We know its etymology well enough. Potentia is power and omni is all. In a word: total power. Now, in the first place, what is power in the divine sense of the Bible? To Christian theology there is only one thing that is truly powerful; that is Agape. All other "power" is sham-power.

The political type of "power" that has become such a current phenomenon in our Macchiavellian world is not power in the sense of the realism of Biblical thought. Satan has brought into our world something which has received the label of "power", and by which he has manipulated things to the point of alluring man to imagine that he has to say, in order to remain true to full realism, that God is "not quite omnipotent after all". But this too, is not power as it is conceived of in biblical thought. For to say that "God's power is limited" would be tantamount to saying that Agape is limited, something "seriously reduced". But this has never been the case, nor will it ever be. It is the absoluteness of Agape that secures for all eternity the meaningfulness of God's kingdom.

It is the great accuser, not only of the brethren, but first and foremost of God, who causes us to dwell overlong on the lugubrious aspects of this present aeon with its gruesome woe and its apparent meaninglessness, while thinking that the theologians of old were too naive, and downright wrong, in their "insistence on omnipotence as a factor of divine perfection". But, in fact, their wrong, if any, consisted in not entirely embracing the tremendous fact of what omnipotence really stands for, of not consistently integrating it into the philosophy of Agape.

Permit one question, or two: Where have we had to go in order to find the reason why God let the possibility of sin, entering His universe, stand open? To Agape. And further: Since we have established that there is no true power outside Agape, is there any other answer to this question? In order to find the very reason why God made it possible for man to sin (that is, exert freedom of the will), we must study God's POWER. In other words, it was not because God did not have perfect power that He let that door stand open. It was because He had it. God could not have dared take the risk otherwise.

5. Augustine's Concept of God and the Origin of Evil

Nature is not, in herself, evil. Evil is rather that which goes against nature, perverts nature. Augustine endeavored to demonstrate how absurd manicheism was when it claimed that evil is a "nature" and a "substance". He pointed out that all "natures" and "substances" have a good and perfect God as their Author.

Evil is a corruption whose origin is not to be sought in the Creator of natures. It had no place whatsoever in those natures as they were created. How, then, could evil come into existence at all? Augustine endeavors to answer this capital question by referring to the fact that those "natures" have been created out of nothing.(1) What did he mean by that as an argument or an explanation?

I assume that the logical trend of Augustine's reasoning here must have been something like this: What characterizes man is that he has been created. He has been drawn ex nihilo. The same, of course, is true of all the "natures" by which God has been pleased to surround Himself: they have been

drawn from nothing, absolutely nothing. But precisely this fact makes them, in a sense, corruptible; that is, susceptible of being corrupted, thoroughly perverted. This is the reason why human nature, also, could be corrupted or perverted. Only the One who has not been created, the Self-Existing One, who has always been there, is incorruptible. If man had been of the category of the Non-Created--that is, as pagan philosophy has constantly suggested, a "parcel of the eternally Existing Substance"-- then he would not have been susceptible to change of any kind. But the fact we know is that man was created; he was drawn ex nihilo. Accordingly, he had the possibility of changing and he did change.

1Contra Epist. Fund., 44: "Quapropter quamvis sit malum corruptio, et quamvis non sit a Conditore naturarum, sed ex eo sit, quod de nihilo factae sunt."

This means that by virtue of just that freedom of choice with which man has been endowed, he may freely decide to make resistance and rebel against that constantly outgoing divine love which keeps him alive every moment. He may make for himself a choice of self-annihilation. For, as a result of that choice, he will ultimately glide back into the nihil from which he was drawn. This fact gives evidence that our world has one tremendous necessity: God must make a most personal and specific outreach by virtue of His almighty Agape to keep us alive. For Agape is the only creative, organizing, order-making power ever known, by which we live and have our being. That Spirit of Love, emanating from God, is the absolute prerequisite demanded for all order and all life. Without it, cosmos will immediately fall back into chaos, that is, into the unfathomable evil of disorder. The Wisdom of Holy Writ repeatedly warns man against the fatal delusion that order should be a self-evident phenomenon, a matter of course. If the incredibly privileged creature we are speaking about--the free personality: man--fails to permit the Almighty One to maintain, creatively, the wonderful processes of life within him, then, that man will, inevitably, and without delay, start on his way down-hill. He will break up into non-existence.

It is true, the simple anthropology of the Gospel and the full facts about human corruptibility were not always as clear as that in Augustine's mind. The encroaching influences of dualist speculations had confused the issues to a large extent many times. Nevertheless, it is admirable to see how valiantly Christian his attitude became toward the coarser heresies of Manicheism and Marcionism. Through his personal experience with God, Augustine manifestly learned a great deal about Christ's wonder-making love for fallen man. He realized the Creator's mighty power to re-create man, separating him from the forces of evil.

6. The "Dualism of the Christian's `TWO NATURES`"

Here we come to the really crucial question of our present chapter on "ethical dualism": Is there not a radical duality in the very depths of the moral nature of every man; that is, man even after he has taken a sincere and whole-hearted stand on the side of the Christian Gospel? This is probably, in the last analysis, the question which will tend to give the greatest trouble to the conscientious investigator who insists on being 100 per cent true and 100 per cent clear in his statements on Christian anthropology: Is that anthropology consistently monistic in all respects?

The sincere historian of ideas who makes it his task to follow objectively, and describe correctly, the general trend of anthropological views in the minds of Christian theologians and Christian laymen down through the centuries, is likely to have a curiously varying and sometimes rather shakily dramatic experience. Even the very terms whirling in the air are suggestive of drama: "Two different

natures"--in the same man, at the same time--and this at a time when he is already conceived of as a Christian! In some ears that undeniably sounds like disruption, rather than wholeness. But is there disruption, in actual fact?

Briefly, what is the plain actual fact about the true Christian? Is he disrupted, or is he whole--with regard to his deepest moral nature? Is it possible to establish with certainty some plain fact about the oneness of man according to Christian anthropology.

Of course, this is a most pertinent and most momentous question, and it should be faced with frankness, and seriousness. Indeed, if there proves to be an original and quite radical dualism right here in the heart of Christian thinking--and Christian living--then we must know it; we must know it with certainty, and we must know all its naturally devolving consequences.

What is any man's actual situation in that crucial fight between good and evil in our world, which is the great theme of Christianity? First, what real prospects does he have, as a man, to overcome evil? Here we naturally come back to a topic we recently mentioned as a frequently recurring one in patristic argumentations against the inroads of heresy in the Church. That question is, above all, the most deeply religious one that can ever be asked. But it is at the same time the most captivating philosophical question. It has haunted the minds of thinking men from times immemorial: Does man have a free will? And, if so, in what sense is his will free?

As soon as a person has said "Will", he has also said "ethics"; he has said "drama of good and evil". The ability to choose, in the last analysis, comes to mean the choice of doing good. An abstraction of the terms is here probably sheer nonsense. For, evidently, if a person has a will at all, that is bound to be a free will. This is clearly the way Thomas Aquinas understood it. For he says: "Voluntas et liberum arbitrium non sunt duae potentiae, sed una tanta"(1)

1Summa Theol. I, qu. 83, art. 4 - So a perfect synonymy between "will" in general and "free will".

More than that: this free will is the freedom to will something, and that "something" is definitely either good or evil. In man's world there is no escape from the moral issue. There is no hiding place in some nook of a "purely intellectual" will, or an "a-moral" will.

The notion of moral liberty inevitably becomes the prevalent one in all thorough-going human thought. To Goclenius, for instance, "liberum arbitrium" is not only the free will in a purely theoretical and generalized sense ("voluntas ut fertur sine coactione in aliqua re"). No, it is rather that particular manifestation of human freedom which consists in "willing the good only." ("tantum bonum velle"). The kind of will that real men find it worthwhile discussing at all, is the "voluntas mancipata malo". So a delivered will. And the deliverance is a deliverance from evil.(1)

In the long and bitter controversy between Erasmus and Luther, as well, that essentially moral meaning of the term "liberum arbitrium" was developed until it became the meaning par excellence.

It is just in connection with the whirl of turbulently developing anthropological views through the period of the Reformation that we shall here try to arrive at some real clarification of our theme.

We all know what the great captivating topic was, thrown up into preeminence by that huge wave of truth-seeking curiosity we call Humanism or the Renaissance. It was precisely MAN. We shall very soon proceed to seek some realistic point of fixture to our special thesis in the respective anthropological conceptions of Calvin and Luther. But first of all we must then try to get a good look at their proper backgrounds. Would it be irrelevant to seek that background in what is currently called the "time spirit"?

1Cf. A. Lalande Vocabulaire techn, et crit. de la philosophie, under the item: "Arbitre" (5).

Anyway, it "times" do have their "spirits", it ought to be possible to compare them to men. For men, too, have their peculiar spirits.

I do know, of course, that I am not the first among students of human history to make an attempt of considering historical epochs almost as you would consider the various life stages of an individual human being. However, my angle is a quite particular one. The question I ask is this:

Are there some more prevailingly "childlike" periods in the history of mankind, as against some more prevailingly "adult" ones?

Particularly for my study of Biblical spirituality versus pagan spiritualism (as of Christian totality versus anti-Christian disruption), it has proved helpful to assume the presence of such a distinction as a valid one. Of course, it would be unreasonable to expect any abrupt points of demarcation between that "period of childlikeness" and the ensuing "period of adulthood". It would seem indispensable to assume a "period of transition" between them. Now, as we know, the transition between childhood and adulthood is ADOLESCENCE. So my next question will be: Does it make any sense to consider in terms of such "adolescence" just that remarkable period of historic time which historians generally have agreed to describe as the "introduction to our modern era"? The teenager (the adolescent) is an in-between. He is no longer a child, nor is he yet a mature person. In a similar way, the renaissance is an interim phenomenon.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RENAISSANCE, AN "ADOLESCENCE EPOCH" IN THE HISTORY OF WESTERN CULTURE

In other words: I adopt the schema of considering man through the Middle Ages as still being in his "period of childhood". For, just as the child is characterized by that great "naivete" which permits him to accept things unreservedly as his senses present them to him, in the same way the Middle Ages remained very "childlike" in so many respects. There was still a wonderful amount of wholeness and harmony in medieval man, as I evaluate the matter.

Then comes a change in history. It happens the moment when that same mankind enters its period of "adulthood", our so-called modern times. Probably no one will deny one thing, regarding that

curious time of transition, crowned with the beautiful name of "Renaissance": In it there was a certain spirit of fermentation awaking almost everywhere. Mankind's original childlike ability of turning outwards, simply embracing the whole environment he knows and confides in, that ingenuous and artless mode of life is henceforth gone. The self-consciousness of the adolescent has--imperceptibly, as it were--rendered "the child" rather uncertain, diffident, and reserved.

Winsnes considers precisely an increasing uncertainty ("usikkerhet") and a sort of helplessness ("radlosheit")--(The word implies a "lack of all counsel or fixed point of orientation)--as peculiar features of the Renaissance period. Man seems to feel "more alone" than he used to do. He does not any longer find the safety and confidence he used to find under the leadership of the great Church.

"To the humanists of the Middle Ages God was still the center around which everything revolved. He was the eternal norm for all human self-unfolding. But in the humanism of the Renaissance there is rather a tendency in the opposite direction, a tendency of placing man in the center, a tendency of human self-adoration, or even of making self the only actual God." (E. Skard, O. H. Winsnes & Paulus Svendsen: Tider og tanker, 1952, p. 43.)

What Traits of Character Does This "Adolescent" Manifest?

We might safely express it in this way: In the last analysis, the crisis shaking Occidental man, at his somewhat boisterous entry into modern times, is of a religious order. It is the crisis of a Child, trying to disengage himself from his dependence on a Father. Hence, his uneasiness, his helplessness, his isolation, his timidity; often strangely coupled with defiance.

What could be a more adequate description than this of one peculiar stage in the life of a human individual? We commonly call it adolescence or the teenage stage. No psychologist would think of that age as a particularly harmonious one. It has too much super-tension and internal confusion, too much rootlessness and disruption, to be harmonious.

But it does have some outstanding positive qualities as well. At no other period of his life does the human individual reach more sublime heights of idealism. Never is his longing for absolute perfection and total integrity more boundless. But we must recognize one side of this which is not so fortunate: that highstrung idealism of the teenager is itself a phenomenon balancing on the edge of crisis. Its clamorous cry of "independence" is, at bottom, rather a cry of a desperately felt dependence. A mere word of encouragement or discouragement, on the part of the respective environment, is liable to seal its destiny. If environmental conditions are favorable, then--and only then--is there some considerable chance that the crisis will gradually dissolve into a sounder state of a more stable idealism. By and by the young individual wins back much of his previous fellowship attitude, the blessed state he enjoyed during his harmonious childhood. That naive and confident orientation outwards of the days of yore, has now even been enriched by an additional positive element; that is, the conscious purpose the firm principle characterizing sound maturity.

There is one more fact about human adolescence we must note, when we try to envision the Renaissance as a sort of teenager; thus trying to understand that fateful period of Western history in a better way: All along with its curious high-strung idealism the teenager has a quality which is very different; some would call it downright materialistic and egotistic. I am referring to an equally intense adolescent ambition to arrive, to assert oneself. It is an almost irrepressible drive for a most personal success in a most temporal world. It often greatly manifests itself as an inconsiderate urge for purely

material forms of gratification, for downright sensual pleasure. Few observers would mistake that for idealism. It is not idealism in any sense of the term.

The trend is definitely this-wordly. Probably no one would seriously raise the question whether that youthful ambition to assert oneself in this highly secular way really manages to exist side by side with the previously mentioned idealism. It obviously does, strange as that may appear. Any person who still remembers his own period of adolescence will know that such an ambition is there. The question one may ask is this one: Does it have a right to be there? Is this a duality implying necessary disruption in human life?

I do not think it strange that some fears might arise for the safety of true totality where an extreme idealism of the type I first mentioned finds itself strangely coupled with an equally extreme yearning for personal success and personal well-being. But who would dare to say that the latter has no legitimate place whatsoever, along with the former? In my opinion, the true problem consists in bringing them together into that harmonious synthesis which must be the real aim of mature human existence.

However, my main point here is the following: Precisely the intensely agitated and critical character of that double set of boundless yearnings--one towards the realization of infinite ideals, the other towards the attainment of secular prosperity and material safety--this pointed duality makes adolescence an age of potent dangers: The prospect for unity in man's later life depends on one thing: Will that radical rupture between the inward-tending and the out-ward tending elements ever reach a point of final integration? If not, mature existence is bound to be without harmony!

And now back to the Renaissance. Does this period in the history of Occidental man present similar signs of an agitated crisis, and similar trends toward a widening gulf across which no bridging system may seem likely to bear the increasing tension in the long run?

In fact, it is astonishingly difficult, even today, to disentangle the confusing cobweb of different tendencies that existed together at the time of that tempestuous transition period in our world. Think, for instance, of the fierce religious strife surging up just at this juncture. Was not the Reformation, too one of the natural daughters of the Renaissance? To a large extent yes. But the universal revival of the individual, named the Renaissance, is a multifarious phenomenon, indeed. Let us sum up the facts, considered in our particular context:

On first view, it may seem almost a wonder how that illustrious new birth of the individual could produce such different effects in different minds. 1) In Germany and most Northern countries the result was (in some most influential circles, at least) a profound religious revival.

2) In the "homeland" of the Renaissance, Italy, as well as in other regions of the South, such as France--the result appears to have been, first and foremost, a revival of art, including the art of life. I mean everyday secular life with all its amenities. (It is remarkable, by the way: in those very same Southern countries where the Renaissance produced such a love for art and secular good living, the more austere movement of Protestantism seemed doomed to failure almost from the first moment!)

It may be difficult to suggest any one plausible explanation of such divergent results. The two territories on which the same influence, or approximately the same influence, was exerted, may have had populations essentially different in essential respects. In my special work on Alterocentricity versus Egocentricity as Fundamental Motifs*, I have tried to account for the fact that not only individuals, but

even whole countries and climates may, to some extent, be sorted according to varying degrees of introversion or extroversion in my "ego-altero" sense; that is some regions can be seen as having features of the more typical "adult" while others present features of the more typical "child". It looks as if the sunny regions of more southern latitudes tend to abound in extroversion; i.e., the simple orientation outwards of the unreflecting child. With this tentative explanation in mind, one might ask the question: Where in Europe could one expect to find a more genuine child of the artless spirit of the first among arts--the art of life--than just in Italy, the cradle of the Renaissance?

In all events, history's testimony is clear: In Italy the new movement awakened a swelling urge in man to turn outwards and to unfold his personality in strong external activity. This urge expressed itself with glorious freshness in the fields of commerce, science, and art. From now onward, the temporal prosperity man can enjoy in this world becomes an important object of his eager ambitions. The luxurious superfluities of artistic creation ornamenting outward life, become the pleasant feature filling his existence more and more. The somewhat superficial amenities of a purely mundane culture take an increasingly large place, even in the lives of clerical persons.

*Essai sur l'alterocentrisme contre l'egocentrisme, en tant que motifs fondamentaux du caractère humain, Université de Montpellier, 1968.

In Teutonic territories this was not so salient. In fact, in some influential circles of the Germanic populations the reaction was strikingly different. Here the same "new birth of the individual", which both Humanism and Renaissance stand for, brought about an intense awakening of human conscience. A profound spirit of self-scrutiny began to stir up the minds of people presumably possess a more natural aptitude for such rather introspective activity. Thinking men were here overwhelmed by a serious misgiving:

Perhaps, after all, a person's outward actions might be of no avail as a means of saving his wretched soul from its inherent wretchedness and from the fires of destruction, consequently awaiting it in the realms of the beyond. What a serious possibility! For so many centuries the church had now kept placing almost unlimited confidence in so many things. But suppose those things were nothing more than ropes of sand. This was the new misgiving, consuming the peace of some apprehensive minds. The superficial rites and brilliant display of external glory characterizing the Church were now suddenly felt to be, not only futile and inefficient, but even a positive danger. The boastful promises of the contemporary clergy were unveiled as "impertinent deception". Church officials were now regarded by many, not only as vain fools, but even as wicked imposters. A surging wave of revolt, against such vanity and such imposture, was the eventual result.

The Reformation soon spread like a burning fire over Teutonic lands.

The theologically oriented historian who takes a broad and critical look at some phenomena protracting themselves far into the new era, and far into the Germanic realms, has to admit that they often testify to serious disruption rather than to happy integration and harmony in human lives. But this too is just part of the picture, although it is a most serious part.

And, now, if we extend our field of vision sufficiently in order to consider "both camps" at the same time, we find one thing to be indisputable: Symptoms of a supertension between two "opposite

groups", within the framework of the great Renaissance community as a whole, are rife and pregnant with possible disaster. For a supertension in a community always means an impending peril of explosion and ruin to the very wholeness of that community.

I am not here mainly referring to the actual military clashes which soon threatened to destroy inestimable values, ancient and new, on both sides of the gulf, as wars generally tend to do. I am thinking more in terms of a great permanent cleavage which was now destined to establish itself between two "bitterly antagonistic groups of Christians" (what an absurd expression!). The threats of this cleavage was a dark cloud which the Middle Ages, with its general theocentric attitude and its whole childlike ingenuousness, had never known within the Occidental World. It is unfortunate, but true: Since the Renaissance there has been no synthesis happening to this "Christian" part of our globe. Its glaringly anthropocentric attitude could only realize itself in terms of utter disruption.

The signs of an increasingly precipitous "adulthood" of our modern era are only too distinct. During the "dark centuries" preceding the Reformation, the West had, after all, cherished a fond reverence in its heart: It had nourished a definitely alterocentric belief. This was a belief in something outside man, something higher, more valuable and more dependable than man. In other words, there had been the general consciousness of an eternal, unchanging reality, God.

Henceforth there is only a gradual "emancipation" of the arts and sciences. They are "delivered" from the narrow precincts of the Church. The onward march of the Secularization is destined to grow bolder and more defiant every decade.

Of course, modern man, boasting of the advantages of his own "soberly scientific" age may be right enough in one thing he claims: What the Middle Ages had possessed, was often more credulity than faith, more a confused search for "Holy Grails" than for the sound realities of human life. There may be some undeniable truth in such an assertion. There may be considerable reasons for assigning a rather negatively symbolical value in that mysterious emerald cup "from Christ's Holy Supper" which was supposed to have such wonder-making properties for the one who could manage to lay hold on it. In fact, that fancy cup may with considerable right be said to have possessed--perhaps more than anything else--the dubious and highly egocentric property of existing only in the weird depths of medieval man's own excited imagination. For just such chimeras of their credulous fantasy often led men in the Middle Ages to gamble with their lives and to expose themselves to many useless kinds of serious jeopardy.

Nevertheless I think I am also right in taking just that curious Holy Grail as an appropriate symbol for something the Middle Ages had, and our modern times do not have: The adventurous youth of the medieval era still had a zest for searching, with life-absorbing enthusiasm, after something outside themselves, which they believed to be more precious, more elevated than themselves. They had eyes and hearts wide open to an appreciation of the mystery of the spiritual value, the data beyond the visible field of their immediate horizon. Today the furiously dry objectivity of scientific research does not consider such things worth one brass farthing. Moreover, one thing should be kept in mind in connection with those "crazy medieval hunters for Holy Grails". Eccentric and hazardous though such roamings from adventure to adventure may have been, they were always interspersed with no small amount of realistic experiences and highly worthwhile practical human activities. The hero does find ample time--to settle down and live! Indeed, the Holy Grail story is one of numerous intermezzos. After all, Holy Grail hunters did not produce any catastrophic cleavages in the midst of their own childlike world. Their mediocrity prevents such calamity.

The new element that becomes really vicious and worthy of blame in the Renaissance materialist's attitude towards reality, is just his increasing one-sidedness and his obstinate excesses.

But now just a swift jump over to the "opposite camp" in the adolescence era of Occidental humanity, that of Germanic Protestantism: Where the people here free from all excessive trends? The following is what we know about their attitude towards Humanism: They tended to reject, as a dubious value, all that artistic glamour which the humanists adored. And the scientific achievements ran the risk of sharing the same lot on the top of the dung hill. The tendency of the Reform was always more or less to distinguish between the "worshippers of God and the worshippers of art," as some Protestants like to put it. And if this is largely correct in the case of Luther and the German reformation, then it is still more correct with regard to Calvin and the Reformed Church. Calvin was not only an unshakable adherent to Protestantism, but the responsible leader of that movement in its most ascetic form. The cleavage between the new religious movement and the more secularly oriented adherents of Humanism was growing more distinct every day. That applies to Luther's attitude, and certainly not less to Calvin's. In fact, one very pressing reason why the latter set about writing the first edition of the work which was to become the great manifesto of the Reformation, was probably the desire to draw a clear line of demarcation between the humanists and the adherents of the Reform. Abel Lefranc says in his introductory notes to a modern publication of the edition of 1541 (the French translation of the "Institutes"):

A demarcation was necessary. And it was Calvin who took upon himself the task of drawing the line. He did this right in front of an attentive and surprised Christian world.

Here an admission is appropriate: Calvin's attitude toward those "superficial" and "outward" ornaments of life, contained in artistic beauty, is not a lugubrious as a traditional opinion has tried to make it appear. In my attempts to evaluate Calvin's aesthetic attitude, through a particular study of his principal work, "L' institution de la religion Chrestienne," I have come to the conclusion that the French reformer is not nearly as fanatically austere in his views on artistic beauty, nor nearly as destitute of deep human feelings, as many critics have made him look.(1)

Typologists may place Calvin in whatever category they think most appropriate. An essential fact remains: He was a man profoundly influenced by Christianity. And Christianity is a never failing prophylactic against anything that is radically inhuman or radically impassive toward genuine beauty, or in any way indifferent to the realities of a surrounding world.

11Carsten Johnsen: Calvin's Aesthetic Concept, Oslo University, 1939.

Luther, too, contributed his share toward a widening of the gulf of humanism and the Reformation. Let us have a look at that man's position.

2. Luther's Harrowing Experience with the Abysmal Depths of Human Nature

What type of personality was Martin Luther? Where did he place himself in the fundamental battle we have described between totality and disruption? Was Luther essentially austere and introspective, if we think mainly of his natural psychological disposition?

One thing, of course, can hardly be disputed: There was an unmistakable portion of self-scrutiny in Luther--an overwhelming consciousness of sin. Accordingly, there was in one important sense, a definitely Christian sense, some deep currents of introspection in that whole complex of sentiments and ideas leading up to the bitter crisis through which the German reformer was bound to pass before he arrived at his liberating doctrine of righteousness through faith alone. But does this mean that he was a typically introvert character? Not necessarily. The few typologists who--as far as we know-- have found it worthwhile to study the great reformer from a mainly typological angle (characterological) appear to agree fairly well that Luther was less introvert than the majority of his colleagues.(1)

Personally, if I were asked to produce convincing arguments to that effect, I would start with this one: Luther's enormous popularity with the common people. This characteristic of "derbe Volkstumlichkeit" in the German reformer is probably also one of the psychological answers to the historical question: How did Protestantism in its feeble beginnings actually manage to turn out a political success? Or, at least, to the biographical question: How did the person Martin Luther manage to survive those first critical years of the movement? If I look away from the question of providential guidance, and even all deeper forces that may be at work in a complexity of cause-effect relations, I may with good reason remind my reader that it was the enormous popularity enjoyed by that broad and "derb" personality that scared a Cardinal Cajetan from directly arresting Luther in 1518. And it was possibly for the very same reason that the great Emperor, Charles the Fifth, also contented himself with just summoning the "wicked heretic" to appear before him; in fact, even with a letter of safe-conduct, instead of simply having him burned on the stake at once.

1Cf. Kretschmer's comparison of the pictures and respective personalities of Luther, Calvin, Savonarola, etc. in his famous work "Korperbau und Charakter".

During the years 1517 to 1521, Luther became German's hero and "the eyeball of the German people",--and this in spite of the fact that not a single one of the princes had, as yet, placed himself on the reformers side.(1)

However, that popularity was certainly not due to Luther's courage, which aroused such great admiration in the more enlightened bourgeois sections of the German population, but, undoubtedly, just to that "round," popular way in which he spoke and behaved. We know the actual clumsiness of Luther's manners on the occasion of his first appearance before the august body of venerable princes and smart diplomats of the Diet in Worms, The second time, it is true, he did bow his knees in front of the Emperor, as the custom of simple courtesy demanded, and now he started his speech by apologizing for his clumsiness on the previous day, alleging that "it is not easy to behave according to the manners of high lords, when one is brought up in a solitary monks' nest". I feel, however, that the sly and slippery diplomat Cardinal Aleander was not entirely wrong when he ascribed that clumsiness to Luther's personal nature. Wherever and whenever Luther had been brought up, he would hardly have appropriated either the cunning subtlety or the polished savoir vivre of a Hieronymus Aleander.

Compared to some Renaissance enjoyers of mundane life, with their characteristically broad conscience, Luther was perhaps an austere--some would even say "narrow"--character. Personally I am more inclined to hold that just a certain totality is the great fact about that man's character. Such totality ("Ganzheit"--"ein ganzer Mensch"--"aus einem Gusse gemacht," as his own forceful language would express it) was indispensable in order to make his mission in world history possible. Let me

explain my point, both as regards the indispensable need of totality in general principle and the particular presence of that totality in Luther's life:

A full conception of the central Christian truth of Justification through Faith does demand, on one hand, a considerable self-examination. Or, to use a more theological expression: it demands an intensely burdensome consciousness of sin. That is a first and absolute prerequisite. And Luther had that. It was just that unbearable weight of a heavy burden that gave him no rest nor respite, where other ecclesiastical men seemed rather to be tranquilized with comparative ease. So the definitely unfavorable superficiality, otherwise so common in extremely sanguine and extrovert people, had no place in Luther's nature.

On the other hand, he was not the obstinate type of human personality either, who closes himself up and gets hopelessly consumed by the fires of his own heavy remorse. On the contrary, in Luther we find a relieving act of openness and frank confession right in the midst of that harrowing experience which was to become the turning-point in his tormented life,-- and a turning-point in the history of Christianity, one might dare to say. At least it denoted the triumphant surging up of a world movement to be known as Protestantism.

Let us discuss this "double-sided"--or "many-sidedness" rather--in Luther's personality, and in his active reaction on that special occasion. This appears to agree with a corresponding many-sidedness--or why not "Allseitigkeit"--in the age-old message which is, and has always been, the central reality and the crucial test of all Christianity: Christ our Righteousness. This will throw a peculiar light upon the essence of totality, as we have seen it.

Of course, one quickly admits a variety of historical circumstances. Each one of them must have its definite contributions toward the sensational bursting forth of the message of righteousness by faith just in those days. It was simply bound to make its way with invincible force. But the personal attitude of Luther was important enough. His heart was certainly such that he could become the appropriate instrument for an explosive proclamation of just the decisive message of grace as man's unique source of salvation.

Luther's heart-rending awareness of his own sinfulness was certainly an introspective movement; we have to admit that at once. In fact, there was here an introspection as profound--nay, as abysmal--as any man can ever experience. But notice: this was not a profoundness permitted to be made incurably disruptive. We know some persons who seem to take almost some sort of morbid pleasure in the profoundness of their "personal abysses". At least they give themselves up to a very one-sided defeatism. Their whole bearing clearly says: "Now I am going right down to the bottom. And believe me: I intend to stay there!"

No, Luther's type of profoundness (his awareness of bottomless sin) was made eventually wholesome and life-saving. How? By the virtue of true religiousness. This was the redeeming property right in the abysmal depths of Luther's experience. Let me again try to explain what I mean.

3. The Man Who Knew No Bargaining

What was the characteristic feature about Luther's internal struggle at the time of his deepest crisis? It was not the kind of battle most salient in the experience of common monks in those days.

Church history informs us that the current points around which most other Christian ascetics at Luther's time would generally strive to concentrate their attention, were:

1. The subjection of the lusts of the flesh, and to this end:
2. An actual torturing of the body.

Let it be noted: such torture was carried on as much as possible here in order that the individual might have to suffer as little as possible hereafter,--in perfect accordance, by the way, with the famous word of Augustine, which was, and is, the great motto of monasticism:

"Lord, cut me and burn me here, but spare me in eternity!" What is the remarkable fact, however, about Luther's temptations, and the attitude he took toward them? This has been very well described by one writer:

"Luther was among the relatively fortunate monks in one respect: He was exceedingly little tempted by the flesh. The fear of corporal pain and the thought of expiating it in the mildest possible way, this hardly seems to have entered his mind."⁽¹⁾

In other words, there is something peculiarly "spiritual"--and "total" about the very nature of his problems, as well as about the way he feels bound to face them.

In fact, what obsessed Luther's mind, was a thorough recognition of the sinfulness of sin, on one hand, and the equally thorough recognition of God's absolute justice on the other. How could an imperfect human being-- nay a totally corrupt human being--exist at all in the presence of such immaculate divine perfection? The feeling of condemnation, too, was here bound to be total. Knowing the bottomless wretchedness of his own heart, how could Luther avoid discerning God's awe-inspiring righteousness as a sword of judgment hanging over his soul?

1Ibid,. p. 345.

The more "spiritual" the nature of his sin, the more impossible did it seem to extirpate it. At the bottom of his heart he found nothing but jealousy, anger, and haughtiness. From these subtle evils of the very heart there was no fleeing away. He could avoid literally killing his neighbor, but how could he avoid hating him? More than that: how could he manage to love him? And how could he manage to love his God above all things? Luther's despair was certainly total.

Here a trait of character becomes visible which may elucidate just how disruption is miraculously overcome in the case of Luther's self-scrutiny: That man did not only realize his own total depravity: He also openly confessed it, without any reservations.

We shall soon see how Luther distinguished himself among common men by rising notoriously above what I have called the "bargaining spirit".

That spirit of sordid commercialism is never beautiful, but it becomes particularly ugly-looking just in questions of morals and religion. On the other hand, you might ask: what connection does it have with disruption?

Let us seek our answer to this extremely important question by asking another one: What is the special virtue demanded in order to enable any man to face the most awkward facts of life? We know that some men possess this matchless courage. They acknowledge the most unpleasant realities of their situation unflinchingly. Others are the Peer Gynt type. They always choose the alternative of a cowardly detour. What connection does this have with wholeness versus disruption in human minds?

The one who knows what moral integrity means, has no doubts that there must be a connection. Modern psychology actually teaches us that the failure to face the disagreeable issues of life frequently result in actual illnesses of the human mind. Choosing the easy compromise, the both-and, instead of the either-or, that is: not choosing at all. And this remarkable choice of not really choosing, that is the spirit of bargaining. When it occurs in a person's religious life, it leaves the soul in a bruised and fatally diseased condition. The name I have chosen for that disease is disruption. The road leading upward to wholeness and harmony for human lives is always the pointed and painful one of courageous choice, of the either-or. Some have called that a road of deliberately acknowledged bankruptcy. But an openly admitted bankruptcy is not the worst thing that can happen to a human individual. Sometimes it is the best.

Luther did have the rare moral integrity of "going into total bankruptcy" before the face of the only Righteous One. According to the "accountantship of salvation", as required by the Christian gospel, total bankruptcy of self is the *conditio sine qua non* for man's appropriation of righteousness, Christ's righteousness.

In view of these general facts, it has been a matter of quite particular significance to me to get to know what attitude Luther manifested in his life regarding the "bargaining spirit". And it is not with rashness that I have drawn these conclusions. In company with the best historians as my guides, I have gone back to the days when he made his solemn vow of becoming a monk. This certainly happened at a moment of almost paralyzing commotion. The question naturally rises, as it arose in those days: Is a man morally bound to follow a course he has decided upon under the pressure of forbidding circumstances?

Luther's friends attempted to answer this question for him in the negative. They repeatedly assured him that his decision had been a precipitated one. Even Luther himself felt that it had. Nevertheless, the idea of not fulfilling his promise to God on that occasion simply never seems to have entered into his mind in any serious way. On the contrary, Luther seems to go to unnecessary extremes in his fulfillment: There were 23 convents to choose from in Erfurt, as Welle remarks, but Luther consciously chose the most severe and the most serious of them all, that of the Augustinians.

There he still had the possibility of choosing the broad and popular lane of compromise. Like myriads of other monks throughout contemporary Christendom, he might have opted for the only really well-known way, in his generation, of gaining righteousness: personal actions of goodness and Christian penitence. But he chose instead to seek peace with God on the level of his longing heart and his aching conscience.

Just here, again, Luther's "eccentricity", his radically different character, obviously prevented him from finding any cheap relief. His own diagnosis was: "sin of a hopelessly spiritual order". This analysis made the matter seem hopeless indeed. For how does one get about cleaning away stains of that order?

The result was the one we know: Luther's introspective profoundness, and the whole inexorability of his attitude in moral affairs gave him that horrible experience of diving right down into the bottomless pit of all known human corruption. But if the descent into Tartaros is endless, the remedy required for a true re-ascension must also be endless. The only reasonable consequence of that total acknowledgment of personal failure is the one the Gospel knows: a sincere and unreserved abandonment to the mercy of God.

Here we come back to the real significance of the *tabula rasa* type of spiritual bankruptcy versus the spirit of casuistic bargaining, seen in the light of Luther's accomplishment of his mission to the world. What would have happened to the history of the Reformation if Luther, like so many other insolvent doubters in humanity, had refused to face the full facts of his insolvency and go into bankruptcy before God. In this context, I cannot help thinking of a very strange form that casuistry adopts again and again. You may see it observed right in the heart of Christendom: man's strange insistence, from times immemorial, on providing his own robes of righteousness--at least "partially".

If Luther, too, had been like that, he simply would not have been a match for his historical mission. For that mission demanded thoroughness and totality. And Luther had that, to a larger extent than most other men in his generation. This is what made his work so revolutionary under the prevailing circumstances. His solemn and sensational proclamation to the world was this simple formula: Christ, our only righteousness. That is the great principle of Christian totality which makes man whole.

4. Is the Christian "Partly Just" and "Partly a Sinner"?

Luther's drama in history resulted in Western man's forceful liberation from the most disruptive influences of Platonic ideas on Christendom. The vehement desire, on the part of a miserable slave, for entire freedom was the fact that made Luther different, consistently and resolutely different,-- to such degrees that a revolution in religious thought and religious life was the consequence.

Of course, there have been other men with similar trends toward totality. But let us here limit our observation to Luther. In what respect was Luther's deepest anthropology victoriously anti-pagan? In what way did it notoriously assert itself as a tremendous desire to shun the indolent compromises Christendom had been making with pagan philosophy?

When Luther spoke about the nature of man in the light of the Christian gospel, he described him in those famous terms: "simul justus et peccator". (At the same time just and a sinner). Does this imply a compromise, an anthropological split? Does it mean that man has now become "partly" just and "partly" a sinner? Not at all. The characteristic fact--and the fact Luther constantly emphasizes is this:

1. Man--as a man--is entirely a sinner,--and remains entirely a sinner--as long as he lives on this earth. Every moment of his life he is a sinner--totally and absolutely dependent on God's forgiving love and Christ constantly operative righteousness, appropriated through faith. Even the best action performed by the most pious saint is maculated by sin and, in itself, hopelessly doomed to perdition. It is sin in its deepest foundations. Accordingly, that saint is in desperate need of being forgiven even his nicest looking action. And this need of forgiveness will go on until the day of his death.

(1)"Opera hominum ut semper speciosa sint bonaque videantur, probabile tanem est es esse peccata mortalia."

This "tanem" evidently introduces an entirely contrasting viewpoint, the viewpoint of stern reality: Those glittering works are nothing less than mortal sins.

2. On the other hand, that same man--if he has accepted Christ's righteousness--is perfectly righteous at every moment, and in the totality of his inmost being. True enough, this justice is a "justitia aliena". For unquestionably it has its origin in the Other One, in Christ. Nevertheless, it is so completely transferred and imputed to man that, in its saving effects, it is as good as if he had actually merited it himself. His life in Christ is totally righteous, without one single stain or spot of contamination.

Just the paradoxical completeness with which Luther carries through each one of these two aspects, represents a radical breach with the fundamental anthropology of salvation in the contemporary Church, as it had gradually come to be developed, and fairly definitely formulated, even as early as the days of Augustine.

But--one may perhaps object--had not Augustine spoken about the salvation mystery in very much the same terms? In fact, is it not precisely from him that Luther has--to a large extent, and probably quite consciously so--borrowed his important expression: "simul justus et peccator"?

1Disputatio Heidelbergae habita, 1518, WA I, p. 356, 16.

Yes, undoubtedly (1). Permit us, however, to point out, already now, one little difference in the formulations: Augustine has "ex quadam parte justus, ex quadam parte peccator".(1) Now, of course, we do agree that such a peculiarity of expression need not necessarily imply any fundamental difference in substance between Luther's conception and Augustine's conception. Luther might perhaps just as well have happened to express himself in similar terms of a "partly"--"partly". In fact, he sometimes does. Therefore, we are bound to go to the history of ideas in order to see what basic contents are involved in either case.

First, from whom had the two theologians inherited the essence of their respective ideas?

"Both from the Apostle Paul", some might immediately infer.

That is true enough. In fact, Augustine keeps very reverently to Romans 7 in his consideration of these things. In accordance with verse 25, he admits that the same human being--and, obviously at the same time-- is both spiritual and carnal ("idem spiritualis, idemque carnalis"--note 1).(2) And this strange concomitance evidently goes on in man's nature "quamdiu hic vivit". (That it will not go beyond our life here, must be tacitly implied-- ibid.) Nygren has remarked that listening to Augustine speaking about these things may often give the Protestant a curious impression of listening to his own Luther. So similar are the sentences and the formulations. In fact, anyone may establish for himself the truth in that remark. Take, for instance, this quotation from De civitate Dei:

"That very righteousness of ours, however true it may be, because of the objective of goodness towards which it is directed, still is such in this life that it becomes equal to a forgiveness of our sins rather than to a perfection of virtues."(3)

1Cf. Anders Nygrin's conclusion in *Filosofi och Motivforskning*, 1940, p. 142

2Sermo CLIV, V, 7

3Lib. XIX, cap. XXVII: "...tanta est in hac vita ut potius remissione peccatorum constet quam perfectione virtutum".

Although we may doubt that Luther would have imitated the good old Church Father to the very point of using, in an entirely serious way, such an expression as "ipsa nostra justitia", one thing is here beyond doubt as far as the substance of Augustine's statement is concerned: The reformer finds it perfectly to the point and in beautiful accordance with the Scriptures. Not only this, but time and again Luther makes use of another statement by the same venerable teacher, viz., that the mind of the flesh (or literally, *concupiscentia carnis*) is put off in baptism,—"non ut non sit, sed ut in peccatum non imputetur". So one thing is made clear--and corroborated by the authority of the great Augustine: Man's sinfulness is a reality that becomes more terrible as time passes, but for the follower of Christ it is not any longer counted as sin. Here both authorities seek a greater authority than themselves. The one they go to for reference is the apostle (1 John 1:18): "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Still Augustine--not Luther--finds it possible to make some definite distinctions:

"If you covet ("concupiscis") something which the law prohibits when it says: 'thou shalt not covet', you do (at least) observe something, too, which the law enjoins: 'Thou shalt not walk after thy lusts'. For one thing is to avoid lusting altogether ("*aluid est non concupiscire*"); another thing is to avoid walking after your lusts ("*aluid post concupiscentias suas non ire*"). Not to covet at all is the feat of the absolutely perfect man. Not to walk according to one's covetings is the feat of the man who is still fighting, still struggling, still laboring. (*Non concupiscere, omnino perfecti est; post concupiscentias suas non ire, pugnantis est, luctantis est, laborantis est.*")(1)

1Sermo CLIV, cap. VI, 8.

It is perfection then, according to Augustine, that cannot be reached; although the longings of our *caritas* has a good direction all right. She, heroically, stretches herself upwards toward the real value, God. In other words, our own righteousness is bound to remain hopelessly partial. Its shortcomings cannot be denied. They have to be "supplanted", as it were, by the perfect thing Christ has done for us. God's forgiveness is indispensable in order for our deficiency to be covered.

But notice: just our deficiency. We are not entirely unjust. No, as men of good will, fighting our way upward in defiance of our evil propensities, we do possess, after all, a certain degree of justice in our lives. Obviously, the fight of the Christian is seen as not essentially different from that of good men without any Christian background; such as the idealists of old, those noble climbers on their arduous way up to the peaks of eternal truths. For, of course, any man's justice on this earth must be measured by the degree in which the spirit is allowed to control the body, the body subject to its many passions and sensual propensities.

There can be no doubt about the origin of such concepts. They testify that Augustine is still clinging to an ideal left behind in his soul from the days when he was indelibly influenced by Platonic or

Neo-platonic ideas. And that was where Luther was absolutely incapable of accepting the theological and anthropological concepts handed over by medieval doctrine molders as a lasting legacy to the Catholic Church. To the German reformer the formula "simul justus et peccator" does not mean that man is simply a sort of living split between a superior reason and a vulgar sense animalism.

Some things seemed quite natural to Augustine; to Luther's basic views on the matter concerned, they were altogether incompatible. Take, for instance, an illustration coming to the Church Father's mind most graciously, and not at all as a last resort: Plato's example of the driver whose quadriga is such a perfect sign of hopeless disruption, the good horses pulling the carriage one way, and the bad ones the opposite way. To us there could hardly be a more striking image of man as Greek dualism tended to conceive of him. But, as applied by Augustine to Pauline theology, it must certainly--to put it mildly--be somewhat beside the point. Choosing it and using it in connection with Paul's teaching could hardly be considered as a mere accident. It is not a thing that might have happened to almost anybody, at least not to Luther. It is not just another "casual" and "insignificant" indication of Augustine's proverbial and almost admirable conversance with Platonic philosophy. No, it is simply characteristic of the "ex parte" justificatio and "ex parte" peccatum which constituted Augustine's proper concept. And that is a concept we are bound to place in clear opposition to Luther's concept, namely the profoundly characteristic idea of a "totaliter justus" and "totaliter peccator".

Up to the Reformation our world had been thoroughly accustomed to the externally well-rounded compromises and the internally well-digested synthesis of a platonized Christianity. By that I mean a humanly very attractive mixture between the noblest forms of human idealism and Christianity. It is not strange at all that such a world would tend to be scandalized by Luther's unpolished statement:

"Esto peccator et pecca fortiter, sed fortius fide et gaude in Christo, qui victor est peccati."

Small wonder that a stern adversary, the eminent Roman-Catholic Luther-scholar, Denifle, here exclaims with a certain consternation: "According to Luther, God accepts the sinner as righteous in such a way that the sinner remains a sinner".

However, one thing particularly in Denifle's attack against Luther's theology, I am at a loss to understand. That is the statement: Luther's force consists more in "the religious quietive" than in the "ethical motive". That seems to overlook completely the vehement indignation which caught the German reformer's entire person at the sight of the prevailing laxness of the contemporary clergy. It also seems to overlook a most practical ethical reform movement in which he was to assert himself as a tremendous dynamic force.

It would seem equally unwarranted to suggest that aggressive pride could be at the root of the Reformer's reaction.

When did it happen that a particularly alert consciousness of one's own unworthiness and a sincere sorrow over this unworthiness, led a person to proud defiance? Never. A true realization of our hopeless state as men left to the deplorable buttresses of our "own righteousness", can consistently drive us one way only: to the cross of Calvary; that is the narrow path of Life: Christ, our Righteousness.

In conclusion we may say: That accentuated "inward-directedness" (or self-scrutiny, or introspection) in Martin Luther's case has proved to be no serious danger at all. True, it did have all the high-strung violence of adolescent idealism. For some time it seemed to threaten both himself and the Christian Church with incurable "disruption". However, it finishes by making both the man and his

movement truly whole. That is the unfailing influence of genuine religion on all kinds of human profoundness. That is to say: the potential dangers inherent in "being profound", in the sense of man's diving vertically down into the bottomless pit of his human profoundness, those dangers are miraculously neutralized; more than that: turned into glorious potentialities of wholeness and harmony.

Luther becomes a man who graciously escapes the perilous pitfalls of his time, viz. an increasing lack of totality in its outlook on human life and human destiny.

And now, what do we find if we go to the opposite camp? I mean to those self-confident heroes of bold Renaissance emancipation, of humanist secularization? What do we see happening to those "harmonious", "outward-directed" men? Humanly speaking, they should have a better chance to become harmonious than Luther had. Please do not think that I find anything necessarily wrong about their harmony of their outward-directedness. Of course, their fault can hardly consist in this; that they find peace of mind and inspiring delight in the newly discovered beauties of their wide awake external senses. It must rather consist in the strange exclusiveness with which they gradually come to consider these external things as the only value, the only reality. Their outward direction is not the thorough one that makes man whole. It lacks the alterocentric thoroughness which finds not only values outside oneself, but the Value, the One Infinitely Greater than oneself. This failure always happens to those who have the one-sidedness of superficiality, finding the temporal things as the only value, the only reality.

But now we must also consider another onesidedness, the onesidedness of a would-be profoundness. That is, the exclusiveness of those, in the new dawning era, who tend to imagine "eternal things" as the only value, the only reality.

Chapter V

CALVIN'S ANTHROPOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

1. How Calvin Insisted in Vindicating God

The importance of the topic may justify first giving a glimpse of Calvin's anthropology as a whole.

In my attempts to analyze Calvin's *Institution de la religion chrestienne* from a philosophical and aesthetic point of view(1), I have shown to what extent his conception of God is decisive for both his conception of nature and his conception of man. In Calvin's system of thought, God is the absolute center. The circumference is the creation. Of course, there is nothing unique here, so far, from a Christian point of view. Man is a strictly limited, entirely dependent, and comparatively insignificant creature, subject to the will of God. But what distinguishes the French reformer, is just the inexorable manner in which he tends to push that distance between Creator and creature toward its extreme limit. Calvin's own passion for the perfect has undoubtedly contributed much toward the theocentric absolutism for which he is famous. Some historians seek the origin of every specifically Calvinian doctrine just here. But is that absolutism synonymous with harmonious alterocentricity? Is it synonymous with totality in the biblical sense, in the truly spiritual sense? That is our capital question.

1Carsten Johnsen: Calvin's "Institutio religionis Christianae" Revealing the Author's Aesthetic and Philosophical Views, 1958.

Considered from our special point of view, we might say that the French reformer presents a "monism" of a somewhat strange type: It is apparently not so much based on synthesis and unification, but more on exclusion and annihilation of the refractory elements!

The great message Calvin endeavors to imprint upon the minds of his audience, with untiring energy and passionate zeal, is this: God is everything, man is nothing. That truth is all-important, --the more so as man's most inveterate perversity is that of overestimating and even idolizing both himself and all other created things.

To Calvin, however, God is not first and foremost the boundless love. He is above all the eternal, almighty will, which does not suffer any limitations whatsoever. Any creature or principle that could be imagined to possess any kind of proper values, or even any real existence, outside of God--that would be an absurdity to him. For it would imply such a limitation. But neither man nor evil, or any other thing you might mention could limit God.

Calvin's radicalism and passion for the absolute must necessarily lead him to awkward positions of downright irreality sometimes. Undoubtedly he has been rather painfully conscious of this himself. And who would envy his situation? There is certainly no beaten track ahead of the man who feels under a certain obligation to reduce everything, outside God, to absolutely nothing. Those extraneous things--such as the world, the evil, man, etc.--are not always so easily explained away even by means of the most subtle logics. For, every moment, they produce irrefutable evidence of the fact that they do exist, after all. So, if God's unlimited, untainted glory is to be fully maintained only at such a price, then his prophet on earth unquestionably has a most ungrateful task to perform.

Nevertheless, Calvin rarely shrinks back from what he believes to be his God-given mission. It may be an exaggeration to say that he bluntly endeavors to prove that all those things do not exist. Of course, they do exist in some sort of way. But Calvin valiantly proclaims that God is the ultimate cause of their existence. In the case of evil, this must be a particularly hard nut to crack. But Calvin's sincerity and devotion are indiscussable. His attitude toward God reminds us of the attitude which the prophets of old seemed to have: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up".

God's project must never be thwarted. God's purpose can never be thwarted. What He has decided from eternal ages, cannot be altered or modified. All are forced--ultimately--to do as He pleases. Even Satan is "le ministre de Dieu". The evil in the world is simply destined to serve God's cause. God has, in some sense, planned and desired that evil should come into existence. In the edition of 1560 of the Institutes, the reformer violently fights the old philosophical school that had made evil into a principle of almost equal validity to that of good.

Characteristically enough, the references to the devil, "le Maling", and all his subversive activity, are comparatively few and far between in that great work. In the popular and quite human portrayals by so many writers in the Middle Ages, the devil had certainly been a far more graphic and lifelike figure. And he still was in most of the literature dealing with such subjects in the 16th century. So Calvin, too, must have been familiar enough with the concrete picture of the evil one. Nevertheless, he almost seems to ignore it. Is this due to his general intellectual and abstracting trend, or to that special

theocentric absolutism we here discuss? We are not able to tell. But the phenomenon itself cannot fail to attract our attention. And it presents a curious contrast to what we observe in Calvin's German colleague. Luther never tires of portraying the devil's hideousness, his power and his cunning. No wonder that posterity had made the German reformer the picturesque center of a great number of legends in which the many-horned monster, Satan, plays a most vivid part. Such popular visions, as far as we know, have never been counted among the posthumous honors paid to Johannes Calvinus by his thankful followers. It probably requires a certain amount of deep humanity and of "derbe Volkstumlichkeit" in a historical figure to provoke such legends in the popular imagination. Calvin is not sufficiently human for them, and his own idea of the "Maling" is not sufficiently crude and concrete--or typically human--in his peculiar wickedness.

It goes without saying that nature, to Calvin, must become a comparatively pale and insignificant thing. Nature is a means for God to reveal His glory. That is about all. But considered from that point of view, it is an excellent agent, indeed. Just having a glimpse of this masterpiece of creation, one is overwhelmed "by singular light".(1)

What light? Is it the light of the rising sun reflected by the millions of diamonds in a dazzling, snow-covered landscape one beautiful winter morning? Oh, no, nothing as ephemeral and insignificant as that. Light here is a spiritual value of eternal duration. The apostle, writing to the Hebrews, has aptly called the world a mirror for the invisible things.(2)

It is God's greatness that manifests itself in the smallest details of the material world.

For instance, to him there does not exist any such thing as a blind force inherent in nature and governed by its own laws. In his eyes a force of that kind would endow nature with too great independence. But nature, too, is absolutely dependent on God's will and authoritarian intervention.

1Edit. 1541, 10, 19. "Singulierement on ne peut d'un regard contempler ce chef d'oeuvre de monde universal en sa longueur et largeur, qu'on ne soit, par maniere de dire, tout esblouy d'abondance infinie de lumiere."

2". . .L'Apostre aux Hebrieux a proprement appelle les siecles miroirs des choses invisibles: Pource que la composition du monde nous est au lieu de miroir pour contempler Dieu." Ibid.

"God has such a superintendence in leading all events that all that is done proceeds precisely according to His counsel and nothing happens by chance."(1)

If considered as some sporadic quotation, this might, of course, simply refer to the general law-directedness of nature. But numerous texts-- and also Calvin's whole trend of ideas--shows that there is something more to it than that.

To him the Creator is not just "in general and vaguely, the principle of movement in creatures, as if someone having once made a canal and directed a current of water to pass through it, let it run on all by itself". (1560:I,XVI, 5). Oh, no, such pagan deism does not satisfy Calvin's idea of God. For he believes in the God who has counted every hair of His disciples' heads, the God who knows the individual sufferings of every animal in a Ninive sentenced to death, the God who suffers together with every falling sparrow. In this respect, Calvin is typically biblical, typically Christian. In his opinion, even

the most negligible climatic or botanic changes are due to God's willful intervention. In every particular God has some secret, but very definite motive:

"No wind ever blows without special order from God." (ibid. I, 9, 16). When vineyards and corn fields are beaten to the ground by hailstorms, they are all signs of some "special punishment he exerts".

I am glad to note that there is no place whatsoever, in Calvin's theology for that insinuating pagan phenomenon I have often termed "automatism".

But there is something the French reformer seems still more bent on circumscribing than nature, reducing it to total independence. That is man,-- yes, indeed, precisely man, that self-important and boasting, but utterly helpless worm. The historian is constantly under the same awful impression: Calvin, the zealous prophet of the Lord, does not only reduce man; he annihilates him. But the purpose of that annihilation is also always the same: it is in Dei majorem gloriam.

11560: I, XVI, 5. "Dieu a une telle superintendance a disposer tous evenements que tout ce qui est fait, procede tellement de ce qu'il a determine en son conseil, que rien n'advient par cas d'aventure."

Now the instrument he uses to perpetrate that annihilation of man, to the greater glory of God, is a double one: 1) "la predestination:" 2) "le serf arbitre." Those two doctrines form a focal points of Calvin's whole anthropology. They constitute typical traits of Calvinism.

Here the cold logics and the intransigent harshness of the keen reasoner and the vindicator of absolute righteousness reveal themselves infallibly. In our special context, as it will soon turn out, this will adopt a special significance. Of course, Calvin's idea of a predestination of all things may be seen in connection with his personal development toward an ever more relentless radicalism in a general way, as well as in particular respects: The more consistently God-centered his system grows, the more passionately does he, according to this viewpoint, attach himself to the doctrine of predestination as a means of glorifying God.

In his important contribution to the study of Calvin's theology, Max Scheibe has observed a progressive evolution: In the first instance, it was mainly man's miserable state and his great need of sure salvation that induced Calvin to attach himself to the doctrine of predestination. Here, then, what presumably plays the essential role, is the evangelical doctrine of redemption from sin and a personal yearning for security of salvation. Hence, there is a strikingly large place given to the doctrine of election during this period of Calvin's theology. Only much later--obviously in the same degree as that "zeal of Thine house," which we have recently mentioned, became the consuming flame of the reformer's life--he did eventually begin to proclaim the doctrine of the eternal predestination in its most inflexible form

For our study, the general consequences of both doctrines are of prime importance. But first we may establish the fact that neither of them makes the impression of being particularly alterocentric. To tell the truth, there is hardly an doctrine in the history of Christianity which has more effectively conferred upon its adherents the stamp of considering themselves as a sort of "exclusive club". At least, that is the view "those outside" invariably tend to adopt here.

However, our principal aim is now to see what light the development, in Christendom, of the doctrine of the bound will may throw upon the question of a possible dualism--and even a disruptive dualism--in the Christian view of man in ethical respect.

In Calvin's theology nothing could follow more naturally upon the idea of a predestination than the doctrine of "le serf arbitre".

2. The Bound Will

Exactly like the former doctrine, this latter one was intended to strip man of the last filthy rags with which, according to Calvin, he strives to cover his miserable nakedness. Clearly enough, our austere reformer had made up his mind to leave man no trace of any personal independence or any natural merit. This time the instrument of annihilation is as unbending and as merciless as ever. Nowhere has Calvinist radicalism showed itself in a more implacable light.

In all known cultures, popular opinion appears to have considered the human will as a fairly potent agent in molding the life of the individual. And in most known religions, some kind of personal choice has been regarded as a decisive factor for a person's final salvation or perdition. At least, practical men, regardless of political ideologies or of religious creeds, have tended to enlist the will as a momentous force in the service of human prosperity and happiness.

Nevertheless, as long as philosophy has existed, one of its classical questions has remained: Does man have any such thing as a free will?

Here Calvin is certainly not on the side where one would generally expect to find a humanist. (And yet, Calvin was a prominent humanist.) He is not on the side where a considerable number of Christians today, Protestants as well as Catholics, would expect to find a Christian. (And yet Calvin was a whole-hearted Christian,--we have no doubts about that.) The fact is, that we find the learned Bible student, John Calvin, proclaiming, decade after decade, with force and firm conviction: Man is a miserable slave. The will-freedom he boasts of is a ridiculous illusion. And I, Johannes Calvinus, servant of the living God, am here to prove it,--Bible in hand. I am not afraid of your counter-arguments either. For I know the Holy Scriptures. And I know man!

So, once more we find ourselves watching this stern and pitiless, pale and thin little figure in Geneva, as he keeps tearing to pieces every bit of intellectual or moral pride with which men endeavor to adorn themselves.

Here we must remember that Calvin knew his classics by heart. He was a scholar of exceptional learning and perspicacy, thoroughly acquainted with philosophy, ancient and modern.

And what was, there, the conventional formulation of the topic under consideration? What was commonly meant by a free will--*liberum arbitrium*--in Calvin's environment?

In the sense of all classical philosophy the term "free will" naturally implied an absolutely unmodified ability of choosing whatever you like--for instance good--and putting that choice into practice!

Small wonder that Calvin was somewhat categorical in his remonstrance: There is no such thing in mankind! he cries out. Does not your Bible teach you, in plain and unmistakable words, that the

human heart is basically and inherently evil and utterly incapable of even one single good act--or motive? Man, left to himself and his own abilities, can choose only one thing: evil. He can put into practice only one thing: evil. If this is true, is there much liberty left to boast of?

In fact, when one seeks to understand Calvin, one should never lose sight of the circumstance that the two alternatives presenting themselves to him were so radically pointed. The adherents of "liberum arbitrium" could not fail to exasperate Calvin immensely with their pretentious clamor: "Human volition is absolutely free in all things".

Of course, he could have answered them with a simple "No" or a "Not entirely so". But then he would not have been the man he was. Calvin was a fighter and an absolutist himself. So he answered just as pointedly: Human volition is absolutely enslaved. It is virtually free in no thing whatsoever?

To prove that became to him a matter of capital importance. The most crucial questions of the whole Reformation here seemed to be at stake: Was any human being--saint or layman--able to store up "merits" by means of "good actions", produced through his own "free will"?

Now, in fact, the following conclusion seemed dangerously near at hand: If there is a grain of independence in the realm of human volition, then there must be a grain of independence in the realm of human action as well. At least Calvin, in his consuming jealousy for Dei sola gratia, must have feared the possibility of such a conclusion intensely. No wonder that this determination became implacable: The adversary had to be driven against the wall. His bold arguments must be refuted by a diametrically opposite proclamation:

So miserable is man that he has no freedom at all to decide. This applies to the most insignificant actions of practical life,--"the actions which in themselves, are neither good nor evil and belong rather to earthly life than to spiritual life". (1541: 90,1). And, please do not imagine that one is here speaking only of such practical actions, which, in their consequences, may have some noble connection with the realms of the spirit. Oh, no, the autonomy of the human will is absolutely nil, even for actions entirely limited to a purely material sphere of causal relations!

Of course, Calvin, the doctrinaire theorizer, feels the burden of proving this statement,-- I mean proving it not only with the Bible in his hand, but even with plausible, logical arguments. Whether we, his stubborn readers, will accept this proof, that is another question.

To put it briefly: the fact that a person may perform a difficult task with astonishing ease sometimes, whereas a really easy task is often performed with astonishing difficulty by the same person, shows--to Calvin--that a higher will (God's will) has a leading hand even in the smallest details.(1)

Of course, in special cases such inexplicable phenomena may find their explanation in a personal intervention on the part of a divine will. This is the plain statement of the Holy Scriptures throughout. On the other hand, probably few Christians will agree with Calvin that such cases prove the intervention of God in every trivial transaction man performs or triesto perform. In fact, some will claim that the general and very wide conclusions Calvin here draws from his premises, are based on childlike faith rather than on hard logical arguments.

1"l'experience journalle nous contraindra d'estimer, que nostre coeur est plustost conduit par le mouvement de Dieu que par son eslection et liberte, veu que souvent la raison et entendement nous default, en choses qui ne sont point difficiles a congnoistre, et scavons comment nous en debvons sortir. En choses de grande consequence et de grand danger, le courage nous demeure ferme et sans crainte. Dont procede cela, sinon que Dieu besongne, tant d'une part que d'autre?" (1541:90,1).

Let us recapitulate, however, stressing the essential points so far. The categorical formulation of problems facing the reformer was this: Does man have a free will, yes or no? Because of his nature, Calvin could not have answered that question with a simple yes. How could any genuine Christian have answered it with a yes, and nothing more? Would not that have placed him immediately on the side of the self-confident philosopher who says: "I have, in my own nature, the superior power to choose whatever I like. I make up my mind to do good, and do it. I make up my mind to love my neighbor, and I love him".

Does not Christianity, on the contrary, say unmistakably here: Man is a miserable slave.

And when did slavery begin to mean the same as freedom? If a notorious slave calls himself free, then he must either be a fool or a liar, mustn't he? For the freedom he boasts of, can, at best, be a sad illusion. As a Christian, Calvin simply could not be ignorant of this fundamental Christian standpoint.

So once more this is the pointed question, the crucial question, the one Calvin had to face: Is human volition free, yes or no? What should the poor man have answered? On one hand, it is a fundamentally Christian idea that man is totally incapable of choosing good, the only choice that matters at all. He is a helpless slave of his own sinful nature. On the other hand, how can a man be without any power of choice whatsoever, and still be accounted responsible for his evil options and the resulting perdition?

A bold theologian preaching the absolute servum-arbitrium in this radical form must be prepared for challenges of the most bitter and the most disdainful sort. And Calvin was, indeed, most bitterly and most disdainfully challenged by some quite keen adversaries in his audience:

"If we are unable to choose for ourselves, in any degree or in any essential field, how then, in the name of justice, can we be made responsible for what we do or fail to do? And if God is the one who chooses, why, then, has he chosen the way of salvation only for a selected minority?"

Calvin, it is true, had the fearlessness--and perhaps the recklessness--to retort that this was no business of theirs, and that no one could ever blame God for having mercy upon whomsoever he pleased. But who will find that answer really satisfactory? And who will feel that it is, after all, in perfect harmony with the gospel of grace and lovingkindness?

"Choose therefore life, that ye may live",--was not that the divine invitation of old, still going out with its merciful and humanly understandable appeal to a world in woe and sorrow? Again, "Choose you this day, whom ye will serve!"--Who could prevent Calvin's theological opponents from bringing such a quotation to bear against him? Was all such biblical talk about choosing nothing but sheer nonsense? Was it a mere facon de parler?

Certainly Calvin's dilemma becomes every Christian teacher's dilemma. But what, then, would be the truly logical answer to the question?

It might be more cautious to ask first: Is there a barrenly logical answer to the question: "Is man's will absolutely free, yes or no?" To some questions there are more practical answers. That is, the answer may have to be a compromise. And compromises, we know, most often tend to appear more practical than rigidly logical.

And now to Calvin's special case: Could that man be naturally supposed to find the way of a practical compromise? In fact, few things seem more unlikely, considering his natural disposition. To Calvin a compromise was an abomination. I think we can say this without any serious exaggeration. In fact, that golden mean--or downright "mediocrity" in a certain sense--which I have found to characterize the alterocentric type of human personality, is not a characteristic of Calvin's personality,--not by any means. On the contrary, I would venture to say: The concept of an "aurea mediocritas" has no existence whatsoever, either in his mind or in his vocabulary. No-no, to Calvin's mind mediocrity is never golden. The so-called "happy medium" is an absurdity, for a medium is never happy.

It is not the lot of every man to be born a cyclothyme (to speak with Kretschmer), or a naive (to speak with Schiller), or a child (to speak with the Christian gospel),--at least not to grow up and still remain that child. For some are born as "schizothymes", "sentimentals", or "adults".

It does not fall to the lot of all men to be practically wise. That "practical wisdom" includes the intuitive knowledge that very often the real truth is found to reside only "somewhere in the middle"!

But let us now have a closer look at what we have called the "golden mean" or the "lucky compromise". Is it really golden, and really lucky, even measured by the measure of the kingdom of the Christian Child? Is it wise, even measured by the peculiar wisdom of Christian spirituality? If not, then Calvin was right in refusing to consider it, or just failing to consider it. In other words, his refusal (or failure) cannot then be reduced to a case of mere typological peculiarity. No, then it must rather be said that Calvin avoided the "compromise", simply because his mind was naturally guided and protected by some selective mechanism inherent in Christian spirituality.

Of course, also a more fortuitous cause may be suggested. Calvin did not happen to invent a compromise of that kind. Nor was there anyone else there at the moment presenting to his mind the idea of such a compromise. Personally, I am inclined to the fact that the French reformer was an introvert going to extremes on so many occasions. This characterological peculiarity was a major and decisive obstacle to his opting for the golden mean as his favorite solution.

We shall soon see why Calvin would hardly have been able to swallow such a compromise (or "third alternative" as I have also called it) even if it had been presented to him,--to say nothing of inventing it himself.

Is there an alternative between the two extremes: man's total freedom, on the one hand, and his total lack of freedom on the other?

3. The Third Alternative

What is that compromise I am here speaking about,--the "only natural one" I can immediately see? Let me put it on the table, simply and unassumingly, just as Columbus is said to have put his egg:

Man's volition is partly free, partly bound.

Of course, this is not an entirely unknown alternative even to the 16th century theologians: Precisely in the great strife between Luther and Erasmus concerning the freedom of the will, there had already been arguments emerging which may suggest to us "a third alternative". In Luther there must certainly have been a feeling that it would be an exaggerated statement to say bluntly: Man has no freedom whatsoever. That would amount to saying: Man has no will at all. At least, if "liberum arbitrium" and "voluntas" (will) are taken as synonyms (as I have shown Thomas to take them, in Summa Theol. I, qu. 83, art. 4). But man does have a will, of course he does. By nature he is free. He possesses freedom in a certain respect. In what respect?

Let us go back to the passage where the German reformer in his fight with Erasmus calls even Augustine to his aid in order to make it infallibly sure that man has a "servum potius quam liberum arbitrium" (a bound, rather than free, will). Here Luther frankly admits that there is a certain freedom of the will, but only with respect to the things already in man's power and in submission to him (inferior to him). But other things are above the control of man's will (*supra*). Here the will is the captive of sin, and as such cannot choose what is good, according to God.(1)

It is an interesting distinction that Luther makes here: On the one hand we have the inferior things, the things subject to man's dominion; on the other hand we have the superior things, those to which man himself is subject. With regard to the former, natural man has freedom of volition. What are those inferior things? We may sum them up in Jean Boisset's words: "les choses qui concernent la matiere"(2); the things concerned with matter.

We have liberty of choice and liberty of action as far as purely "external" things are concerned. Luther mentions eating and drinking.(3) So there is one domain--according to Luther at least--which, in a certain sense, escapes the hard rigidity of the *servum arbitrium*. In such outward matters of practical life as "selling or buying a house," going to church or not going to church, man has freedom. One thing may seem somewhat surprising here: Even Luther has obviously not availed himself of this distinction as a general pragmatic solution destined to close the mouths of those who cried out obstreperously about God's "arbitrariness" in keeping man responsible, a creature who "had not been given any choice". When Erasmus challenges him on this very point, he simply answers:

As to the question why His Divine Majesty does not abolish this deficiency of our will, and why He does not change all men, or why He makes our will responsible in spite of the fact that man cannot direct it as he pleases, then that is a thing it is not permissible to inquire into.

Is Luther right on this? I think not. How could he ever be? In my opinion that inquiry is an absolutely legitimate one, and it is a tremendously crucial one. How could a Christian teacher forbid his students to ask precisely that question about the meaningfulness and the fairness of a God who keeps creatures responsible for their wrong actions in spite of the fact that He has not given them any freedom to act rightly? This question must be both courageously asked and properly answered. By this I do not say that I am the one possessing sufficient wisdom to give the answer, at least not an answer that would necessarily have satisfied either Calvin or the humanist quibblers who challenged his radical theology in the "Theocratic City" of Geneva. But I do feel I have the duty to make a sincere attempt.

1The Weimar edition, 1883 ss., of Luther's works, 56, p. 385. "*Liberum quidem semper est naturaliter, sed respectu eorum, qui in potestate sua sunt et se inferiora sed non supra, cum sit captivum in peccatis. Et tunc non possit bonum eligere secundum Deum*". Italics ours.

2Jean Boisset: Erasme et Luther, 1962, p. 49.

3Obviously Luther does not speak about this as a volitional freedom. In *De servo arbitrio*, p. 160, however, we find new reference to that same "freedom" of man on a purely human plane of life.

I do not want to appear inconsistent with the trend of totality I otherwise advocate so strongly. I hate to divide life up into sections and departments. Such division evokes the queer idea of watertight bulkheads. You cannot departmentalize life's vital realities and still boast that you have reality.

Nevertheless, demarcation lines do have their useful purpose sometimes. For instance, a theoretical distinction between different zones may serve the practical end of facilitating the human appropriation of certain logical concepts.

So, for the sake of illustration, let us simply agree to go on using the metaphor of "separate realms", even in the virtual totality we have learned to know as our human existence. And now, then, comes my experiment of thought:

Does it make some sense to say, for instance, that in such and such a "realm" it would seem more reasonable to look for a bound will; whereas in such and such another "realm" it would seem more reasonable to expect true freedom of the human will?

Calvin, in spite of himself, as it were, may suggest to us a certain "line of demarcation". At least he does speak about "the actions that are, in themselves, neither good nor bad, belonging rather to the earthly life" ("la vie terrienne": cf. our quotation p. 126). You may remember that even in that "amoral" field--as one might call it--of "purely outward actions", Calvin is anxious to deny a human soul the power of exerting anything like a sovereign will. Did Protestantism maintain strictly such negative views about man's utter inability to choose for himself anything whatsoever, in any field whatsoever?

It is most interesting to note, I think, that the *Confessio Augustana* practically states the free will of man to be something he does have, but strictly limited precisely to that field of "outward actions"; we might say also, the "trivial" actions of everyday life. In fact, according to article 18, (with our own parentheses inserted,)

"man's will has some liberty to work a civil (I might here say: outward) righteousness, and to choose between things that are subject to human reason, but...it has no power to work the righteousness of God, or a spiritual righteousness, without the Spirit of God; because that the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. 1 Cor. 2:14. This is wrought in the heart (I might here say: in the depths of the very inward,) when men receive the Spirit of God through the Word."(1)

Here Augustana avows its indebtedness to the authority of Augustine, whose "*Hypognostica*" (90, liber III) affords the corroborating statement:

"We confess that there is in all men a free will, which has, indeed, the judgment of reason; not that it is thereby fitted, without God, either to begin or, at any rate, to perform anything in matters pertaining to God, but only in works belonging to this present life, whether they be good or evil. By good works, I mean those which are of the goodness of nature; as, to will to labor in the field, to desire meat or drink, to desire to build a house, to marry a wife, to keep cattle, to learn the art of diverse good things, to desire any good thing pertaining to this life; all which are not without God's government, yea,

they are, and had their beginning from God and by God. Among evil things, I account such as these: to will to worship an image; to will manslaughter, and such like."

Characteristic enough, what the Augsburg Confession finds worthy of special condemnation in the Pelagians, is--among other things--that they pretend, in their own human nature, to have the power of performing the commandments of God, even "as touching the substance of the action." Augustana points out precisely that nature is "able in some sort to do the external works... Yet it cannot work the inward motions."¹

¹The Augsburg Confession, 1905, p. 23, rev. ed., Decorah, Iowa.

These then are quotations from a document publicly summing up what Protestants were supposed to believe. So, you see, it does not at all necessarily mean going beyond the traditions of the Reformation to try and give some concrete formulation to what I have called a third alternative. In fact, one can here already see the contours of that third alternative taking shape. Right out there in the bewildering fog banks of our confused horizons, we may begin to see the dawning of an intelligible order.

What then, exactly, can we suggest that third alternative to be like? Let us simply keep to the possibility foreshadowed by the Confessio Augustana (or by Augustine, if you prefer to go still farther back.) I say "foreshadowed", because I feel the need of caution and of still considering this whole scheme in terms of a practically helpful image. The Augsburg Confession has, however, clearly enough suggested the alternative of a limited free choice in human volition.

In the name of the Christian religion, based upon the firm testimony of the Word, we do assume as an unshakable fact, that man is utterly helpless when it comes to changing the deepest grounds of his "inward heart". But-- and here the tentative perspective of a certain distinction of "zones" comes in-- why should not his liberty of choice reach at least as far as his "outward" options and actions go?

The late Norwegian theologian, Valen-Sendstad, has put it approximately this way: As a man, I am perfectly able, for instance, to place my feet within the walls of my Christian church (Cfr. Augustine). I choose to go there, and I do go there. I make up my mind to read my Bible, and I do read it. I decide to go down on my knees to pray, and I do pray.

¹As an example of "external works" is here mentioned: the ability to withhold the hands from theft and murder"; on the other hand, "inward motions" are: "fear of God, trust in God, chastity, and such like."

It is true that these actions represent a very "outward" sphere of mobility. But if they do place me exactly where God's transforming grace can reach me, is not that all the freedom I need?

Not much to boast of, to be sure. For we must admit that such a "contribution" is extremely "outward" indeed. But the question is rather this decisive one: It might be that this most "outward" sphere of action is still sufficient to cause two essential things to happen; and they are things in which the question of human "merit" does not yet enter at all:

Man places himself within the reach of his Saviour's arms. It is entirely those arms that save. So the merit is entirely the Saviour's. Let me illustrate this by telling you a story about a truly ridiculous man. He was about to drown. A man on the shore reached out his hand to save him. Did it mean anything for his salvation whether he grasped that hand or not? Of course, it did. This was decisive. Accepting the hand of salvation is always decisive. But now we come to the ridiculous part of the story: Imagine that man going all around the town afterwards, bragging about his own "fantastic accomplishment". Just imagine the man saying: "Today I was almost drowning. Then it so happened that a person on the shore, in the nick of time, stretched out his arm toward me. And do you know what I did? I grasped that hand! What a fellow I am. I never dreamed that I could ever be that good and courageous and full of personal merit. I have known all the time, of course, that I am a pretty resourceful fellow. But I hardly ever realized what an abundance of resources I do possess within myself." -- Now, what would you think about such a boaster? There must be something wrong with that man's common sense, mustn't there? For the merit is bound to be rather on the side of the rescuer who reaches out his helping hand. Still the grasping of that hand is indispensable for the drowning man's rescue.

If he does not contribute his little share, the salvation simply will not happen. If he does accept the help offered to him, however, that "contribution" is absolutely sufficient on his part. On the other hand, if a man fails to place himself within the reach of his Saviour's arms (i.e., if he does not permit himself to be saved), that failure is also "sufficient". It suffices to make him fully responsible for his ensuing perdition. Although the drowning person's willingness to grasp the rescuer's outstretched hand is no "merit" to boast of, his refusal to grasp it is just as surely a definite demerit to be heavily blamed for, and even to die for. The sinner is at perfect liberty to choose death rather than accept the offer of eternal salvation. He and nobody else, not even God Himself, has the power of that choice. Man has, as an intelligent creature, been deemed worthy of the freedom to accept God's saving hand or refuse it. Hence he also has the responsibility that reasonably goes together with that freedom! You need not have all the freedom of the world, all the might of heaven, to be responsible.

Does it not seem, then, that the "practical compromise" here suggested as a substitute for the pointed antagonism between the radical ideas of a "total freedom" on one hand and a "total servitude" on the other, constitutes a theoretical alternative sufficient to restore harmony?

And now back to Calvin and his particular contribution toward the history of the ideas we have been dealing with: Did the possibility of this "third alternative" never seriously occur to his mind? Is there anything in his writings, or his acts, indicating that there was, in the depths of his heart, a forceful yearning for a "compromise" of the kind I have here suggested, some sort of intermediate position between the concept of radical volitional freedom and that of radical volition servitude, in the case of man? I have not been able to lay hold on any really convincing document to that effect. And, sincerely speaking, I do not expect that I ever shall. For what I do know is the general fact I have already expressed in this way: Calvin hated the idea of compromise. He despised it with all his heart.

More than that: I think there is good reason to assume that--to a certain degree at least--he despised outward things by and large. I may perhaps even admit that Calvin had some fairly good "excuse" for despising them, at least considerably more excuse than may be accredited to quite average human beings. Why?

The reason is simple. In the first place, Calvin was a pioneer in a peculiar revolutionary movement. This fact should always be kept in mind as a mitigating circumstance. The Great

Reformation brought a great spiritual crisis to many individuals. This might happen to any person at such a tempestuous time, but particularly to those who naturally tended rather toward a certain inward disruption. In fact, the Reform movements of the 16th century meant an incredibly violent controversy in the deepest religious views of a whole culture and a whole epoch. Implacable opposites were at grips with each other, to an extent as never before seen. And Calvin was right in the surf of the seething tempest of that ravaging turmoil.

I have mentioned it before, but it can hardly be too emphatically pointed out: The Reformation was a special reaction of the most vehement type. A reaction against what? To a large extent, just against outward things, against the superficial, in religious ceremonies and in human lives! That superficiality had, in fact, reached a notorious climax. Now it was violently rejected--even by outstanding personalities within the Catholic clergy. Still more violently by the Lutheran Protestants, of course. But most violently of all by the Reformed Church, Calvin's Church.

In violent reactions, however, we have seen one thing to be almost inevitable: Their men will, almost invariably, tend to adopt a rather disruptive pattern of behavior. That is the pattern of going to extremes. The pioneers of the Reformation would have been well-nigh superhuman if they had proved a total exception to this rule. It is true, you may object here: They would have need of no more "superhumanity" than what can come to the rescue of any man allied with Jesus Christ. That is true enough. For man's humanity united with God's divinity renders man omnipotent, nothing less than that. He has all the unlimited powers of heaven at his disposal for the purpose of overcoming his own human weakness. On the other hand, however, it is also true that we should never fail to be tolerant. We should recognize the special hardships and the special temptations to which people of a different epoch and under different circumstances happened to be exposed.

We have already seen how even Luther was here in the danger zone. He, too, was certainly a valiant representative of a wholesome reaction against a prevailing evil in the contemporary Church. Even faithful Catholics had, at this juncture, become painfully concerned about a perilous gliding out, of the medieval Church, into the quagmire of self-salvation and self-righteousness. But just in that heat of a legitimate reaction¹ against formalism and the "thralldom of external works," Luther was tempted to despise actions and to grant them almost no place whatsoever in the work of salvation.

Sufficient evidence of this is found in a well-known fact: The German reformer actually had the most serious difficulty in accepting one of the books of the New Testament canon as the inspired Word of God. What book should that be? There is one apostle who has particularly much to say in favor of those outward manifestations in human life which in Christian terminology are called "works". We shall soon give particular analysis to some most pertinent points in the Epistle of James, the apostle who has the boldness to state--in no ambiguous terms--the excellence and prime importance of just works. So far, a mere glance at the second chapter--verses 14, 17 and 22--enables us to understand Martin Luther's uneasy feelings, in fact, his predicament,--and his angry reaction. The least that can be said is: those peculiar Bible texts certainly do not seem too well adapted to help a gallant warrior such as Luther in his inexorable battle against the servitude of self-justification, a pseudo-justification through the contribution of purely human efforts.

¹I do not say a "legitimate heat."

We, therefore, understand Luther's reaction perfectly. Both he and his French colleague were right in the heat of a gigantic battle. Any praise of personal human actions must have sounded, in their ears, almost as the flute of the papacy, or as the treacherous voice of the evil one himself. For what was their constant fear? It was that their respective congregations might be tempted to infer that those pitiable works of their own could, after all, provide them with some morsel of proper merit or proper righteousness.

And what could we expect Calvin's reaction to be, relative to the theoretical possibility of a free will of any kind or in any degree? He would turn against it with exasperation. Seriously consider the alternative of a compromise?--Oh, never? Even in purely external matters, a tentative concession of that order would seem to him to involve potent danger. It would mean an unheard-of independence granted to a vain-glorious humanity. Why should man be suffered to say braggingly: "I have performed this outward action, at least, of my own accord!" No, no, even that little admission would be too great an honor, too high a merit, for man.

So much for the mitigating circumstances of Calvin, the tremendously challenged and vehemently exposed warrior in the hot battlefield of theological warfare.

But here I must add still another most weighty consideration: Calvin had the notorious disadvantages of just belonging to the typically introvert type of human personality. I have given much study to the various facts indicating this typical introversion, in my psychological and literary dissertation dealing with this topic.(1) In his life, as well as in his literary production, I have found sufficient confirmation of my theory that Calvin possessed the handicaps--as well as the notorious assets--of a typical schizothyme (if we may use Kretschmer's terminology, without subscribing, for that matter, to the psycho-physiological implications of his theory).

Calvin belonged to that type of human being. Any amount of hectic activity in his life is entirely insufficient to disprove that fundamental fact. But a person of that type is bound to have particular difficulty in openly confiding in anything that is typically "outward". And the inevitable consequence is a corresponding difficulty in appreciating "outward things".

But without a due appreciation of "the outward things" it is also very difficult to appreciate, to the full, man's remaining honour and worthiness in the midst of his abysmal dishonor and unworthiness. Notice one thing however: I do not for a moment imagine that Calvin applies himself to the invention of such devices as the doctrine of predestination or the doctrine of the totally bound will just for the purpose of degrading man. Rather, he does it for the purpose of exalting God.

Not for a moment can we doubt the pure and good motives of both Luther and Calvin. At the root of their most rigid doctrines on God and men there is wholehearted allegiance to God, a humble commitment to the will of the Supreme One. In his Institutes Calvin stresses the capital importance of just this spirit of Christian humility and unquestioning surrender to the counsel of God. This is the only way of knowing what can be known:

"The will of God is the supreme and sovereign rule of justice, and that to such a point that we must consider everything He wills in the following manner: It is just for the simple reason that He wills it.

However, people sometimes ask: Why has God done such or such a thing? To this one has to answer: Because He willed it. Some may pass beyond this, asking: Why did He will it? That is asking something greater and higher than God's will. But such a thing cannot be found. Man's temerity should

rather moderate itself. It should not be so eager to seek what does not exist. For thereby it runs the risk of not finding what does exist."(1)

So Calvin has radically abandoned the proud rebellion of the self-confident humanist, who claims that his reason should clearly understand every point of the teachings of God, before he can make up his mind to believe in them and act accordingly. Calvin is the man of action. Once he has accepted the doctrine of predestination, he becomes restlessly active on the side of that doctrine, and the aim of his activity is to make God supreme in all respects.

I think here is a clear and unprejudiced view of the favorable sides-- the excellent sides--of the uncompromising spirit. But at the same time I know that there are other sides. And this, too, is important to remember as we approach a salient point. That is a point which might allow some special light be be thrown upon a special phase of that peculiar compromise I called "the third alternative".

1Instit. Chret., III, 23,2.

Chapter VI

THE "TANGIBLE FACTS" OF A DUALISM IN MAN'S ETHICAL NATURE

Have we now reached any actual conclusions making it easier to answer our original question: "Is there a radical dualism in the moral nature of man, according to Christian anthropology"?

I here assume "dualism" to mean approximately the same as it did in the philosophical anthropology of old. That is: there is one part of man fundamentally good, or potentially capable of good; clearly separable from this, there is another part fundamentally evil, or at least impotent of good.

1. Dualism as a Merely Tentative Theory

Now some readers might like to infer that, according to that very criterion, we should have ample evidence already from the case of Calvin of a clearcut dualism in the way Christianity looks upon man in ethical respect. For, on the one hand we have seen a wonderful freedom, at least an undeniable residuum of that original nobility and glorious power in man to reach out for the lofty goals of his divine destiny; whereas, in another "part of his life", that same man has proved utterly incapable of exerting anything worthy of the designation "free will". (Was not that exactly the annihilating judgment passed, by the anthropological dualism of antiquity, against one "part" of the human being, namely the body. Bodies were, we remember, not only subject to all kinds of sordid carnal cupidities, and entirely blind to the superior light of the soul, but also absolutely incapable of redeeming themselves,--and therefore doomed to ultimate corruption.)

One modification, however, can hardly fail to attract the Christian historian's attention in this comparison. In fact, something has obviously been completely reversed: The part of man's nature that

Christians now look upon with considerable suspicion and deep-rooted pessimism and find inherently inert and irreconcilably evil, resides precisely in the inward, and in the most deeply mental. Classical dualism, on the other hand, usually seemed inclined to be very confident as far as that "spiritual" side of man was concerned, and looked upon man's body as the great source of evil.

This is an outstanding and most significant fact: Christians, with their invaluable heritage from theocratic Judaism, look upon the body in a more positive, a more realistic way than a pagan idealist did. Pagan dualism always despised the body. Christianity, however, regarded it as a marvel of God's creation,--and even as a temple of the Holy Spirit. In a similar way, physical labor was associated with a position of honor and dignity which pagan philosophers had never thought of giving to it.

And what is now the historical fact regarding the general views adopted regarding man's freedom of will? You may go to those Christian congregations of the present day springing directly out from the Reformation, a Reformation whose principal pioneers held such pessimistic views relative to that freedom. Well, you will generally find a noteworthy trend here: the great majority of Protestants today believe neither in predestination nor in the bound will, as Calvin and Luther did.

But the item with which I am primarily concerned is still the question of the comparative ethical freedom of man. I say comparative freedom. But just how far, then, is that freedom seen to reach, in practical reality (the only reality that ever meant anything to human life)?

In our theoretical schema, we suggested a while ago, in accordance with *Confessio Augustana*, that this freedom was limited to outward actions. But alas!--let us admit it frankly--that still leaves us as miserable victims to an unending battle with a certain dualism in the deepest heart of human ethics.

Please notice one curious fact that will never cease to astonish the student who tries to settle the questions of dualism in Christianity: At all times, and in all places, he will encounter profoundly Christian men and women whose internal harmony is not in the least disturbed by the gigantic and most formidable "problems" resulting from the idea that there is an ineradicable dualism inherent in man's ethical world. If those men and women knew something about that dualism, so convincingly expounded in theological theory, how then could they remain so happy and untouched? For we do assume that they are normal humans, don't we, both with regard to intellect and emotions. So, superficially considered, having to face such paralyzing degrees of "inner unfreedom" as dualism would assume, they ought to become utterly despondent. But what happens? So far from showing any symptoms of interior disruption these genuine children of the Christian spirit remain harmonious and undisturbed. (This reminds me of certain rare birds, examined by hyper-modern research. Our scientific experts are inclined to state that, according to the known laws of aero-dynamics, those creatures ought not to be able to take off and fly. Evidently, however, the birds themselves do not know about those fatal laws of modern scientific research. So they just take off and fly beautifully, anyway).

I can think of only two possible explanations here: Either that alleged radical dualism of Christian anthropology in ethical respect is just an illusion. Or, at least, its problem aspect is an entirely illusory aspect. In the latter case, divine Providence must have ways of dissolving intransigent and conflict-laden opposites which sophisticated human logic does not know.

Of course, one may, with the existentialist thinker Gabriel Marcel, say that, to a Christian, the problem aspect is always an illusory one. The Christian knows no problems, properly speaking. He knows only mysteries. We shall see later to what extent that is the angle from which the true child constantly tends to view everything he meets in that peculiar world of his. We shall also see to what

extent he persists in that "mystery angle", without abandoning in the least the strange rock-bottom realism of his inherent child-likeness. That is the most astounding fact in the whole matter.

But let us, so far, just calmly enjoy observing how nicely my whole "separate-regions theory", so painfully elaborated by me a moment ago, now finishes by simply vanishing into thin air. Let us delight in seeing how airy, and unnecessary, it becomes--in front of a peculiarly Christian, a peculiarly child-like, attitude toward the question of a potent versus an impotent human will.

2. The Daring Suggestion of a "Co-operation" between "Two Wills"

Christianity says--and this must certainly be registered on the side of the impotence or servitude of the will:

"The unaided human will has no real power to resist and overcome evil." Notice the word unaided. That implies something very essential and very Christian: There is the possibility of an aid. Often there is even the mention of a co-operation. That may be still more suggestive, and equally Christian. It implies two persons working and "willing",--both at the same time: on the one side God, on the other side man.

But why not first go right down to the very abysmal depths of moral impotence and heart-rending disruption that exist in a human soul on the battlegrounds of good versus evil. A brief passage, from the pen of a modern Christian who knows this battle, will describe for us the dilemma we all know about from our own daily lives:

"Many are inquiring: `How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?`--You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life in sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you."¹

Everything in the pathetic realism of that snapshot from human life, as it must have appeared to millions of tired fighters in the age-old arena of idealist endeavor, seems to invite to despair. But then the tone suddenly changes. And it is a genuine tone of Christian orthodoxy, and today quite generally accepted by successors of both Luther and Calvin. The very next words of the same text run as follows: "You need not despair".

Why not? The reasons given would perhaps be somewhat surprising to the audience Calvin used to instruct, admonish, and edify. I do not say that his instruction, admonition and edification was without its blessed results for the kingdom of God, but I do say that same special notes were strikingly different from Calvin's way of expressing ideas:

"What you need to understand, is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart. You cannot of yourself give to God its affections, but you can choose to serve him. You can give Him your will. He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him; your thoughts will be in harmony with Him."²

As far as man's intrinsic worthiness and intrinsic power is concerned, this only repeats a sad old story, one may say: Man has no freedom to boast of. He does not possess, in himself, the tiniest bit of the basic moral

freedom; that is, the freedom to be good. Man cannot, of his own accord, assert himself as really free in the sense that he can make up his mind to do good and then do it. Therefore man can only be one thing: a slave.

1E. G. White: Steps to Christ, p. 45

2E. G. White: Steps to Christ, p. 45

3. Man's Only Ability and Only Right So Far: To Be a Slave

But let us look at this only ability of man: What if that should happen to be, after all, a sort of point of departure for something further, something new and remarkable. Here I want to look at myself as I am. Miserable creature though I may be, I still vindicate my "abilities: and my "rights" where I still seem to have some left. Candidly and humbly I bow down to the cave-bottom reality of my utter nakedness and my utter misery. I willingly admit that my status is that of a mere slave. Whatever I do, I turn out to be this, and nothing but this: a slave.

So this I assert as my only ability. But I also assert a singular favor in that same context. God has certainly had pity on me. For he has granted me the privilege of choosing the house of my slavery, and the kind of my slavery. I need not necessarily be a slave under Satan. I may just as well be a "slave under Christ."

So I simply avail myself of that incredible choice. I resolutely choose to be the slave of Jesus Christ. But to be the slave of Christ means to yield completely to the will of Christ. And, if my total submission thus becomes a submission to Christ, then something strange comes out: That submission itself soon reveals itself as a virtual freedom. Thanks to a miraculous intervention, a creative act on the part of my Maker and Redeemer, I am made a participant in the power of God, the only true power in the universe, namely agape. As long as this is kept burning in the heart, even the greatest sacrifice is made meaningful, and therefore light. This does not in any way mean that the battle has come to an end. But that, too, has become tinted by the same meaningfulness. So, far from being a tragedy, an endless evil, it has become "the good fight of faith" (1Tim.6:12). The eternal life is something one energetically must "lay hold on" (Ibid.). It demands the exertion of a will-power embracing man in his totality, the last fibers of his fighting endurance. Only a weakness-conscious humanity, made almighty through its intimate union with divinity, can stand the stress.

What a glorious and thrillingly dramatic category of "slavery" we here have received the grace to choose. And how infinitely different from the deadening dullness of a drudgery we had the grace to decline. That difference is understandable. For what could one expect to happen to the man who "places his will on Satan's side"? What prospects could such a poor creature have of "exerting his will power"? Actually he has had his will on that side all the time. It is naturally there. Automatically he has been gliding down, along with a sombre pack of devils and demons, throughout his sinful existence. I do not even care to mention the word "cooperation" in cases of that order. That would be too nonsensical.

A crowd of God-forsaken personality-deprived creatures, all rushing down the same incline, are not intelligently spoken of as mutually cooperative, are they. The inclined plan simply is not the proper place for active cooperation. No, to "work together" and to "help one another" those are actions of the up-hill type, aren't they?

We are encouraged to exert our will, just as we exert faith. There is something wonderful happening to us as we do this. But exertion certainly is not a thing that is likely to happen in an environment of absolute passivity, of utter automatism; that is, the environment we may share with the evil one. It is together with Christ we have that positive experience of a liberation from the deadlock of inertia and will-lessness.

I do not imagine that a human intellect is able to reach the point where it can perfectly grasp the philosophy of salvation in such a way that it finds nothing more to puzzle over in this sublime field of knowledge. But I do think that I have been aided by God's gradual revelation to have some illuminating glimpses of fascinating aspects of the science of salvation.

4. We Must Be Willing to Be Made Willing

Here I would like to pay particular attention to a formulation found in the writings of the same author. It says that in order to have that great liberation we are here speaking about, realized in our lives, we must "be willing to be made willing." For clarity's sake I shall quote this passage in its context:

"We cannot, of ourselves, conquer the evil desires and habits that strive for the mastery. We cannot overcome the mighty foe who holds us in his thrall. God alone can give us the victory. He desires us to have the mastery over ourselves, our own will and ways. But He cannot work in us without our consent and cooperation. The divine Spirit works through the faculties and powers given to man. Our energies are required to co-operate with God." (Mount of Blessing, p. 142).

What we find duly stressed here is (1) that the evil force against which we have a life-and-death battle, is not a mere shadow. It is not "automatism" in the sense of a sheer nothingness we need not worry about. It is not a mere "zero" in the sense of an impersonal abstraction. No, the evil one is an active person, in the sense of a most negative personalism, furiously intent upon working out our perdition. (2) God's positivity is the diametrical opposite to this, in the sense that His personality is characterized by an entirely opposite urge: He wants us to be free, in every possible realistic sense of the term. There is nothing He is more bent upon achieving, even through the greatest sacrifice on His own part, than precisely that restored total freedom of man as an intelligent creature of God. In fact, to such an extent does He insist on this as His eternal plan for man, that He cannot even now, for one single moment, abandon His original divine counsel of regarding man as, in an essential respect, an autonomous being, a creature endowed with will-freedom, so precisely not an automaton, not a playball that can be cast hither and yon, as anyone might find it in his own good pleasure to do. Even God Himself does not for a moment take the liberty to manipulate man, treating him as an "it". By so doing He would have indicated something terrible, namely that He had withdrawn from man the dignity of will-freedom. But this He has not done, not even to the crudest sinners. God be praised.

And now to the continuation of our quotation, which contains the strange formulation already mentioned:

"The victory is not won without much earnest prayer, without the humbling of self at every step. Our will is not to be forced into cooperation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. The stronghold of Satan would not be broken. The will must be placed on the side of God's will. You are not able, of yourself, to bring your purposes and desires and inclination into submission to the will of God; but if you are "willing to be made willing", God will accomplish the work for you, even "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. 10:5. Then you will "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil 2:12, 12.(1)

1Notice the two wills encountering each other in this sentence: Man must "be willing" to be "made willing". The first part is man's willingness (willing). The second part is God's intervention in the process. It is through the Creator's almight that the miracle is produced which makes man willing; that is, transforms his deepest heart with such a realistic transformation that he is made 100 per cent willing. That is the real willingness, the willingness that counts. But notice, also, one strange and significant fact here: We said: "the first part" of the sentence, and "the second part", almost as if full realism self-evidently authorized us to make a definite distinction here between one "part" of the process where exclusively man's willingness (man's initiative, man's force) were upon the scene, and "another part" where exclusively God's willingness (God's initiative, God's force or "compulsion") were upon the scene. Of course this is a bold simplification of the real facts. It is an artificial schema serving one purpose only: to bring home to the reader's mind the tremendous idea, once more, of a co-operation, not a "co-operation" where man and God "take turns", as it were, in being exclusively upon the scene. That would indeed be a very foolish notion of both man and God. The reality is a thousand times more fascinating than that. For, of course, from the very beginning "Man's willingness" is something that is aided along by God

There is a remarkable togetherness of apparent opposites in this "willingness to be made willing". In reality it is the same doubleness we find in the statement: "The will (of man) must be placed on the side of God's will". What kind of autonomy or self-determination is this? Who is the one that decides? Of course it cannot be denied that man decides. But what he decides is to let God decide. In other words, man does actively make a choice. In fact, it is the greatest choice he could ever have it in his power to make. But that choice is to let God choose for him. And what God chooses for man--and is now perfectly able to choose in man's behalf, without cancelling that creature's dignity of personal initiative (will-freedom)--is to change him radically.

So, the thing happening here is a striking coincidence. It is the great case in man's world where autonomy meets heteronomy. In what? In theonomy, if we may use the word coined by Tillich. But that absolute rule of God is the strangest absolutism the world has ever seen. It is a God-rule (theocratic government) in which the governed ones are at perfect freedom to govern themselves. God's surprising way of making subjects--a people totally subjected to him, controlled by him--is to enable each single subject to control himself. The first step in His plan to "re-subjugate" man is to liberate him. He liberates man perfectly in every domain in which he has, heretofore, been in miserable servitude. To his greatest astonishment, man finds himself liberated at the very moment when he makes the decisive choice to be a bondman, namely the bondman of Christ.

However, the astounding thing about that instantaneous liberation of the human will (making him free to do good) is this: It knows no limits of any kind. This is the great empirical fact that always overwhelms a sinful human being at the very moment when he finally takes courage (faith) and simply steps out to exert his will freedom, as promised by God.

I continued and inspired by Him from second to second. It would never come to fruition in man's life at all if God did not employ all the attractions that infinite love can invent in order to encourage man to make his decision in favor of yielding his will to God. On the other hand, as far as the "second part" is concerned, of course exactly the same "co-operation," the same mutual willingness is demanded all the time. God could not for a moment make you willing if you did not permit Him to do so. Constraint is out of the question.

Let us be somewhat more specific regarding the details of that strange event. Where did that man find himself? He found himself at the edge of the deep blue sea. Or should we rather say his deep Red Sea (or his Jordan). That will be more evocative, to the Bible reader, of the drama with which God confronts the man whom He really wants to make free. God asks man to exert his freedom of putting his feet forward exactly at the point where he happens to be standing now. From that point onward God is the One who "worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). That is the process called "to be made willing". It is not, at any moment, an arbitrary pushing, on the part of God, reducing man to an automaton. No, it is the creative grace of God working in man, virtually enabling him to "will and do", himself, whatever should be willed and done. That is a progressive liberation of the human will, a liberation in which the problematic question of "how far" never arises at all.

In other words, man does not at any moment suddenly find himself knocking his head against some formidable "wall", some limitative "border line", marking a new and different "department" bearing the description "locked". There is no such department. The human will simply is not confronted with that impenetrable "inward region", in front of which it is bound to collapse, as our previous tentative metaphor suggested. On the contrary, what obviously happens to the man who has linked his will to God's will, is that his property of will-freedom finds itself imperceptibly enlarged. How much? Exactly as much as is required by the prevailing conditions of life at any given moment. The freedom is simply there to be exerted.

But what, then, has happened to an old phantom we used to call "the problem of an ethical dualism in the Christian's life"? Evidently that myth has vanished into thin air. The theoretical figure of the "two realms," one with freedom and one without, is not needed any more.

Of course, this was also Luther's experience. Was it the experience of Erasmus as well? There seems to be more reason to doubt that. Boisset puts it this way:

"It is the existential experience of Calvin (l'experience vecue par Calvin) which explains the fact that, from being an Erasmian, he became a Lutheran. About the liberty of man he will now say that it is a reality in the same measure as that man has become 'a new creature'; that is, to the extent that man's will corresponds to God's will, coincides exactly with it, identifies itself with it-- through grace. And that coincidence is possible for the Christian only, i.e., for a man liberated from the servitude of sin, and attached to the infallible will to do good, which is the will of God. The sum total of all this becomes: man is never independent, for either he is a slave of evil, or he is homme lige of good, obligated toward God."(1)

But what kind of magic is this? Here a human person was recently characterized by having no free will, no essential moral freedom at all. Suddenly he is found to be in possession of a perfectly free will. How could such a radical change be explained?

5. How Subjugation Turns Into Freedom

The Gospel, I think, gives an explanation of that phenomenon as reasonable as one can expect. Moral impotence, or the servitude of the human volition, wherever it asserts itself in human lives, is due to just one thing: the abnormal and accidental phenomenon of sin. Sin is able to triumph in man only after it has enfeebled the human mind; that is precisely by first destroying that original God-given liberty of volition which, in its fulness, constituted the glory and dignity of mankind.

In order to lift man out of this degrading, dishonoring, and most painful situation, Christianity has a remedy which, to man, may seem the last extreme of absurdity: It demands total subjugation (apparently a perfect synonym for servitude). To God and to His law!

1Jean Boisset: *Sagesse et Saintete*, 1959, p. 200.

One thing, however, is seldom kept duly in mind: That God of the Christian to whom he submits, is the God of Love. And His law is the law of Liberty. Subjection to such elements of fundamental goodness in life cannot be subjection in any negative sense of the term. For total human beings it is, on the contrary, the congenial soil in which their freedom is born and reared. The spirit of subjection is the surest preservative for their totality, or the condition for its restoration, once it has been lost. To be restored to the integration here referred to, and thus completely become one with the spirit of total submission to the will of God, this means, in the case of man, to be restored to himself. This includes restoration to the fullest glory and dignity of perfect will-freedom, with which man was originally created.

So FREEDOM/SUBJUGATION is obviously the great new synonymy we have to become familiar with. And this is no absurdity. We must again simply know what our words stand for. Our minds must learn to accept that synonymy as an entirely reasonable thought-form in the kingdom of God. Thus we shall no longer be haunted by any artificially construed notion of an "invincible dualism" in Christian ethics.

"Freedom" is a very ambiguous term. In a given case it might mean the most unworthy forms of human thralldom.

At last we have to return to one crucial question of human ethics. It is one which the committed Christian simply cannot permit himself to push under the rug any longer. I am referring to that searching question which Luther and Calvin failed to answer in any satisfactory way: How could it be reasonable on the part of God, how could it be in harmony with His perfect ethical integrity, to consider an entirely unfree human creature as still responsible?

Have, we in our turn, refused to face the rigors and the blunt realism of that question? Or, on the other hand, have we here been so anxious to vindicate the cause and good reputation of God that we have devised some scheme of easy compromise, placing ourselves fully on the side of the radical

humanist, saying: "Man is good at bottom. So, when he comes to his own good self, he does have the inherent forces in him to choose--and do--good. That is why he is responsible!" Is that proud humanism our real answer to the crucial question? It would seem a quite grievous matter if we should thus have adopted a standpoint which truly merits the relentless condemnation, not only of the old reformers, but of God Himself. Do not take this to mean that we fail to discern any beauty or goodness in the humanist's heart.

There can hardly be any doubt that both the mind and the heart of Erasmus were profoundly possessed by magnificent ideas of human justice and human reason. Let us simply quote what that scholarly "heretic" stated as his sincere conception of a dignified liberum arbitrium in man:

"By free will we understand a force of human volition thanks to which man can attach himself to the things contributing toward his salvation, or turn away from them."⁽¹⁾

Is not this in fair harmony with the fundamental idea we have already accepted as fully orthodox? That is, the idea that man himself must make a choice. He must choose to "attach himself to the things contributing toward his salvation". In our mind that would essentially mean to attach oneself to the will of God, to the aid of God. These are things man can decide to cast his lot with, "or turn away from them". In fact, I would not even blame Erasmus for calling this a "contribution" of some sort; whether or not it is a contribution, depending on the way the term is conceived in the individual case. Is it conceived by the "contributor" in terms of a positive merit, something he is proud of? Or is it conceived in terms of grace, something for which he is heartily thankful? In the latter case it would immediately mean a downright obligation toward God, the One to whom man is thankful, and accordingly most realistically obliged.

1 Diatribe, 19/7.

If God Himself condescends to speak to His children, even calling us "contributors", or "co-operators", then why should not we have the courage to avail ourselves of the same "figures of speech"? Of course, provided that we are realistic enough, right in the midst of our childlike play, to know what they stand for!

I cannot definitively sum up the results of my study on moral freedom before I have added my last and rather scandal-reeking argument, which is a critical analysis of the theological dualism of "Faith-versus-Works". But, I may already anticipate the "scandal" by stating something that certain minds may interpret as "touching the confines of heresy": The Christian simply has to turn to the tiny tasks of his immediate vicinity. He has to decide for himself, whether he should take his courage in both hands, that is make certain initial steps into the field of his known duty, as a human being placed before God. This is where His Creator and Redeemer stands eagerly waiting to meet him. Overflowing with tender solicitude, the Father clasps the little hand of the faltering but positively responding child, simply leading him, from there, all the way up to the final goal. Notice: The Father does not push him, or drag him; he just gently leads him.

The liberation of the human will, under these circumstances, is a graciously progressing reality. The liberated one need not worry about it one bit. He should only be careful to keep in mind: he will never come to a point on his path where that endlessly expanding freedom can exist independently, man having his way separate from God's way. No, to man one thing should be clear: God is his Way, his

Reality, his Life. The very environment of man is God. "For in Him we live and move and have our being". Acts 17:28.

To the one who has once said yes to real existence, God is his only power, his only hope. That does not mean a small power and a small hope. It means an infinite power and an infinite hope. From the life of such a one, the problem aspect has vanished completely. But the mystery aspect has not vanished. God's ways are eternally mysterious.

Chapter VII

ARE FAITH AND WORKS SEPARABLE ELEMENTS IN MAN'S LIFE ACCORDING TO BIBLICAL ANTHROPOLOGY?

Or is this simply another case of false dualism? Is it once more our lurking heritage of Hellenist thinking which fools us into splitting up human totality? What was the first attitude of the great reformers toward dualist disruption by and large? First, were they dualists in the common fields of pagan platonic dualism where almost any able theologian today would be quick to recognize dualistic trends? Second, were the main reformers led astray by such "double vision" (the dualist's disruptive views) in fields of pagan bewilderment where even our learned experts in theology and philosophy do not seem to discern between pagan spiritualism and Christian realism?

1. Dualism Still Going Strong

We know that Calvin was very heavily under the influence of dualist philosophy in one instance: In his *Psychopannachie*, he put down statements that actually became decisive for the official course Protestantism was destined to take, as regards its general teachings on the state of the dead. Here the French reformer definitely took his stand on the side of platonic body-mind dualism: An inward element of man (his soul), according to this, could perfectly well be separated from the outward element (the bodily expression of that soul). Man could go on living, in a bodiless state.

And now, what about faith versus works? Can we perceive in "faith" that same "blessedly independent" interiority in man which never failed to call forth sentiments of approval, and even veneration, in our philosophy-inspired theologians? On the other hand, would it be possible to see in "works" a typical representative of that exterior matter which never failed to arouse their suspicion and often their contempt?

My question is a most serious one. For it extends to a new field (or what will immediately be considered as a new field), the classical controversy between dualist and monist views. And to biblical theology this is an enormously important field. So the significance of the question about totality versus disruption in human life is bound to be correspondingly intensified.

Do faith and works, considered in the light of simple Christian realism, reveal themselves as nothing but two aspects of one and the same reality, precisely as in the case of the human mind and the human body? If so, then the "bottomless chasm"--and the "inexorable fight"--between inward faith and outward action are bound to be unveiled as just another case of something entirely imaginary and man-

made, rather than something realistic and God-given. An endless quarrel through centuries of theological dispute would thus simply be rightly passed off as vain nothingness. I would hesitate to say: ridiculous nonsense. For the subject field is here too heavily laden with human destiny to consider it in an ironical or light-minded way under any circumstances. It is a serious matter, indeed, to have the very substance of religious faith simply evaporized through a subtle theory of philosophical spiritualization. For if outward action is the only medium through which a living faith can realize itself at all, then it must be a crime or a tragedy to heap contempt and calumny on this outward aspect of the faith-works totality.

How much can we base anything trustworthy on the historical fact that Christians, from generation to generation, have kept repeating: faith versus works? True, if we go to Martin Luther, the great German reformer, we do find a man of sturdy thoroughness in matters of Christian religion who may often appear to be quite firmly convinced that those two elements do have a generally valid relationship of essential opposition to each other. Faith is the admirable top value. Works are the despicable non-value, nay anti-value.

And what extreme monist would ever dare to blame that valiant warrior for the way he expressed his views on the topic of works versus faith? We should not forget that, as a particularly exposed pioneer of the "Protestant Revolution" (as his opponents have preferred to call it), Luther was fighting a life-and-death battle, a battle against the futility of human merits. Protestants in those days thought of this battle as decisive and inevitable. Outwardly, at least, our days are more peaceful ones. There has been ample time now to give more calm consideration to the questions under debate. But are there more clear and consistent lines drawn up now than there were when the battle was raging at its most violent stages? There would seem to be some valid excuses for the fact that one does not find perfect clarity and consistency in the heat of supertension peculiar to a battlefield. But what excuse do you and I have, if unclearness and inconsistency go on to be the characteristics of our Protestant credo?

Anyway, there should be nothing to brag about on our part if we now settle down to a reasonable and fruitful discussion of the most combustible themes of Protestant theology more than 300 years after the reformers laid down their weapons. The first reasonable question demanding a reasonable answer may be: Is there any evidence that faith, "the inward thing", has happened at all to any human being, at any time, without a minutely corresponding amount of outward expression--that is "work"--going along with it? (Not "following after it"! For that is not monism in the realistic Biblical sense.)

2. Does Faith Need a Body to Live and Move In?

It is sometimes contended that faith in Christ is possible without any opportunity to unfold in external acts. But is this true?

Let us look for the most illuminating examples in the history of human psycho-physical reality. Some will here once more rush back to the precarious case of the thief on the cross. Their main objective seems to be to demonstrate that a life in outward Christian activity is not indispensable, or of any capital importance at all. Inward faith, they say, is all that is needed, and it does not demand any material medium in which to express itself or realize itself.

Strange, by the way, that so many should insist upon choosing, for their negative demonstration, the example of a man who distinguished himself as one of the most dramatic revivalist

preachers in Christian history: the thief on the cross. Even as late as the present day that man makes a marked contribution with his exceptionally efficient preaching: for an indelible record of his "sermon" was made on the spot, and the publicity it was given reaches all the way down to the 20th century. No one was to have any valid reason for doubting the dynamic expression which was to be the audible and visible counterpart of that disciple's wholehearted faith.

But why not here rather choose the theoretical example of some man whom we assume to have been saved in the very last second of the "twelfth hour". A merely theoretical assumption is all we can permit ourselves to make, it is true, regarding the salvation of that soul. For here we are expressly dealing with the extreme case of a person notoriously deprived of both the time and the tangible media for communicating his faith to any external world of potential observers on earth before he was engulfed and abruptly silenced by his devouring grave. We here boldly assume that such a belated conversion is possible. Well, if so, then who among us would have the temerity to claim that even this person's assumed inner faith-- the faith that is strong enough to save him--was doomed to remain without any tangible exteriorization, without any palpable "body", without its behavioral counterpart? After all, what do I know about another being's deepest acts of expressing himself? In fact, what do I actually know about my own even? Is not the very fact that he prayed--or sighed--to God, an expression, fervent with life and movement? I must simply assume, in accordance with the strange principle of psycho-physical oneness and interaction, that, to every reality of inward faith, there is an exactly corresponding outward manifestation of that faith. The fact that it may not happen to be a manifestation reaching the limited sphere of my perception, does not prove anything at all. That perfect one-ness, right in the midst of an intriguing doubleness, permits me to assume that it all unfolded, and all was cut off, simultaneously, at the moment of death, only to resume its unfathomable two-face reality at the moment of resurrection. From that moment onward, there will be time enough, indeed, for any human individual to go on unfolding the perfectly co-ordinated double-sidedness of his faith-works totality, as if there had not been any interruption at all.

If faith's most striking quality is just to burst into external action, then what power in heaven or on earth could be assumed to preclude such vital "bursting" out? Evidently that dynamic explosiveness is part and parcel of life itself. And why should we be so eager to deny the picture of life that we do have in front of us here all the time? The bare fact of the matter is that we are left without any evidence whatsoever that faith can happen at all in human beings without there being an exactly corresponding exteriorization in the form of "works". Simple every-day common sense would seem amply sufficient to entitle us to this assumption.

However, the only safe way for a Christian to arrive at dependable certainty about any issue of capital importance for salvation, must be to go to the Word. Are there any scripture texts in the NT canon that really elaborate on this question of dualism in our particular respect? If so, then that must be where we ought to go for firsthand enlightenment regarding even that problematic case of a "necessary dualism", the alleged "absolutely inevitable dualism in the very heart of Christian ethics". Let us keep firmly together some historical facts to start with:

What we all know fairly well is this: both before and after Luther's time there has been a considerable amount of controversy on the topic of faith and works. Of course one point did seem to be beyond dispute most of the time, or at least fairly well agreed upon. I am referring to the central statement of the Christian message to the world: in order that miserably disrupted human beings should be made really whole again, they must obtain one thing: the righteousness made available to them through the matchless sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But discord soon sprang up--even among sincere

Christians--on one essential point: Just how is that extraneous justice to be appropriated by man? Is it through "faith alone"? Is it through a "more active" type of personal attitude, sometimes described as "works"? Or is it through "partly faith and partly works"?

3. Was Faith Ever "Alone"?

Of course, we here find ourselves pretty well right in the midst of Luther's personal formidable dilemma. And we all know the solution at which he eventually arrived. At least we do know something definite about the way he expressed it: "Gerechtigkeit durch den Glauben allein." (Righteousness by faith alone). What does that actually imply in this context? If we say, in our Western, Greek-influenced culture, "the soul alone", "the soul exclusively", or "the soul purely", we do know, approximately, what Western trends of thought are liable to understand by such "pure-soulism". That spells dualism. Personally I might add: it spells psycho-physical disruption, and certainly not unity. It leaves no trace of wholeness in man's ideas about himself. Seen from the viewpoint of original Christianity, in fact, it is bound to mean a wholly unwarranted and most dangerous spiritualistic abstraction; in other words, a fateful pagan infiltration. This is bluntly what the doctrine of an inward soul, separable from its outward body, always means: pagan dualism, spiritualism short and sweet.

I have spoken about general trends of pagan dualism. And now to the specific case confronting us: Is such a non-Christian cultural influence noticeable in the case of Luther's famous "durch den Glauben allein"? I would naturally shy back from suggesting that Luther is a spiritualist and a dualist philosopher. And it would even be a doubtful thing to accuse him of being under the partial influence of such spiritualism and dualism without first giving a thorough study to the documents available in this respect. Under all circumstances it must be a most interesting and important task to find out, as far as possible, what Luther actually meant with his "sola fide" concept. It might be that his pointed "allein" in this present case must be relegated into a different category altogether. I would be glad to be able to say something like that about his anthropology.

In the first place, it should be noted that Luther himself openly admits that his translation has added the word "allein".

"It would have been pointless to tell me that the word `alone is not found in the Latin or Greek texts here, for I was well aware of it...But the word has to be added if the sense of the passage is to be expressed clearly and with proper force in German... `But', says someone, `it sounds bad, and people will understand it as meaning that they need not do good work'. My dear, let me ask you whether St. Paul scandalizes us less by adding `without the works of the law'? `By faith alone' is a formula which you might ingeniously get around and explain away: but this other formula, -- `without the works of the law' -- is so brutally explicit that no explanation can get around it." (Luther's open letter about the art of translating.)

Well, do these words testify that Luther had grasped the true meaning of Paul's language with such admirable clarity? Far from it. I shall now try to demonstrate for you how utterly confused the reformer was regarding certain aspects of Paul's theology. And if he was confused, then you and I might be equally confused. For we are just as far from Paul's cultural environment and his peculiar way of expressing himself as Luther was, or still farther.

Luther's confusion is best shown by his attitude toward another apostle, namely James. Let no one try to gloss over the historical facts in this field. Not that you and I, "progressive Protestants of the

twentieth century", have so much to boast of, compared to Luther, in any respect. I know of no denomination today, in fact, that has any reason to boast. On the contrary, I feel I should here rather ask a crucial question which might put us all to shame:

4. Could it be that the Very Presence of a Vehement Debate on Faith versus Works in a given Church is an Ominous Sign that an Anti-Protestant Philosophy of Platonic Spiritualism is Trying Hard to Extirpate All True Spirit of Reform?

Let us make a sincere effort to examine critically both our own thinking and that of Luther. What does the great reformer mean by that remarkable statement of his in the above quotation, that "Paul scandalizes us" with his formulation? Is the Pauline expression "faith without the works of the law" a substantially scandalizing one? Is it "irrational", as some modern Protestant theologians seem to enjoy finding features of downright irrationality in Christ's religion? I am referring to Nygren's famous description of the Christian Agape as a type of love entirely devoid of common sense reasoning. Is Paul's formula just as much an occasion for scandal, seen from the view-point of sound human reason, as Luther's formula "sola fide" appears to be? Let us have a long and particularly critical look at this most crucial question. For if biblical Christianity is all that scandalous and irrational, then I will never dare to state any more that it is a model of realism among religions. I must then simply stop expressing such childish nonsense the sooner the better.

So then, what do we imagine that Paul means by his term "the works of the law"? What does Luther think Paul means by that? What do you and I, theological exegetes of today, think he means?

Well, as far as I can see, there is no reason to doubt how Luther immediately interpreted this linguistic expression. To him those famous words of Romans 3:28 about the simple way in which man is justified, namely

"by faith without the works of the law" means exactly the same as

"by faith without works", -- short and sweet.

Well, if that really was what Paul meant, then Luther must have been perfectly right: Paul's words must then be scandalous indeed. If what Paul says is that man is "justified by faith without any works at all", then that must include all good works. And the logical assumption would be that faith can have an existence without good works, its natural counterpart.

Is that realism? No, that is spiritualism. It is Platonic dualism of the purest make. And since such pagan dualism does not otherwise find any place in the Bible, Paul must impress my logically reasoning mind as scandalous and irrational in the highest degree. And then I can also understand perfectly why Luther felt bold enough to add his word "allein".

"So halten wir dafur, dass der Mensch gerecht werde, ohne des Gesetzes Werke, allein durch den Glauben." Romans 3:28.

Luther would in that case be perfectly right in saying that his addition of this little word was by no means any more scandalous than Paul's expression; for that Pauline statement was bound to be just "brutally scandalous", and "so brutally explicit that no explanation can get around it."

Now then, our great question will be: Was Luther's interpretation right? Was his reasoning correct when he immediately assumed that what he had said was exactly the same that Paul had said? In other words, can we put a sign of equation between Paul's concept of "faith without the works of the law" and Luther's concept "faith alone", that is, sola fide in the sense of "nullis operibus", so "faith without works", barely and squarely?

As far as I can see, this sola fide, in terms of a faith without works, would convey a notion exactly as pagan and disruptive in its platonic idealism as the notion of a "soul without a body". It is bound to imply the abstracting dualism that advocates a sort of "pure spirit" faith.

Was Paul a victim of such Greek "pure-spirit-ism"? Did his anthropological views create in his mind the queer vision of some kind of faith without any bodily substance to it? By "bodily substance" I here mean, of course, some concrete action in which that faith could realize itself. Is Paul's concept of faith just an abstraction, some kind of bodiless specter, dangling in the air, precisely like Plato's "pure spirit"?

No, this would be contrary to what the greatest research experts in biblical anthropology, Catholic as well as Protestant, have arrived at regarding Paul. It would mean throwing overboard the most realistic findings constituting the result of minute scholarly efforts made over the last 100 years. On the contrary, the scholars are amazed to see how completely that man, in spite of his great conversance with Hellenist culture, managed to remain free from any infiltration of Greek dualism.

1 This would seem to furnish, all by itself, reasons enough for defending Paul's reputation as a philosopher adhering to ideas of human totality rather than inhuman disruption. A priori it would seem rather unfair to suspect that apostle of views of obvious splitness as serious as this. Above all it would appear terribly unfair to make assumptions of such pagan trends in Pauline philosophy without subjecting the apostle's notion -- or rather his linguistic formulation of such a notion -- (the "works of the law") to a thorough investigation.

5. A Fundamental Inquiry: What Does "Works of the Law" Mean in Paul's Vocabulary?

Our question now then will not be, in the first place, What does Luther mean, when he says "the works of the law"? Nor will it be, What do you and I mean when we use that term. True, those questions too are important enough for our study, and they must be given their proper answer at the proper time. But now, to begin with, this basic question: What did Paul mean? Or, generally speaking, What does Holy Writ mean by an expression it here introduces into its peculiar vocabulary: the deeds of the law?

We here have to do with a combination of words. What do those words stand for, -- singly and together?

"Works", as a general concept, is of course a neutral term. Works may be good, or they may be evil. And now, what about the word "law"? This, as well, has more than one connotation. It may mean something good or something bad, as the case turns out to be. That is probably the great difficulty about the term "law" as a theological concept, and the cause for much confusion.

The law as such is inherently good. Even Paul himself declares that openly: "The law is holy and just and good." Romans 7:12. This goodness of the law is something most of us have got more or less firmly impressed upon our minds in spite of all trends of lawlessness in our culture. So some kind of subconscious notion seems to keep playing a certain game with our conscious mind: "Why, then, should not 'the works of the law' also signify at bottom, simply good works?"

Well, who decides the meaning of any special term? It ought to be the author who has used that combination of words in this or that special context, -- do you not agree? He must know what he intends that expression to signify. Not you and I should decide this arbitrarily.

In other words, in this special case we must not permit ourselves to be led astray by our otherwise most correct notion that God's laws are good. For that idea of fundamental goodness is not particularly helpful to us when it comes to acquiring an accurate notion of what Paul specifically means by his peculiar idiom: the works of the law.

Does Paul by this mean good works? By no means. Let us do our best to submit humbly to the author's consistent intention here. Let us go to the expression in its original Greek form. There it reads: *choris ergon nomou*, without works of law. In this case we must yield to the simple fact that the word "works" (*erga*) has been decisively qualified by a special genitive: *nomou* (of law).

Is that qualification in a positive or a negative direction? It is negative. Can we be sure about that? Well, you need not read very far in that famous epistle to the Romans before you can clearly see the point. When Paul says "*erga nomou*" then he always understands something definitely negative. For what is the state of those works?

6. The Basic Qualities of the Works of the Law

They are dead, hence absolutely worthless. Worse than that: they are something bringing a direct curse upon man's head. (Galatians 3:10.) Could anything be expressed in a more clearly negative way? And the reason for all this negativity is more than evident. What is it? The works of the law are borne on wave-crest, of human pride. They are simply man-made. So precisely not produced by faith or any other God-given virtue. They are identical with paganism in its most deleterious form. We all know with what desperate earnestness both Luther and Calvin had to fight pagan humanism in their community.

Creaturely pride was at the root of the entire rebellion which is still having its terrible repercussions in our universe. Its essence is self-righteousness, self-salvation, the most stubborn unwillingness on the part of Eros to submit to the gentle principles of the law of love in terms of the Christian Agape. So the works of the law are simple self-aggrandizement, and as such they are the most dangerous pest in the history of Christian soteriology. It goes without saying that this special category of works is totally unfit to have any fellowship with Christian faith. To be sure, they do have the common characteristics of an outward "body". That is indisputable. But what kind of "body"? A foreign body. What does that imply about their relationship to genuine faith? It implies that they constitute nothing but an entirely artificial superstructure, as it were.

To understand this better, just think of a man who has had the misfortune of having a large portion of his skin burned. That skin is part and parcel of the human body, so a living and integrating part of the organism. Now, in order to become whole again that man has the unlucky idea to creep into

the hide of a dead animal. Will this restore living totality to him? Of course not. The dead hide will remain forever something altogether foreign, something artificially superadded.

Some of my student have obviously felt that the rather close parallel I venture to draw between the faith-works totality, on the one hand, and the soul-body totality on the other, might not be entirely justified. For the body, they would say, constitutes something undeniably good, doesn't it, something inalienably realistic in human life. What, in that body, could correspond to works in the negative sense, the vain and illusory sense, the depraved and hopelessly corrupted sense

7. The Deeds of the Law -- a Simple Corpse

This is not difficult to discover. The parallelism of the imagery is perfect indeed: To those rotten works of man's own righteousness corresponds one remarkable thing in the workshop of the physiologist: the corpse.

And it was just part of a corpse that the man who had burnt his skin, tried to creep into, namely the hide of a dead animal. This is what I mean by a foreign body here, something "artificially superadded". To that man's

life, such a desperate attempt could only mean one thing of course, namely an infinitely increased danger of infection or putrefication and an accelerated death.

Now, suppose again that the same man finally became wise enough to rid himself of the foreign skin with which he had tried to cover his sores: Could we consider this as a disruptive act of cutting away part of his own real entity as a human being? Of course not. Could we call that man a "dichotomist", a "disrupter of totality", "a false dualist" in his special field? No, no, that would be a total misunderstanding of the concept of totality, or the concept of disruption. True wholeness in life only gains by getting rid of false superstructures, by shedding dead hides.

And now to the spiritual field: Would it be reasonable to call Paul a representative of false dualism for the simple reason that he insisted upon throwing away the foreign body he calls the "works of law"? No.

What would first have to happen before we could rightly accuse him of such heterodoxy? There would have to be clear evidence that he had tried to separate from faith its real counterpart; that is, a category of works most realistically and organically interwoven with that faith. It would have to be evident that he looked with contempt and disgust upon works, regardless of kind!

He did not! On the contrary he speaks in a definitely positive way about the "endurance in good works" (Rom. 2:7). The KJV has rendered the singular of the Greek text here with "well doing", since "works" in English, in this sense, does not perhaps have any corresponding singular, although Col. 1:10 indicates that the translators do not seem to be entirely sure about this. Here the apostle encourages the flock to be "fruitful in every good work", 1 Thess. 2:17 is a similar case. In 1 Tim. 2:10, the "good works" are described as the thing that may properly serve as an adornment for the Christian! There is no risk of exaggeration in being "rich in good works" (I Tim. 6:18); and so on.

Accordingly, what Paul was so eager to cast off could not by any means be that category of works. What he resolutely and emphatically declined was not the works of faith, but rather the

superadded "foreign body" traditionally attached to faith, but not belonging there at all, namely man's constantly and shamelessly reappearing self-manufactured robe of righteousness: the deeds of the law. A total separation from that deadly burden was both natural and necessary in the deepest religious sense; so no matter of perverse splitness at all. And in all this Luther seems to have understood Paul perfectly, and agreed with him whole-heartedly.

8. Are Paul and James in Disagreement?

But--you may object--if Luther agreed so beautifully with Paul, then why did he not understand James equally well, and why did he not accept him as an outstanding authority in his field?

I say, without hesitation; an outstanding authority in his field. For here one thing should be duly noted: James is precisely the writer in the NT canon who makes that illustrious faith-versus-works dualism we are here speaking about his special topic for a thorough-going discussion.

In fact, against what should James be polemizing so severely in his second chapter, perhaps the most famous part of the whole epistle, if not just against that artificial duality (so dualism) falsely insinuated by fanciful human reasoning, or perhaps rather by a total lack of basic reasoning:

"If a brother or a sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled,--notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath no works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I shall show thee my faith by my works."

In other words: please show me that bodiless specter you call your "faith without works", and I shall show you something infinitely more substantial and realistic: a faith made substantial and realistic--by works.

The challenge here is not a delicately muffled one. And the first part of the passage quoted may sound like the sharpest irony. For what type of person is the apostle here describing? It is simply the "pure idealist" who seems to think he is actually "helping" the poor and suffering ones by means of a purely theoretical (abstracted) faith and a purely theoretical (abstracted) charity. This is the incredible dualism of "faith alone". I do not say the ridiculous dualism of "faith alone". For this is too tragic a concept to be laughable. And if there is a drop of irony in James' approach, it is an irony that is heartily solicitous to bring the dear lambs of the flock back to the sheltered fold of sound realistic thought and action.

How could Luther be so upset about this chapter? Did he feel that there was something there directly aimed at making fools of such sturdy Christian theologians as Paul--and himself? Now, of course, he was bound to find, in that chapter, words he had used himself in what he intended to be a most positive and dignified sense. Even the word "alone" comes up. James emphatically points out that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone", (i.e., a faith disengaged from the vital context of its corresponding works); at least no living thing can exist in that wretched state of "aloneness"; for faith without works (faith alone) is obviously nothing but a vain abstraction, a nasty trick of self-deception.

Evidently, Luther's concept of "faith alone" was not that empty abstraction of philosophical hocus pocus either. I see no reason to believe that his vision of faith was that of some discarnated

monster, or apparition, or ghost. This illusionism or magic simply does not seem to be in the German reformer's line of thinking. In fact, his mind-body realism seems to have been definitely stronger than Calvin's. Therefore he also rejects instinctively, as it were, the immortality doctrine taught by the Church. To him it is part of the "dung of papacy", for it is conducive to such pagan inventions as the purgatory myth. The pure-soulism of Greek spiritualism is not Luther's heritage. And his conception of the human soul is a fairly realistic and wholistic one. So why did he fail to see that faith, as well, is an interiority which is bound to have its corresponding exterior manifestation of God-given works, in order to take place at all? We do not know the full answer to this question; but we do know that this and other truths were kept in reserve for a later and extended phase of Protestantism. A new and still further enlightened generation of Protestants were one day to protest bravely against all disruptive anthropological trends in their minute and most insidious ramifications. Mind-body totality (and along with it any other facet of "exterior"- "interior" totality) still had to be pointed out in terms of its capital significance for the deepest and most central soteriological truths.

But so far the foreign corpuscles of disruption were still a fact. For a long time some large bodies of Lutherans were to find it extremely difficult to include implicit obedience to the commandments of the law of God in the web of their Christian totality. The fatally confusing dualistic connotations, with which the current formulations of a faith-works ideology of the new church seemed loaded, were a constant source of misconception about the core values in the gospel of salvation.

And that dualism is still notoriously alive today, precisely as it must have been in the days of James. Obviously he found it, and fought it, right in the midst of his own parish. I would not dare to make any attempt to measure the "relative seriousness" of different types of dualism. But to demonstrate the fact of their close relationship to each other turns out to be a task important enough.

9. Is Man's Faith More "Meritorious" Than His Works? Let us now only focus our attention on some simple facts showing how utterly groundless was Luther's suspicion regarding the intentions of the Epistle of James. What the reformer feared for his reform movement was that James' "strange" doctrine might induce some wavering members of Luther's Protestant congregation into dangerous papistic errors,--above all the idea that man, by means of his own external works, is able to accumulate some kind of personal merit, assuring for him the glory of salvation. Now, was this an idea logically devolving from the apostle's argument?

The very opposite could here be maintained: A strictly reasonable conclusion from the remarkable monism of James' faith-works concept would rather be as follows: Faith and works, being inseparably bound together, must--each one of them--follow the same principal rule. What do I mean? Well, one example of that "sameness" is revealed in the answer to the question, where does faith claim to have its origin? Exclusively in Christ. He is consistently pointed out as the One who entirely causes us "both to will and to do". So any amount of faith we happen to have at a given moment is bound to be considered as totally dependent upon Him. It is exclusively His merit, His glory. And then, what about the works, in accordance with THAT MONISTIC VIEW (or holistic view) we assumed as fundamental to James' trend of thinking? Would it be reasonable to conclude that those works are less dependent on Jesus Christ? Of course not. If our faith is properly His faith, then our works must be properly His works in exactly the same degree. It would be illogical and unreasonable to assume one rule valid for faith and an entirely different rule valid for its "phenomenal counterpart", that is, the good works, constituting the very body of a man's faith. Of course some may now come to me saying: It is a dangerously new and exciting game you are here playing with old and tradition-honored concepts of religious creed.

If faith and works are perfectly equated with each other, and no distinction whatsoever is made between them, do you not then run the risk of saying: "Man is saved by works..."? In the first place, it should here be repeated: I do not at all "perfectly equate" faith and works. I never said that "no distinction whatsoever" can be made between them. What I did say, even when I spoke about the bodysoul relationship, was this: It is perfectly legitimate to distinguish between the two, but not to separate them. And I illustrated my statement by taking the case of the two pages of which a sheet of paper inevitably consists. You are not an unrealistic fool, of course, for the mere reason that you distinguish between the front side and the backside of a sheet of paper. It is only at the moment when you start trying to find some way of separating the two, that the psychiatrist might reasonably be invited to give consideration to your case. In the second place, those who fear so much the risk of a total fusion of the concept of works and the concept of faith, would be far less anxious, probably, about the risk of coming to believe that it is "works that save", if they stopped to think just what kind of works are here referred to. I have tried to make the idea sparkingly alive that the good works, wherever you come to speak of them in an absolutely meaningful way, in an absolutely realistic way, are Whose works, as far as any notion of merit is concerned? They are wholly and fully Christ's works. And when did you come to doubt that Christ's work for you is realistically able to save you? You need fear no danger of going into heresy, whatever number of times you should like to repeat this statement that Christ's work in your behalf, and Christ's work in your very life, is a work that saves to the uttermost. It is rather at the moment that you start to think of "good works" in terms of something bestowing some kind of merit upon you, that you have reason to fear that even the mere shadow of your vain imagination constitutes a real threat to your sound realism and your sound orthodoxy.

We should only be careful to point out that it is real good works we are speaking of, and that those are the merit of Christ, nobody else. If in any way you entertain the idea that you derive any degree of personal human merit from any part of the faith-works totality that saves, then you are a fool, and there is no reason for anybody to believe your words. What man in everyday life would be entitled to much credibility if he tried to make his fellowmen believe that only the outside of the window panes in his house were to be credited to the work of the glazier, but the inside of the panes was his own work and hence to his own glory. Joking apart. It is the childlike view inherent in plain sober-minded realism one constantly comes across, whenever one examines the "anthropological philosophy" of the Early Church. And this is true "faith-and-works ideology". Therefore this is what I want to emphasize in the case of James as well: He is eminently and comfortingly childlike in that his mind is not haunted by any spectre of pagan dualism, relative to his views on faith and works. To him faith and works constitute a perfect union. But James has no confidence whatsoever in man's ability to save himself. He has no infatuated admiration for man's "intrinsic moral beauty". He know exactly what is the one decisive and all-important factor for the realization of the great wonder of Christian redemption: Exclusive faith in the meritorious work of the Other One, the One whom man finds outside himself, and infinitely greater than himself.

10. Does James Have a Poor Evaluation of Faith? There is no valid excuse for thinking that James did not ascribe sufficient importance to the value of faith. Does not the text inform us that he actually wanted that faith to be nothing short of perfect! And just how is faith, this unique agent of the power of God, in the heart of men, made entirely perfect? Could there be any more significant question? Could there be any more significant answer than: "By works was faith made perfect". (verse 22). No one could ever blame the old apostle for insisting upon that harmonious fusion, if this was his firm conviction: Works constitute the only imaginable complementary facet establishing faith as a perfect and living reality in human lives! Just as a visible and concrete human body constitutes the outward substance through which a human heart or soul realizes itself, so external human acts always

constitute the God-given concrete "instrument" through which man's faith realizes itself. You need not be ashamed of your body, dear friend. It was God who made it, as your only medium for a contact with Him. If I see the history of ideas correctly, the apostle James must be counted among the "philosophers" in antiquity who have done most to combat false dualism and to further the cause of anthropological totality. And how was he enabled to make this significant contribution? Probably his remarkable ability here came in the same way as that of other heralds of the Christian gospel some two thousand years ago: They were one with God. So they did not just think Christianity. They lived it. "Faith is made perfect by works!" What a tribute, what a rehabilitation to the honor of the outward things, the lowly things, everyday practical things! I would not be astonished if some literary salon philosophers of following ages would find it a little discomfiting to be told that this is the way perfection is achieved. It is the one and only way given for man, in a time-space universe, by which true wholeness and substantial reality could ever be provided for that blessed interiority, which was supposed by pagans to get along so splendidly "all by itself" (all "alone").

Here Christianity has always meant a surprising experience, a shocking experience to human philosophy. For the latter has a definite disregard for the outward things. Bodies are "outward". So they should be disregarded or even despised. Works are also outward. Accordingly they too should be disregarded and despised. Quite a priori, as it were, they should be disregarded and despised. The external fact or practical action becomes almost an occasion for scandal in some circles. What an arch-pagan aberration! But what is the attitude, then, of the childlike Christian, that plain and unsophisticated creature who simply believes the gospel? Will he feel equally puzzled and scandalized? Suppose he learns, in his "elementary school" of Christian living, that divine Providence has found it compatible with Its dignity and Its wisdom to take even the simplest human instrumentalities into its service and establish a method of cooperation (!) between frail humanity and almighty Divinity,--will he have any serious objection to that peculiar plan for human regeneration? No-no, the typical attitude of the ingenuous alterocentricity of the Christian Child is precisely this: he is co-operative. He is sincerely grateful for having been regarded worthy of an opportunity for actual cooperation. It is quite a different type of mind that tends to consider all things from the problematic angle. This is the trend of the complicated, the downright defiant and rebellious mind: the adult mind. The genuine child--if I am to use Gabriel Marcel's dialectics once more--knows no problem. He knows the mystery only. The common tendency of our modern world is particularly far from the childlike in this respect. It seizes the problems with actual greediness and predilection. And where it does not have any adequate problem available, it proceeds to make one.

Is not this strange: just manufacturing sham problems, in case there should happen to be a "serious shortage" of real problems in this world! However, if the "problem" of faith versus works is as simple as I have here suggested, would not that place an age-old quarrel in the present case--and perhaps in a great number of similar cases--in a most curious light? James, the "advocate of works", and Luther, the "advocate of faith", are both profoundly Christian. So at the bottom of their hearts, they agree beautifully: Faith and works form a perfect oneness. Look at this passage from Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans: "Faith is not human day-dreaming. . . . Oh, it is a living, energizing, active, powerful thing, this faith! That it should not be ceaselessly active for good is just impossible. It does not ask whether there are good works to be done; for, before one can ask, it has already done them. . . . It is always in action. . . . One can no more separate works from faith than one can separate the light and the heat from the flame."

11. Repentance: The Consummated Perfection of Oneness in Faith and Works

To me this sounds like real monism in Christian anthropology! Here we must look at that marvelous concept of "poenitentia," of true Christian repentance, as both Luther and Calvin had come to look upon it. What could ever be a more adequate symbol of the consummated perfection of oneness in faith and works than the realistic acceptance of a deep moral responsibility on the part of man; extremely sorrowful and extremely joyful at the same time, an intensive aliveness of the heart, an unforgettable smile through tears: Metanoia.

Well, what part does this "Bussfertigkeit" actually play in the science of salvation?

"Despairing of self, but not of God."

This is how Jean Boisset sums up the sound antithetical realism of repentance (Erasmé et Luther, 1962, p. 51). Of course, there is no contradiction here. For just as any realistic man is bound to keep despairing of his own forces, so his hope is continually the more firmly founded and riveted in God. In other words, the more the despair is total, the more the hope is bound to be total also. Man's proper unworthiness remains exactly the same all his life, and the profound awareness of this unworthiness should then be equally life-long. How can one speak about realism otherwise?

However, I do feel that there is only a partial correctness--and therefore precisely a dangerous irrealism in one thing Boisset points out when he says that the attitude of "penitence", or "penance" (Busse), is a "mouvement d' interiorite". On the contrary, its exterior aspect is just as important. In fact a "mouvement d' exteriorite" is absolutely indispensable for both the totality and the duration of Metanoia. Salvation is unthinkable without that totality. For what is salvation, if not precisely a return to totality, to wholeness ("Heil")? This all-sidedness of Metanoia is what makes it a sine qua non for any imaginable salvation of man. An active and total acceptance on his part has to be secured. His worthiness as a creature endowed with will freedom is not arbitrarily torn away from him. Therefore, in order that a man should be saved there has to be, on his part, a personal willingness to be saved. And that willingness manifests itself. It realizes itself in something concrete something substantial and practical in external life. It has its "body", and the name of that body is penance, Metanoia, the bowing down. It bursts out into the act of prayer, a prayer that constantly, and most actively, goes out to God, Jesus Christ, the great Other One, man's wonderful value outside himself, a realistic Person on whom he can depend.

The fact that repentance has a recurrent "double-sidedness" (or all-sidedness), I think, makes it illustrative of the perfect union between faith and works. For on the one hand repentance, in the sense of the gospel, means a profound and incessant inward consciousness of the sinfulness of one's sins. Therefore there is no room for vainglorious pride and self-righteousness. On the other hand, it manifests itself precisely in a submissive willingness to be positive, to do the will of God.

No wonder that this total phenomenon in man's life (Metanoia) becomes nothing less than the attitude in him that allows the wonder of justification to take place as the decisive event of his destiny.

Luther's desperate craving for peace--that is, for the blessed assurance of salvation--rendered it absolutely impossible for him to content himself with the humanly tempting compromise of Augustine, namely the "ex quadam parte justus" and "ex quadam parte peccator" ("partly just" and "partly a sinner"). No, Luther knew only too well that he was "totaliter peccator" ("totally a sinner"). How could

that controversial combination ever happen that he could be "totally a sinner" and "totally righteous" at the same time, and all the time? He saw only one solution: this happens at the moment when man receives the grace of being penitent, or repentant. But then the gracious wonder has to be operative as long as man remains in the flesh (under the sign of sin); that is, until his death or his glorious translation when Christ appears. For he evidently goes on to be this "total sinner" all that time. Even the greatest saint on earth has to ask forgiveness of God, even for his best works, for they are tainted with sin, saturated with sin. So the "simul justus, simul peccator, simul poenitens" is bound to mean "constanter justus, constanter peccator, constanter poenitens." The attitude of Metanoia has to be man's constant attitude. This is the great reality on this side of the resurrection.

12. The Kind of Perfection Mortal Men Can Already Reach

So much for the doctrine of justification. But what now about the doctrine of sanctification? What is Poenitentia's part in, or relation to, sanctification? Is not sanctification understood precisely as a gradual increase in man's genuine Christ-likeness, in other words, a gradual detachment from the power of sin, alienation from sin? Yes, but then a further question arises: As the process of sanctification goes on and on, should not then the attitude of repentance, as well, be an experience tending to diminish in the same degree?

According to short-sighted human pseudo-logics, yes. But the very opposite is the case in reality: With every increase in sanctity, poenitentia also increases. It is bound to increase. Why? Simply because increasing sanctification will always be characterized by an increasing consciousness of the sinfulness of one's sin. And that awareness of the sinfulness of the sin--this is Poenitentia! An ever more intensive sense of your own human weakness, this is the very character of the Repentance (Metanoia) the gospel speaks about so emphatically. So the men whom God is permitted to lead farthest along the road of sanctification, by revealing to them His own glory, His own perfection, those are precisely the men who most intensively sense the human weakness (total corruption) they have in themselves. This sense is Metanoia, the indispensable attitude of man for both justification and sanctification!

"As we have clearer views of Christ's spotless and infinite purity we shall feel as did Daniel when he beheld the glory of the Lord and said: 'My comeliness was turned in me into corruption' (Dan. 10:8). We cannot say, 'I am sinless' till this vile body is changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body, but if we constantly seek to follow Jesus, the blessed hope is ours of standing before the throne of God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, complete in Christ, robed in His righteousness and perfection".(1)

It would, no doubt, be wholesome to our theology (the theology of a progressing Protestantism) to keep in mind one pertinent point, whenever we start meditating over the problems of sanctification (that is, how far man has the possibility and the obligation to become perfect in this life): The highest summit of perfection any man can reach on this earth is the perfection of Metanoia, Poenitentia, repentance! But the repentant attitude is the one that never loses sight of the fact of Dei sola gratia. Therefore, it becomes a constant safeguard against man's greatest peril in discussions on sanctification: self-aggrandizement and self-delusion.

1Ellen G. White: That I May Know Him, p.361.

If I am to have any "theory of sanctification", it will probably have to be just an extension of my "theory of justification".

The sanctified man is the man who is becoming perfectly whole because he is perfectly broken. I am speaking about the brokenness of heart, the contriteness of spirit. This is, from the day of justification on, supposed to be the one constant and all-absorbing attitude of man's very being.

And notice: that man does not even have the personal merit of having broken himself in this sound and salvefic sense of "brokenness". Christ is the eternal Rock against whom he has been broken. Man's natural condition is, on the contrary, the proud illusion of un-brokenness. But if it is Christ who has broken him, it is also Christ--and Christ alone--who has made him whole.

This Christian brokenness is for man the only tenable alternative to pagan disruption.

There is an indubitable etymological connection between the Germanic terms of "wholeness" and "holiness". We must only not forget the principle of caution mentioned by James Barr (*The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 1962, p. 111), and strain the etymology to the point of caricature.

However, the obvious connection between the nouns "wholeness" and "holiness" in purely etymological respect, may in a certain way stand for a fairly corresponding connection between "wholeness" and "holiness" in human life, seen from a biblical viewpoint. And here I am convinced that the concept of Poenitentia with its peculiar wide range of meaning in Christian soteriology provides a wonderful safeguard--perhaps the only one--against heretical deviations.

We have no doubts that Luther possessed a deep understanding of just this "error-mending" totality, even when he formulated his "philosophy of faith" in a sort of "anti-works" terminology. His idea of faith is not a sterile discarnation. With the interior thought, a corresponding exterior act must always be blended. And all the time man should be aware that this act is nothing in front of God, except to the extent that it is worked by God Himself.

"All works are without any other dignity than the one God confers upon them. That dignity may be granted to the lowest, whereas it may be refused to the highest (maxima) and the most numerous. Does this signify that we should not do good? Certainly it does not. But it should be done in humility. God does not push aside works done in that way. In our days they are infinitely foolish those who keep heaping up works which in their eyes are good and magnificent (grandia). They consider them good simply because they have cost great pain, are imposing in number and of high quality according to their judgment. But their efforts are lost. Only humility engenders good works; and it does this without knowing anything about it." (Luther: *Opera*, Weimar edition, 1883, p. 428).

So the contrast and fundamental opposition is not between good works and faith. It is between really good works and imagined good works. It is between those "good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-18), and those hopeless "deeds of the law" which man in his own might strives to accomplish, and imagines as good. But how could pride be good? It is the origin of all evil. Think of the case of Lucifer.

If Luther then --or, in the first instance, rather Paul--seems inclined to reserve the use of the term faith for the good and real phenomenon, the practical reason for this is obvious.

It is a well-known historical fact that man is sadly liable to imagine that he, himself can produce works, even good works, real works. On the other hand, strange enough, that same man does not feel

quite so self-confident, somehow, in front of the mysterious reality, the "intangible" reality, he conceives of as "faith". How could he, a mere human creature, manage to "lay hold of" that mystery? How could he himself produce it?--So, just in this elevated sphere of life, man actually seems to have more of a natural safeguard against his otherwise boundless self-conceit. We might say: he still has preserved a rest of humble diffidence toward self,-- provided that he has not been entirely corrupted by inveterate Gnostic ideas of megalomania. Sometimes there is the opposite tendency: Christians think: "I can have faith. But that is all I can manage. Produce good works I cannot". You are fatally mistaken. You can produce neither one nor the other. We all tend to distinguish here between something we "can manage ourselves" and something we cannot.

But, of course, the distinction man here makes is due entirely to his disrupted way of thinking. If one phase of the faith-works totality is impossible to achieve in man's own power, the other phase is equally impossible. A truly Protestant anthropology makes man diffident of his own achievements in all respects: it knows nothing of human perfection in terms of "holy flesh" on this side of the grave (or on this side of translation).

"If those who speak so freely of perfection in the flesh, could see things in the true light, they would recoil with horror from their presumptuous ideas. In showing the fallacy of their assumptions in regard to holy flesh, the Lord is seeking to prevent men and women from putting on His words a construction which leads to pollution of the body, soul, and spirit. Let this phase of doctrine be carried a little further, and it will lead to the claim that its advocates cannot sin; that, since they have holy flesh, their actions are all holy. What a door of temptation is thus opened.... When human beings receive holy flesh, they will not remain on the earth, but will be taken to heaven. While sin is forgiven in this life, its results are not wholly removed. It is at His coming that Christ is to 'change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body' (Phil. 3:21)." Selected Messages, Vol. 2, pp. 32-33.

13. Do Works "Follow After" Faith?

Many Christians in our cultural environment obviously do realize that they must find some way of attenuating the strained antithesis of the formulation our theologians have traditionally given to the relations between faith and works. But the very means they then gropingly choose for that attenuation is remarkable: works are considered as "the natural consequence of" faith.

The underlying motif for this trend of thought is clear enough: Faith "itself" is primary in all soteriology. And that "primacy" of faith "as such" must be jealously guarded. But, all along, a certain hope is here evidently left lingering somewhere in one's mind that a legitimate place may still be left open, in the life of a Christian, for some kind of good works also. So the formulation tentatively and shyly makes its way: "Works follow after faith."

In other words, faith, to be sure, is the one important thing, the first thing, the exclusively counting thing. And yet there does linger, as it were, some secret misgiving: Perhaps this is not quite complete after all, but rather just the initial stage of true completeness. For safety's sake, let us have something added: "Faith should be followed by works". There the "gap" has been filled. Hurrah! It is work that fills the gap. Finally all is in order. The "subsequent", "complementary" element has brought things up to the ultimate perfection. Works is that "subsequent" element.

Is this a trend of logical thinking? Is it Biblical thinking? No, its ground is a basic misconception: it is still the idea that faith and works form separate units. A "progression" or "fixed sequence" device must be machinated in order to fulfill the claims of that unfortunate "separateness".

How did we human creatures arrive at this pattern of thought? Evidently we all kept saying in the depths of our being: faith versus works. So we finished by feeling pretty convinced that there is a hopeless opposition between the two. This is strange enough, for not one among us ever had the sensational experience of coming across "one" of those "two" in a state of "splendid isolation". Not once in a lifetime did the erratic event occur to one single individual that faith actually appeared to him without, simultaneously, expressing itself in some form of outward action. In the same way, who could mention one single case on this planet of ours where any realistic outward act was performed without a perfectly corresponding amount of inward faith? And still our thoughts are haunted by that inveterate idea of the "opposition", the "anti-thesis". If we were not all at the brink of losing our common sense, how could we fail to see that the "problem" of the alleged controversial nature of faith and works (their appearance "one by one", in a sort of Indian file) is entirely a pseudo-problem, a self-coercion of the human mind!

Why not rather say, Faith is accompanied by works! That would make sense, it seems to me. But even here I cannot see that it would be quite sensible to say: Faith should be accompanied by works. That moralizing reminder is not particularly intelligent. For, in fact, faith is always accompanied by works. It simply cannot help it,--just as one side of a door cannot help moving if the other side moves. Or what would you think about a man who solemnly admonished you to see to it that you always have the right hand wheels of your car accompany (or even "follow after") the left hand ones?

Now it must be admitted that our image of the door or the windowpane, to illustrate the oneness (the two-side oneness) in the life of intelligent creatures, is a very rough one. For, of course, the Inward-Outward totality of a human being is something infinitely more wonderfully structured than that of a door or a material partition wall. The "two sides" in the case of the great psychosomatic reality we call a human person are certainly not to

be understood in terms of some dead, automatic parallelism. One "side" here interferes with "the other" with a fabulous intensity. Let us again have recourse to a rough physical image and say: with the zig-zag rapidity of a lightning you might see flashing between two electrically charged clouds during a thunderstorm.

The wonderful reciprocity in human life between the interior state of mind and the exterior outburst of action is something that evades every effort of objective analysis. It cannot be grasped by any scientific or philosophical formula. It can only be established as taking place. It is just part of that mysterious stream which cannot be separated from the existence of any living organism. Its exact ways are past finding out. And the complexity in the simplicity becomes particularly overwhelming when we observe the stream of life in the case of intelligent, responsible human creatures. We can only admire the harmony the all-wise Creator has been pleased to instill in human life.

The dualist's interpretation of this mind-body reality certainly has not made it easier to grasp the fundamental facts about man. But do we realize that we are committing a crime against that very wholeness which makes understanding possible at all,--yes, we are committing a veritable crime--just as much when we forge notions of separableness between faith and works as when we indulge in

conceiving soul and body as separable entities. Either departure from the plain realism of Biblical anthropology is a threatening danger to man's salvation.

Do we have any just appreciation of what havoc dualism is actually causing to Christian lives right here? Let us try to face realistically, for a moment, what is virtually happening to man's intimate notion of faith, due to the historical fact of dualist thinking in this momentous field?

"Man's notion of faith," you may repeat, shrugging your shoulders slightly. "What does that notion matter, if only his faith itself remains unmolested?"

What you there expressed is representative of the unreasonable trend of the whole question. For how, in fact, could you hope to keep your faith "unmolested", if your deepest notion of that faith is gradually being corroded, eaten up from within, torn to shreds by a false pattern of thinking? Frankly, what is, in reality, your notion of faith? It is your basic standard. It is the highest conception your mind and heart has ever reached as to what faith really ought to be like. And now, how do you imagine that your "faith itself" in practical reality will ever manage to rise above that ideal standard you have established, in your inmost heart and mind, for faith?

But here you, on your side, may have another and quite a legitimate question addressed to me: "What do you mean exactly when you hint that the Western Christian's notion of faith is liable to downright corrosion, to being virtually eaten up from within?"

This simply means that our concept of faith is threatened with being reduced to a shell without a kernel. That is the pitiable state of the "faith alone", as we all are in mortal danger of conceiving the term. Faith gradually comes to be imagined as a beautiful abstraction, but a practical non-entity. It has no organic aliveness or inherent force to do anything. It just is not supposed to do anything, to be practically active and efficient. In fact, there is some inarticulate fear that faith remains faith no longer at the moment when it assumes a substantial body, as it were. Spiritualist circles are always seized by alarm, when suddenly they learn that their faith is "metamorphosed"--by-and-by"--into something that works. "True faith" ("Pure faith"), has no need of working, they seem to say, It has "no business" to work. It is above all such menial contaminations from the bustling, bad-reeking world of the present aeon.

How fatefully unrealistic! Do we Westerners actually imagine that there does exist, in the living reality called faith by the gospel, some sort of "pure spirit" ("ghost"), some "ideal essence" of the intellect or the emotions, or whatever it may be, that goes floating around in non-space (wherever that may be)? And how does it manifest itself? It does not manifest itself. It is simply perfectly disengaged from every trace of what the world knows as concrete manifestations in the sublunary kingdom of works. This seems to be the popular way of reasoning.

And in marked "opposition" then to this "spiritual substance" what do we men of today seem to imagine? We seem scared to meet another--and inferior-- substance called "works", equally disengaged, or at least with a particularly strong aversion against being glued to "faith"? Or rather, it is evidently faith here that is figured as feeling the deepest aversion, or some kind of phobia-like fear lest she should have to "share bed and board" with such an "incongenial" partner as works must be!

In this perilously disruptive infiltration of pagan idealism in Christian territory, there is something strangely akin to the peculiar way we often seem to interpret Paul's words about grace; or rather God's words to Paul about it:

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. 12:9.

Now, how would this text naturally be understood by a pagan mind, saturated with the pseudo-spirituality and the pseudo-logic of Western spiritualism? To him it might as well appear as an oracular message you could perhaps paraphrase approximately as follows:

"Lend ear to me--the great Spirit of boundless mercy for scoundrels of all calibers and castes. I am the Master Magician who generously turns black into white, or white into black, as the momentary need may be. I make any reality unreal, just blotting it out with one single stroke of my magic wand. Now I do know one thing that characterizes you, poor human beings: you are weak. And that fact causes you no end of discomfort. But now we shall amend that intolerable situation through a true stroke of genius. We shall simply pretend that weakness is strength. To me the performance of that trick is a mere trifle. For I do whatever I please, you see. In the kingdom of the spirit I am the one in power. I just extend to you my grace! That is the master stroke of all magic. Of course I also know that in reality you are downright wicked. But if I declare you to be good, that is all you need. Your whole guilt is immediately crossed out. My grace is amply sufficient for you. That is, you are good enough. You never need to worry about becoming better. That will never happen anyway; in practical reality it won't. But that does not really matter, you see. What really matters is the perfection of the theoretical ideal. That is absolutely sufficient, sufficient in itself, regardless of outward circumstances."

Is grace nothing but a sham process of a justification of the unjust? Is it a mere comedy enacted just in order to break down the validity of all laws, the reality of all realism? If spiritualist dualism leads right up to such fateful misconstructions--and we shall see that it really does-- then what danger could be more serious than this for the spirituality the Gospel preaches for the salvation of human souls?

14. What Saves Man? Is it his Faith, his Works, -- or Jesus Christ?

It has become a traditional formulation in Christendom to say: Man is saved by his faith. But do we realize what a one-sided and imperfect expression this is bound to be? It is so easily misunderstood. Of course the apostle James is not much better here. He runs the risk of being equally onesided and equally misunderstood. That is what happens when we, his readers, equally human and equally imperfect ourselves, yield to the tendency of tearing his words out of context. Luther did exactly this. So he knit his brows, as he read:

"ye see then how that by works man is justified." James 2:24. How could you expect the German reformer to take that? He misunderstood as thoroughly as we all misunderstand. But are those misunderstandings the Bible's fault? No, they are your fault and mine. For we are a race of disrupted platonic thinkers. The ancient Hebrews were a race of holistic thinking. And it so happened that it was through the instrumentality of Hebrew authors a solicitous God conveyed to us almost the entire message He deemed necessary for our salvation. (Both the Old and the New Testament have been written mainly by Jewish authors.)

But should we not be entitled to rely one hundred per cent then, you may say, on the statements made by Jesus Christ, as rendered by the gospel writers? And is not He quoted as saying, again and again, "Your faith has saved you (made you whole)"

Your remark sounds very pertinent. But you should know one thing: In the every-day speech of all human communities there are bound to be certain "short-cuts" of more or less inaccurate linguistic

expression. We do not in such an environment expect to find the sort of language which is recommended by the severe school of modern thought called the semantic-analytical school.

Now, what would a strictly logical way of expressing oneself be like in our special case of Christian soteriology?

Here I want to start by asking you another question. It is a down-to-earth common-sense type of question: When we say "It is our faith that saves us," do we then sincerely and earnestly think it is man's own faith that constitutes his Saviour? Is this the personal God who raises him from the gloomy shadows of eternal death to life eternal? If this were correct, then it also ought to be logically irreproachable to put a sign of equation between "man's faith" and "Jesus Christ". Would you dare to do such a thing? Is it, in a literal sense, your faith that saves you? Of course not. Nevertheless this is the traditional Christian way of expressing oneself in our every-day milieu.

I can perfectly well understand that way of expression, and even accept it for most practical purposes, just as I accept the way an acquaintance of mine expressed himself the other day after a car accident from which he had a narrow escape. He said: "It was that seat-belt over there that saved my life."

Of course he was not so foolish as to imagine that a piece of metal or plastic was his Saviour. Nor do you yourself mean anything as stupid as that when you express yourself in the same more or less careless way in a theological context. In reality you are not all that materialistic, or godless, or overtly idol-worshipping, are you? It was God who saved that acquaintance of mine. It is He who saves us all through a complicated variety of circumstances, the details of which we hardly know. The accurate statement we might make, if we were far more careful in our thinking and in our speech pattern, is rather that God availed Himself of those circumstances, and those material gadgets as tools through which He administered His salvation.

So what is it then that saves us realistically, according to the perfect philosophy of the Christian gospel (realism at its very best)? What is it that saves us directly and indisputably?

It is not our faith. It is God's grace.

How unfortunate then that the main shibboleth of traditional Protestantism should be the "sola fide" instead of the "sola gratia".

I think a simple grammatical analysis would be useful here to make the matter clear as crystal. Let me ask you in a general way: Do you find it reasonable, a priori, that any quality or capacity of yours in front of which you may rightly put the possessive pronoun "my", would have the divine power to really save you from death? No-no! Such reasoning would be mere pagan self-conceit, and not at all Christian sober-mindedness or Christian self-scrutiny. Of course it is perfectly acceptable, grammatically speaking, to say "my faith". Even the severest logician of semantic analysis would hardly object to that. And even from a deeply theological view-point, it is an indisputable fact that I myself do have a personal part to play in that faith. My faith is, to some extent -- and this is even a capital point in meaningful theology -- subject to my personal initiative. For I am a being endowed with volitional freedom. As I have stressed quite often, but not too often, God, as the Bible portrays Him, is supposed to wait -- and He does wait -- until I have made my dispositions to give Him "my green light." Only then can He proceed to any act of salvation in my behalf. That is how I have imperfectly, and probably not in too dignified a way, tried to express it.

On the other hand, what about the case of grace? Would it be equally reasonable, theologically and logically, if you started speaking about that basic thing, grace, calling it "my grace"? No, you realize how unintelligent it would be -- don't you? -- to operate with such a concept as "human grace" in connection with man's salvation. The grace is God's, and His exclusively. To imagine that this agent of grace has any human element whatsoever in it would be the summit of all absurdity. To express such an opinion would be a scandal, both linguistically and theologically.

But when I here point out so strongly how different it would be to say "righteousness by God's grace alone," rather than "righteousness by faith alone", then nobody should think that I am trying to reduce the true role of man's faith to something insignificant in the field of biblical soteriology. Oh no, do not misunderstand me. Faith is an inestimable value, an absolutely unique and indispensable value. How could any man dare to downrate something that God Himself has elevated so highly in His Word? The only thing I can do -- and must do -- is to put faith in its right place. Faith in the biblical sense is a tremendous totality, the very basis for an essential co-operation between God and man. In man's life it constitutes something outward and something inward in one solid block. Whether you describe it as active belief or believing action makes so essential difference. In practical reality we ever so often have a stupendous vision of this admirable totality, without being tempted to try and describe it at all. We just establish the fact of its being operative in human hearts. (Of course even "heart" here stands for man as a totality.)

God has simply made Himself dependent on this faith as a sort of prerequisite in order to convey to fallen creatures the divine gift above all gifts: grace; that is what, in a most literal sense, saves from sin and death. How could we ever by any stretch of the imagination dream of anything, short of the absolutely divine, as potent enough to save a lost soul?

So let us observe the proper measure in all things: Faith -- indispensable though it may be -- is, after all essentially nothing but the great TOOL in the Creator's (the Recreator's) hand. Faith is the INSTRUMENT through which He practically accomplishes His act of salvation. In other words, if we were careful enough in the way we handle our prepositions, we would probably say: Men are saved by grace through faith. In passive clauses of this kind, you see, the English pattern is to use the preposition "by" in front of what factually constitutes the true agent of the sentence (therefore also called the "logical" (or "real") subject). In the present case grace is that "logical subject", the agent that realistically saves. To this then is added the following complement: "through faith". That signifies: by means of faith. So faith is just the medium through which grace becomes operative. Faith is the tool par excellence which God avails Himself of in order to realize the work of salvation. Does not this impress you as intelligent talk?

You may still remember the image I used in order to illustrate how ridiculously unreasonable it would be for an intelligent thinker to be proud of -- and to boast of -- his own "contribution toward salvation". For actually his only "merit" consisted in simply accepting it, thus giving God the "green light" so indispensable for His going ahead with His act of saving. On that occasion, however, we imagined the presence of a beach guard, supervising the people swimming around. Those swimmers sometimes get out of their depth without being able to swim properly. For this eventuality we visualized the life-saving beach guard as a man equipped with a long stick, which he would reach out to the person who was about to drown. The latter, in order to be saved, would have to grasp the stick with both hands.

Now, what does that stick stand for, do you think, in our present illustration? Of course it represents nothing but faith. It is the tool which that life-saver uses in order to practice his work of salvation. And now comes the question: To whom is the honor due for the accomplished deed. Is it to the swimmer? Is it to the stick? Of course not. Honor is due to the person behind the stick, the great expert handling the tool. It is he who saves. And the saving Person according to the gospel record is Jesus Christ. The basic power constituting the very source of His being and making Him able to save abundantly, is love. And the bottomless depth of that love is precisely expressed by grace (Agape=Charis).

So why must it be pointed out that grace, and this bottomless source of goodness exclusively, is the saving agent? Because grace is the deepest element in God's essence. No creature in the whole universe is entitled to say: "my grace." That would be blasphemy, self-deification. Grace is endlessly higher than anything of the creaturely kind.

Faith, unlike grace, is not an exclusively divine quality in the same sense. Faith is also a human virtue in the sense that its presence in the human heart does not depend on God's agency exclusively, but, in a decisive way, on man's willingness, as well, to accept this divine influence on the soul; hence making it that human sinner's faith in God. In this sense faith is not a quality going beyond everything that is human. It is not a sort of super-man virtue, as so many -- both theologians and laymen -- seem to figure. Faith is not a spiritualistic substance possessing life and existence in itself. It is not an automatic source in man going on and on from everlasting to everlasting. Faith is not a timeless and spaceless abstraction, some kind of "pure interiority", independent of all historical settings. It could not for a moment disengage itself from such concrete outward "bodily" matters as works. Oh no, faith will for ever and ever have to get along, humbly and cheerfully, hand in hand with its physical counterpart, the tangible, visible actions of every-day life.

15. Could it Happen that "My Faith" might "Jack Itself Up" to become the Worst of All My Idols?

Some Protestants (and you and I might be just among those) seem to enjoy a feeling of particular safety when they have learn to say: "By faith alone", -- "SOLA FIDE"! At that moment all lurking materialism is imagined fleeing, head over heels, into the remotest corner of the rubbish loft.

"Get thee behind me, Satan," seems to be our shout of exorcism on such occasions. For in our minds the ugly scape-goat has obviously taken the form of just this-worldly material acts. We have the pious intention to kill anything that might be suspected of keeping our idolatry alive. Pride is idolatry, and it is our works that make us proud!

Our works only?

"Of course," seems to be the answer we give, as we nod our heads energetically, "it is our external acts that cause us to imagine that we, in ourselves, have accumulated such and such a quantity of tremendous merits. And is not that the abominable lie of our lives?" we seem to be adding angrily. "For in reality our works do not merit anything whatsoever."

Good, but then what about our faith, my dear friend? Is that so much more meritorious? Does that faith merit our salvation? What a deceitful trend of pagan spiritualism, shamelessly raising its head right in the midst of a Protestant congregation. It is the spirit of humanist elitism. We have the

vainglorious idea of belonging to some sort of exclusive club, a super-spiritual inner circle, Did you ever hear about that "pure soul" aristocracy, avoiding like the pest all "filthy rags" of what is considered too outward, too bodily. In the present case that despised materiality happens to be just external works in terms of any physical contribution toward the Christian life. Not for one moment do we seem to have any corresponding suspicions regarding faith. Our delusive idea is unmistakable: If only that "spiritual part of man" could be properly purified, disentangling itself from all contamination with material indignities -- such as practical, "this-worldly" works -- then maybe the bliss of perfect deliverance could still be ours.

This trend of thinking is what I call spiritualism of the most deleterious kind.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT IS GRACE REALISTICALLY CONSIDERED?

DOES THE BIBLE HERE PRESENT A CONCEPT OF GOD THAT IS FAIR AND MEANINGFUL?

Definitions

Here a thorough study of the doctrine of grace, as the gospel brings it out is indispensable. To make the basic concepts clear in our minds, let us first go to the elements of relevant terminology. By Arndt and Gingrich's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, the term charis is rendered:

"favor, grace, gracious care or help, goodwill, that which one grants to another, especially of the gracious intention of God; of Christ who gives undeserved gifts to men."(1)

Manifestly the "charis" concept of the NT has more than one aspect. But the soteriological aspect is definitely the prevailing one in all Christian literature from the beginning. Allen Richardson puts it as follows:

"In one of its principal New Testament meanings, charis is the power or activity of God at work in history for the salvation of mankind."(2)

The Septuagint here tends to give preference to another greek work, eleos, more commonly rendered "mercy". Richardson interestingly distinguishes the use of the two terms in the following way:

1Arndt and Gingrich's Greek-English Lexicon of the NT, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1952. Italics ours.

2Allan Richardson: An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament, 1958, p. 281.

"In the LXX eleos especially represents God's pitying regard for man as weak and helpless, while the New Testament charis means primarily God's forgiving love toward man as sinful and gone astray."(3)

This distinction is of quite particular interest to our topic. Therefore, we have underlined, in the above quotation, with double lines weak and helpless, and with triple lines forgiving, sinful and gone astray.

What two things have here been distinguished? In the first place, to what does "weak and helpless" apply? Obviously to all, creatureliness as such. There is not one creature in the entire universe, according to biblical theology and geneology, who does not depend totally on God's force and God's help, in the last analysis. Left to themselves, all creatures, without exception, whether angels or men, are naturally weak and helpless. In this respect, weakness and helplessness are not necessarily qualities that imply any guilt or imperfection. Creatures with those characteristics may still be perfectly innocent, perfectly in order. In a good world-- God's original world--such "weakness" and "helplessness" obviously just constitute the right challenging appeal, if we may express it in our own human way, to the only absolutely Strong One, the Only One without the need of any help (in a creaturely sense of the word); that is God, the Almighty, the One who is overjoyed to strengthen the weak and help the helpless.

Of course, even among creatures one might reasonably distinguish between varying degrees of weakness; this is tantamount to saying: varying degrees of "strength". So it is not devoid of reason to speak about relative strength even among creatures. But our viewpoint here--the main one--is bound to be that of weakness, creaturely weakness. And there is perfect meaningfulness in this, even in a purely inter-creaturely context. For naturally a particular degree of "weakness" in one creature would present a challenging appeal to the relative "strength" of any "stronger one" who happens to be around. So even in the ideal world of God's perfect creation, we may definitely assume a certain kind of merciful help, joyously extended to the "weaker ones", by the "stronger ones". Here we manifestly have entered the precincts of a different world, a tragic world. We suddenly have to do with a definitely different kind of creatures, the sinful ones, those who have gone virtually astray. Of course these, as well, possess the common traits of all creatureliness: They are naturally weak and helpless from the very outset, if considered apart from the Creator's direct intervention from second to second. But in addition to this they are guilty. They need forgiveness, redemption, salvation.

3Ibid., p. 283. Single underlining supplied by author, double and triple underlining ours.

And now, where, exactly, does grace come in? Does it, as the concept is currently used in the Scriptures, become operative and indispensable already at the moment when any creature is called into existence? Let us rather take one specific case of particular interest to us: Did Adam and Eve depend upon grace from the first moment of their creation? They did depend on divine love (agape). So much we do know for sure. And, of course, in the last analysis, God's grace is nothing but a particular aspect of that eternal love, constituting God's deepest character from everlasting. In other words, grace is a unique angle manifestation of God's love happening to you and me. The point is, however: from all eternity God must have possessed, as His essence, the full agape, with every single aspect inherent in it, including its aspect of grace.

Still one fact remains indubitable. Whatever the exact nature of grace, and however early it may have been in active operation in God's heart, it is only at a comparatively recent epoch of the history of the universe (namely the time of man's fall) that its marvels have been unraveled to the

wondering minds of creaturely beings, thus becoming part and parcel of our treasure of definite knowledge today.

2. Was Grace Known to any Creature Before Man?

Let us give close attention to a most noteworthy passage from one modern Protestant writer, Ellen White. It does not coincide with the wider sense given to the term 'grace', by Karl Barth, but certainly to the narrower one attributed to 'grace' by Luther. Here the term 'grace' is clearly defined in the narrower sense of something applying to fallen man, not to creatures in general:

"We would never have learned the meaning of this word 'grace' had we not fallen. God loves the sinless angels who do His service and are obedient to all His commands, but He does not give them grace. These heavenly beings know naught of grace; they have never needed it, for they have never sinned. Grace is an attribute of God, shown to undeserving human beings. We did not seek after it. But it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow His grace on every one who hungers for it, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we will receive His gift." (Letter 98 b. 1896.)

Would it, if we adopt this concept still seem quite proper to designate the power Adam depended on from the very beginning of his life, as 'grace'? Or should we rather look for other more appropriate terms for that common need inherent in general creatureliness? Evidently the latter option would be better in order to avoid ambiguity and confusion. After all, there is something definitely unique about our human experience as saved sinners, and for that uniqueness Ellen White for her part reserves the word 'grace'.

The same idea is expressed, only with a slightly different formulation in another passage; it speaks about our future mission:

"We shall then be able to tell the lost concerning the plan of salvation, that while the world was lying under the curse of sin, the Lord presented terms of mercy to the fallen and hopeless sinners, and revealed the value and meaning of His grace. Grace is unmerited favor. The angels, who know nothing of sin, do not understand what it is to have grace exercised toward them; but our sinfulness calls for the exercise of grace from a merciful God. It was grace that sent our Savior to seek us as wanderers and bring us back to the fold." (Signs of the Times, Dec. 19, 1892. Emphasis supplied.)

Here we should perhaps make a remark about the expression "unmerited favor" as a sort of definition for the concept of grace. It may not appear immediately evident to all that "unmerited favor" applies exclusively to fallen creatures. To be called into existence is in a way in itself an invaluable favor on the part of a loving Creator. This would seem particularly true about an existence as a creature formed in the image of God. But who among you would think it quite logical to characterize this in any case as a 'merited' favor. If someone should claim it is, then please tell me: when and how did any given creature merit the favor of being created? Would this be a reference to the theory of the "preexistence of souls"? Or what kind of 'merits' could any normal creature be assumed to have accumulated prior to his being granted the glorious privilege of having part in life? Certainly no merits at all could be claimed here, properly speaking.

But in the above quotation the meaning of the term "unmerited favor" is pretty clear. What the writer here speaks about is obviously not just an absence of positive merit. It is rather the sad fact of a downright demerit, something definitely negative. This is expressly stated in the following quotation:

"The Lord saw our fallen condition; He saw our need of grace, and because He loved our souls, He has given grace and peace. Grace means favor to one who is undeserving, to one who is lost. The fact that we are sinners, instead of shutting us away from the mercy and love of God, makes the exercise of His love to us a positive necessity in order that we may be saved." (ST, June 5, 1893; emphasis supplied.)

But please watch out now. Does the same author, after all, use the term "grace" in another sense? Read the following passage, and see if you detect any inconsistency, or at least notable difference, in her use of the concept grace here, as compared to the previous passages. She is here speaking about Jesus Christ and His vital needs at the time of His most literal sojourn among men some two thousand years ago in a Middle East community. Did Christ need grace?

"To the consecrated worker there is wonderful consolation in the knowledge that even Christ during His life on earth sought His Father for fresh supplies of needed grace, and from this communion with God He went forth to bless and strengthen others." (AA 56.)

How can this be made to harmonize with the first mentioned statements? Was Christ in any sense a sinner? Did He have any actual demerits causing Him to need grace, in the very sense that fallen humanity needs it?

In terms of a realistic Redeemer and a real substitute for that humanity, taking upon Himself its whole burden of sins, Christ definitely needed grace. He was literally weighted down by the terrible demerits (the tangible sinfulness) of an entire world.

Certainly this was a different world, compared to that ideal, one whose creatures were not in need of any grace. Christ had realistically entered the dark world of fallen mankind. The One who "knew no sin" whatsoever in His own life, even His life as a genuine human being, was made "to be sin" for us! (2 Cor. 5:21). That "being made to be sin" for us was a fact to Him just as realistic as His "being made man".

So here grace was indispensable--for His real death and for His real life.

And now back to the other question: How old is grace in reality? How far back would you have to go to find its origin? We mean grace in that shakingly dramatic sense, that uniquely historic sense of Biblical soteriology?

For, of course, nobody would assume that a thing of such dimensions suddenly came into existence--overnight, that is, only at the critical moment when there was an actual fall taking place in the history of the universe. No, evidently grace is something more deep-seated than that. It must rather be co-eternal with God Himself. Without it He could never be exactly the One He is. In the depths of His heart grace must have been

a living reality all the time. And this for one cogent reason: Nothing marks His character as fully as this does. Grace was certainly there from everlasting. It was only we and the universe who got to know

about this marvel as late as a few thousand years ago. And here also the reason is a pretty cogent one: there just had not been any call for (actual) grace to come out in the open previously.

3. The Unique Gift of God

But what have we got to know to understand divine grace? Evidently grace presents a very wide spectrum of characteristics. Let us try to distinguish some of the most fundamental. There must be some outstanding essentials to its nature, something striking us immediately as conspicuous.

In that respect, I would hardly hesitate to suggest that the most salient general character of grace is simply that of being a gift. This gift aspect of grace is also, by the way, in perfect accordance with the root meaning of the Greek term (charis). Not only is grace inseparable from what the Early Church termed "the gifts of the Spirit" (charismata), but at the same time it immediately avers itself as simply the spirit of giving. In other words, grace is charity,--charity in its highest degree and in its most noble form.

With this step, however, we have arrived at another significant name and another significant notion: Caritas is the Latin word from which the modern language phenomenon "charity" (charite, carita, etc.) derives its origin. And it should not be difficult even for a layman in linguistics to see the etymological connection between this caritas of the Romans and the charis of the Greeks.

And now, just what is caritas? There is the solemn hush of some secretly but most intensively vibrating, historic significance going out from this word. In fact it was destined to remain, for more than a millennium, what I would not hesitate to call the most important single word in Western culture.

I say this on the basis of two outstanding facts: 1) The Vulgate, that launched the word as a substitute for the more common Latin word amor, turned out to become the version of the Holy Scriptures par excellence in our Christian World throughout the Middle Ages. 2) In that version caritas was the term chosen to render the unique NT term of agape in the Greek original. And, as we all know, there has never been a word that embodied the very Spirit of Christianity in a more astonishing or a more epoch-making way than that erstwhile obscure little word agape.

No one who has experienced, in his life, the strange impact of grace (grace as a biblical concept, and grace as a transforming reality in human life), could fail to have an inkling, or rather a visionary intuition, of the intimate kinship between grace (charis) and the revolutionary new thing that was destined to set the world on fire, namely agape. I say "new", although I am fully aware that it is exactly as old as the Rock of Ages.

The sum of my little digression into theological linguistics is that the outstanding general trait of charis is caritas. But what is the general meaning of charity, not just in the KJV, but in English as a modern language? Of course the same as the meaning of the corresponding terms in all Romance languages: Charity is simply liberalness in giving.

But the great Gift of all ages, according to Holy Writ, is Jesus Christ. And He is in a most remarkable way identified with that unique concept of Love which spectacularly entered upon the scene with Him, and unfolded itself in the lives of His followers at the time when the NT was being composed.

The special fact we must here retain, however, is the following: The unique Gift to mankind was so unfathomably deep, and so unfathomably broad, that it could only be conceived in terms of pure grace. This notion of the boundlessly liberal (or generous), the totally unearned, the absolutely undeserved, was bound to rise up as paramount in the concept of grace, as it relates to human beings.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith, and not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8)

Now, one particularly relevant question about this in our context: Does the pronounced gift quality of grace mean--automatically, as it were-- a sad reduction of general realism,--or perhaps even the complete paralysis of realism?

Let us look at an illustration: One day someone among your good acquaintances kindly and joyfully presents you with a nice parcel containing a coat purchased at a famous furrier's shop. You immediately take out your wallet and offer to "pay the price". "Oh no", says the giver. "There is nothing to pay. This is a pure gift." "A pure gift?" you repeat, almost murmuring; and in your secret though you add: "Aha! Then I know the quality: it's not a real coat, it's a make-believe coat. In that case I need not even take the trouble to open the package. I know you can't get something really valuable for just nothing."

What a system of logics; what a poor way to inspire faith within your own mind. And what a strange way of treating givers. Do we think this is the way to inspire them to increased affection and the joy of giving?

Of course there is something rather incredible about gifts. You can hardly believe them to be genuine. Particularly this applies to gifts coming from the hands of men. But grace is, essentially, a divine attribute. It is real and credible exclusively because it has its source in God, the eternally Self-Diffusive One. This origin, however, makes the gift entirely dependable. "But by the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor. 15:10) That perfectly reliable gift is man's only need, his most desperate need. He certainly needs nothing less. But, on the other hand, he needs nothing more.

4. Grace, The One Sufficient Thing

Let us repeat Paul's information in extenso this time:

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Cor. 12:9,10)

In this connection one capital point has to be included. When man discovers, in his quest for salvation, the goodness of God's grace, and then quickly accepts it, it is clear that the overmastering goodness of grace has not reduced him to the level of a dumb animal. He is not in any respect made equal to a creature devoid of personal intelligence and will freedom. The grace here so liberally extended to man has to be spontaneously accepted by him. God does not force His grace upon anyone! The gift is free in this sense, as well: it can freely be turned down. In order to become operative, it has to be deliberately and consciously received by man. And when it is received (if it is received), something conspicuous takes place in the deepest essence of that man. His involvement in the matter becomes an

active one, a personal one. He is never, at any stage of the process, a will-deprived puppet, made to jerk and yield, according as "God manipulates the strings."

No, far from it: this is not by any means a one-person drama. That would not be dramatic at all. What we here have to do with, however, is a real drama, the drama of the ages. And in that drama there are two actors involved, God and man. Let us not forget the latter one either. That would be false modesty. The fact that man is involved--with every bit of personalism and will freedom still left in him--this, by the way, is negatively demonstrated in a most emphatic way: The vast majority of men bluntly refuse to accept God's grace, so generously offered to them. This negative response is definitely not God's doing. God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). But the choice is man's.

It is evident at the moment, however, that we are mainly concerned with those who do accept. Therefore we want to ask: After a man accepts God's grace, what happens to him?

We have, so far, mainly concentrated our attention on one side of this drama. Grace, we have found, is the constantly self-diffusive force of the Almighty One, irrepressibly active in Him. It was, from eternity, part and parcel of His character as the Living One. But now, at a given moment, what happens, somewhere far out in the wilderness of mankind, right in the specific heart of an ever so feebly repentant human being? Grace starts working in him. It works with increasing force and insistence, still gently and unobtrusively. Finally that man--if he so decides--becomes one with that force from outside, from Jesus Christ. And eventually it permeates every fibre of his being. A miracle takes place: Grace enables that man to do what he previously was absolutely incapable of doing. God's grace is made his grace. It becomes part of his very being.

It is difficult here to choose one's terms with sufficient circumspection, but there are mainly two pitfalls. On the one hand, we may be liable to infer rashly that man is inherently "gracious", that he possesses grace independent of God. This is the typical humanistic error. It is also the typical spiritualistic error which results in self-deification. All idolatry, in the last analysis, amounts to self-worship, which in its turn, is identical with devil-worship, since Satan is the one who has insinuated himself into the shrine of the human heart.

On the other hand, we are liable to assume, just as often perhaps, that the grace from God, in taking hold of man, reduces him to passivity, as far as his personal involvement in the process is concerned. But this is a dangerous misrepresentation, also. On the part of God, there is no deterministic or arbitrarily molding violence exerted against man's freedom of volition; not in any way. It is rather a characteristic of evil influences, not the good ones, that they attempt to violate the individual's God-given freedom, reducing him to nothing but an automaton. This is the automatism of non-life. Life is never automatic.

True, as Christ gives His grace to man, thus imparting new life to the dying one, that renewal is a miracle just as great, and just as total, as the act of original creation. Still there is a certain difference between what Jesus Christ, the Creator, did and what Jesus Christ, the Recreator, does. To create is to make something out of nothing. But man today, in his natural condition, is a thousand times worse than nothing. He is not a zero. He is way below zero. At the same time he is still blessed with the most tremendous dignity ever conferred upon a creature. For he still has not managed to wipe out some decisive traces of the fact that he was made in the image of God. He still possesses personalism, the freedom of the will; hence also full moral responsibility. The fact of man's having been created on this

dignified level, is a historical reality which can never be done away with. That reality irretrievably includes the fact that the Creator, the only Independent One, has made Himself dependent. That is part and parcel of His own going down (his prototypical divine humility; God establishing humility as a pattern for the other ones, the ultimate model of an agape-life attitude for all intelligent creatures in the universe). In other words, at the very moment that He had created man, Christ had already, in His established relationship with that man, made Himself dependent on the gentle freedom of reciprocity which is the deepest nature of grace.

And now to the reality of the fall: What is here found to characterize the process of restoration which God had in store for man? It was a continual and realistic interplay of personal wills, meeting each other face to face, and respecting each other's fundamental freedom. True, it is God who always takes the positive initiative. It is also He who has all the merit. Yet, one thing remains imperturbably: there is no pressure exerted, no violence made. For the nature of grace is delicacy. It possesses the utmost consideration, an infinite appreciation of the other person's freedom.

Read thoughtfully the Song of Songs and you will see the most beautiful description ever made by human language of this peculiar trait of delicacy in the Bridegroom's love for His bride. In the second verse of the fifth chapter you first hear the woman. She is speaking about her Lover, unexpectedly entering upon the scene:

I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh saying, 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.'

Evidently she is not immediately prepared to accept Him. She dwells on the inconveniences in opening her door to let Him in: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"

The following scene is a particularly touching one. The Bridegroom does not demonstrate His "virility" by forcing the door to His darling's bedroom. He just gently puts His hand in through the little hole in the door, a mute appeal to the heart of his beloved one (verse 4).

This delicate gesture has a mighty effect, but only at the late moment when His bride becomes aware of its delicacy: "My bowels were moved for Him."

But it is too late, apparently.

I rose up to open to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone. My soul failed when He spake. I sought Him, but I could not find Him. I called Him, but He gave me no answer.

What the Bridegroom is trying to bring home to His bride's heart is the fact that she is the one responsible for opening the door when he calls. The tribulation she encounters because of her first lack of responsiveness, is just another indirect way He uses to demonstrate His love for her, often the only efficient way of bringing her home again. In no case is there any compulsion.

He can wait. Waiting is--in the case of will freedom in His creatures-- His only possible "key" to opening the door. This is the whole significant content of the burden that goes all the way through the

Song of Songs. The author comes back to it three times. And the words are those of the all-wise Bridegroom. They are not those of the bride, as some translators have made it appear:

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he (she) please. verse 5.(1)

The love that saves (agape or charis) distinguishes itself as precisely the thing that cannot be commanded. If there is one thing that depends implicitly on freedom of choice, it is that.

This is a matchless demonstration of how the principle of "going down" works out in practical reality. In the redeeming process the extreme delicacy and gracefulness manifests itself. It consists in one person "making himself dependent on the other ones." This reaches the peaks of its uniqueness in God: For it is God Himself that thus leaves a large part of the task to man. Everything is permitted to hinge on man's voluntary option, just as much as on God's own voluntary option. Negatively expressed, man has been granted an absolute "veto": He can at any moment refuse to be saved.

But if he should choose to accept the incredibly gracious hand of God, reached out to him in overflowing love, what would happen? Then grace would no longer be limited to the precincts of God. In fact, extension, not limitation, is its natural trend.

Yet, it also has to be admitted: before the creature was there, God was "alone" with all His marvelous agape (grace). (Although God, properly speaking was never alone, as we have already pointed out. How could three Persons together be "alone"? How could "aloneness" ever be consistent with the essence of agape? This would be self-contradictory, indeed.)

1The New English Bible has this formulation.

What we actually want to say is this: to begin with, grace was exclusively God's, in the most narrow sense. Not only did it have God for its only source--that still applies--but in God alone did it find its locus of operation. With creation entering upon the scene, however, and more specifically the accident of the fall and the need of redemption, this became radically different. Now Grace, for the first time, became operative in the lives of creaturely beings, as well. But as we have already stressed--and it is imperative to go on stressing it--this extension of grace is at no single moment a forced one. It never assumes the character of a cruelly or meaninglessly mechanistic automatism. The cold impersonalism implied in such automatism would be a blank negation, or contradiction, of all that grace stands for. Grace is the one permanent safeguard for personalism on the creaturely level. If ever there was an "I-Thou relationship" preservative, this is it. In no other religion than Christianity has the God-man relationship been described in a way that is truly meaningful to man. Here, and here only, is a religion that propounds a salvation in which man is allowed to retain his personalism, his will freedom, his full moral responsibility. In short, everything that confers worthiness and spiritual nobility upon creaturely beings; that is, beings as high up as man, in terms of choice-making intellect; and as far down as man, in terms of moral degradation. Truly, the key to understanding the superiority of Christianity over all other religions is the Christian doctrine of grace.

5. Is Grace a "Perfectly Fair, A Perfectly Realistic Device"?

In order to give fair study to this all-important doctrine, we must pay due attention to the inalienable demands upon man as a fully responsible person. If there is no bargaining possible, not the slightest reduction, then how can there be that gratuitous pardon we call grace? Is grace compatible at all with a realistic maintenance of those irreducible moral standards, so solemnly proclaimed by the commandments of God's law? It seems so natural to make the erroneous assumption that the demands of that law, on the lives of present-day men, must have been reduced to a minimum, or made entirely void, somehow? It seems incredibly hard to grasp the simple fact, which is the diametrically opposite: The demands of God have not been reduced; no, not by one single inch. The necessity of keeping God's law, in its entirety, remains unabridged.

This then is fundamental: the nature of divine grace does not, under any circumstances, provide room for any kind of cheap exemption. Man's moral obligations do not ever come to a point where they are suddenly evaporated. That would presuppose some kind of spiritual magic. But there is no magic in Christianity. There is no hocus pocus in the plan of redemption. If there were any such elements in it, that would mean the total collapse of the universally realistic, as a core value in the Christian religion. But the doctrine of grace does not for one moment go contrary to universal realism.

Let us for a while give some closer study to the central tenets of this Christian realism. A capital one is the immutable fact that every command of God's holy law issues forth directly from the very source of His being, the goodness and justice constituting the essence of His nature. How could grace then be assumed to be a blunt negation to that goodness and justice? That would mean sheer absurdity and a mere pseudo-solution to the problem of evil and injustice in our world. In human literature, from times immemorial, we know that recurrent myth of a deus-ex-machina, suddenly popping up, just as things, rationally speaking, were entirely hopeless. Is the introduction of grace in Christian theology a petty day-dream phenomenon of that irrational kind? Of course not. Christianity is not that cheap in its plan of redemption.

There is no slight-of-hand trick invented for the purpose of blowing injustice into thin air, simply relieving the unjust ones of the troublesome consequences inevitably devolving from their practice of unjust dealings.

Let us rather face the facts: God is realistic 100 percent of the time. Even in His grace He abides with the realism of His deepest nature. It would be a sad thing if this was not so. This being so, however, God Himself was the first one to face squarely all the consequences of man's real state of sinfulness. Nothing less than His supreme sacrifice of Himself was demanded in order to meet man's predicament. God's approach toward reality could not be a round-about movement. His way had to go straight through that reality, including the abysmal depth of utter despair. Christ's substitutionary death was the endless price that had to be paid in order to redeem man's sinful past.

Notice carefully that last word. How far are we now along the sweat-and blood-stained road of restitution? We have merely considered the costs involved to delete man's guilt in his life up to the present moment. Nothing yet has been said regarding his virtual possibility of stepping forward along the progressive path of triumphant living, the active reality of the newborn human creature, from this initial stage of life. But full realism would demand, of course, that this crucial continuation be carefully considered as well. In fact, what would have been the use, or the sense at all, of just raising man to the level of a momentary solvency, if he were not endowed with the real ability to live, that is, to proceed in

a state of lasting solvency? In other words: what is the use of being "justified", if you are not enabled to do justice? Or: what is the point in your being raised from the sombre depths of your bottomless negativity, if you have not also been provided with the surplus power demanded for averring yourself as actively positive? To be positive is something more than remaining at the level of a bare zero, isn't it? To one who is created for being truly alive, zero is still nothing but death. So, for that matter, in the present case, zero (or bare solvency) is no better, indeed, than minus infinite. You cannot be worse off than just dead anyway, can you? Even Satan will once possess that degree of "solvency". And he will remain there, at the stage of his "blessed zero", for an eternity. How could anything reasonably positive come out of being at zero?

6. Grace as Power

You hopefully realize that, in the realistic world of Christian realism, something definitely more, something infinitely more, is demanded of grace than might currently be anticipated. In order to meet the full requirements of that reality, grace will have to be something tremendously positive. It will have to be a creative agent actually pouring into man that marvelous surplus that makes for full reality on the level of the positively living ones. Is grace such an agent? Does it help us to "have life", and to "have it more abundantly"? (John 10:10)

That is just what it does. Inherent in grace there is a rarely realized, but most realistically active virtue, a virtue issuing forth from it, second by second, a virtue simply transforming the deepest grounds of man himself, as a presently living creature? This active force inherent in grace is what makes the saying true: God's biddings are His enablings. What He on any given occasion bids you do, He also, at the same moment, perfectly enables you to do.

Timothy is commanded: "Be strong". Through What Provider of invincible strength? Through "the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Grace and power belong so intimately together, evidently, that they seem to form one single concept. About Stephen it is said that he was "full of grace and power" (Acts 6:8). And as a result of this singleness of divine endowment streaming into his life from above, he "did great wonders and miracles among the people." (Ibid.)

This same impartation of grace as an interior dynamic power is promised to the Corinthians: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye always, having sufficiency in all things, may abound in good works." (2 Cor. 9:8).

We speak in this work about self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) as the great fundamental motif of ancient idealism and of modern humanism. In the above text, however, we obviously have to do with a sufficiency diametrically opposite to that. We might call it "grace-sufficiency". And obviously that is not a will-deprived passivism. On the contrary this seems to give a very different meaning to the famous sentence; "My grace is sufficient for thee". For the "sufficiency" mentioned in 2 Cor. 9:8 is certainly connected with a highly activistic goal: "that ye may abound to all good work". In the following verse Paul refers to Ps. 112:9. And here the Psalmist is quoted as giving a description of the righteous man that is simply quivering with the soundest type of good-work activism: "He hath dispersed abroad; He hath given to the poor: His righteousness remaineth forever."

To finish by becoming worn-out or empty-handed is here absolutely out of the question, as long as man draws freely of the source of power placed at his disposal in terms of divine grace.

And suppose now that grace did not have this "second characteristic", this "second task", regarding its role in the plan of salvation. Suppose it simply proclaimed you "righteous" without enabling you to do righteousness. Then it would be a mere word, a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. It would "help" you magically--that is, unrealistically--to get around your problem. What problem? The ineradicable, lugubriously looming one that is turning your life into a tragedy, a nightmare, from moment to moment. If you are realistic, you will know that such a round-about maneuver would be an evasion, so precisely not a solution. Is grace an evasion? A thousand times no. Grace is the solution. Grace is super-realistic. It is God's own super-realism.

Our argument has not finished. It has rather just begun. We have so far only registered the necessity of a certain "doubleness" about the virtue of God's grace. In the case of man's extreme predicament, it is bound to reveal itself as adopting what may reasonably be called "two different phases".

On the one hand, there is a constant welling up of grace, the grace immanent in God's very nature. This is the power of salvation which was potentially present from eternity in the depths of His agape. In this sense grace is a facet of the deepest being of the Eternal One. As far as you and I are concerned, we should be the last to think lightly of that permanently up-welling glory. For it is precisely the profoundest essence of God's attitude toward creatures. It is the very elan vital of His innermost heart, urging Him toward the act of creation, an urge so irresistably forceful that it caused Him to assume all the risk inevitably involved in the creative venture which constitutes the culmination of the alterocentric urge. This is the urge, in God, and in all who are born of God, toward the other ones. Thanks to His omniscience, God was bound to be cognizant of every individual detail comprised in that risk. Still--from everlasting-- He did decide to create,--and, in fact, to involve Himself in the creation of persons, creatures blessed with the extreme felicity previously reserved for the Godhead alone, the ability to serve others of one's own accord.

There is no blessedness anywhere comparable to that.

This meant the calling into existence of creatures endowed with freedom of volition; creatures, able to make the free choice between right and wrong, good and evil.

To engage in a "risky adventure" of that magnitude would have been simply unreasonable, if it had not been for the reality of grace as an ever present potential factor, hidden in the invisible depths of agape. Or let us dare to pronounce the morally connoted word: It would have been irresponsible. But grace was there, all the time, kept in abeyance for any case of tragic emergency.

We may speak, in our human way, about a certain tension: On one hand, the glorious prospect of calling into being creatures of the unique personal kind; on the other hand, the risk inevitably implied. The glory to be achieved was too great to be left unrealized. And nothing but His own grace enabled the Almighty One to realize it. Grace was the "bank", the great depository value. I mean grace in its most radical sense: the grace of salvation and redemption. This kind of grace, in other words, was bound to be there from the beginning. Its presence was the one indispensable guarantee, the infinite deposit, making the matchless even come true.

About grace in this drama-filled sense it is correct to say that it "goes forth"--on its ceaseless and untiring way--to meet any emergency that history might have in store for persons, anywhere along the whole vast trail of the ages, or the trail of the starry hosts.

It so happens that our holy Bible, in its first pages, gives a fairly detailed account of the signal way in which that same eternal grace, at a given moment, the moment of historic emergency and desperate need, sprang forth from its crypt of eternal potency to an open act of full-blown historic heroism. No sooner had Adam fallen, than grace was there, tenderly pleading with him to be allowed to heal his painful disruption. Since that drama-filled moment in human history, there has not been a day when Christ's grace, prepared from everlasting, ceased to "go forth", gently seeking to meet the individual cases of straying human hearts. "Even before a prayer was uttered, or the yearning of the heart was made known", there was that ray of redeeming fatherly love, from the depths of the endless heavens, going forth, and arriving at the very spot of the emergency call, at the decisive moment, the moment of maximum need. This moment of maximum need is also the moment of maximum receptivity, and therefore the moment most appropriate for a glimmer of heartfelt repentance (metanoia) on the part of man; that is the human condition opening up the way for waterfalls of refreshing grace. Only one condition is imperative: the minimum requirement of reasonability in man: metanoia, a frank awareness of sin's sinfulness.

We know the story of human irrationality. Often it is just men with nothing more than a last flickering flame of life and hope in them who are sufficiently despairing of their own forces, their own selves, to permit God to have his decisive chance of entering in to save them. Those self-distrusting men are the rarest specimens of the whole species. They are, indeed, if not realistic men, at least men with a sufficient germ of realism aroused in them to visualize themselves, for an instant, as entirely lost. Hence they are successfully prevailed upon to place their last spark of hope in God. And His grace is not slow or hesitant in responding to the faintest appeal. You can rely on that.

"Arise and go to your Father. He will meet you a great way off. If you take even one step toward Him in repentance, He will hasten to enfold you in His arms of infinite love. His ear is open to the cry of the contrite soul. The very first reaching out of the heart after God is known to Him. Never a prayer is offered, however faltering; never tear is shed, however secret, never a sincere desire after God is cherished, however feeble, but the Spirit of God goes forth to meet it. Even before the prayer is uttered, or the yearning of the heart made known, grace from Christ goes forth to meet the grace that is working upon the human soul."⁽¹⁾

Who has conveyed to darkened human hearts that initial inkling of a knowledge of God as the tenderly gracious One? Obviously God Himself. Who else could have done it? Even man's so pitifully limited realization of his own lost condition is very clearly an insight he has not arrived at all by himself. It has to come from the Originator of all radical truths. Man today is not that realistic. How should he have any idea of the super-realism of Heaven, when, of his own nature, he hardly rises up to the realism of this world.

1Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 206.

Some readers may think that I am overdoing things with my emphasis on realism. But it would be difficult to be too emphatic on this point in this context. The Bible has other words for that realism. One designation is "the love of the truth". There is a solemn warning against the "deceivableness of

unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved". (2 Thess. 2:10) Obviously then this attitude of realism is something that is freely offered to all who want to receive it. The love of the truth--like any other love-- is something that has to come to us directly from heaven, a gracious divine gift which may be declined or accepted, as the individual choice of the respective potential recipient may be. So two characteristics of realism are outstanding: 1) Realism is not a built-in equipment of man's present nature. It is a miracle. 2) It comes to man as a gift of grace. It is freely offered by God. It is freely received (or refused) by man.

7. The "Sufficiency" of Grace, Realistically Interpreted

Now we must try to find out something important regarding the full implications of the realism we are here so vitally concerned with. Let us come back a third and decisive time to our key text, so shamefully travestied by pagan thinking:

"My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

What is here being said about grace, can easily be misunderstood. In fact it has been misunderstood through all ages of recorded history.

The reason for misunderstanding this wonderful text and its message is always the same: a lack of simple realism in the minds of men; I am here speaking, of course, about the rare men who do pay any attention to it at all.

There is, indeed, a strange thing happening to men's realistic sense as we observe it in the course of history. This sense may appear to function fairly well as long as they are observed moving within the realms of most of the natural sciences. But occasionally people decide to contemplate "more spiritual things". At that moment they often seem to say resolutely "good-bye" to almost everything contained in plain everyday realism. Upon a given signal, as it were, every attitude of elementary realistic-mindedness is suddenly dropped, so to speak. And their whole field of thought becomes filled with magic-mindedness instead.

Apparently religion today often is equated with magic. Of course this is not something new. From times immemorial, entire tribes or nations have been addicted to a certain satanic perversion of all God-given realism, in their studies pertaining to the religious field. Of course, it may be subject to doubt whether one should call that perversion a religion at all. For religion is commonly assumed to have something to do with a person's beliefs regarding God. Magic, however, is essentially godless. Its general trend is definitely a-theistic. True, there is something here still taking the place of a god, namely the magic formula itself. But that is, of course, where irrationalism, our common human trend, comes in. It enables us to easily believe that we have religion.

Now let us focus our attention on the Bible passage of which we just quoted the first part. In response to that text, we seem to reason--due to our superstitious faith in magic--somewhat as follows:

"Aha!--I think I have heard something like that before: 'Strength' is perfected in 'weakness'--that must obviously be one of those famous paradoxes that Christians keep talking about so emphatically. It appears to be an axiom, so-to-speak, that this Christianity is a religion in which rationality is doomed to fail. Evidently the 'absurd' is here assumed to be the great land of lasting bliss, the eldorado of all deeper religious understanding. Strange, though, that just 'strength' and 'weakness'

should be so readily equated to each other. Manifestly that is one of those great 'leaps of faith' our deep-drawing existentialist theologians are referring to. A certain divine absurdity is the great spiritual solution of man's problems. We simply have to accept the apriori assumption that we are all finding ourselves in the strange land of God's magic." This approximately is what one may think about 2 Cor. 12:9. But is it the truth about it?

8. What Does "Weakness Mean in 2 Cor. 2:19? Is it Understandable Without Having to Resort to the Paradox Lover's "Great Leap" into Absurdity?

Poor philosophizing theology of the 20th century. To be sure, the above may sound like a sublimely spiritual piece of exegesis. Still it is an erroneous one. At the same time it is a very understandable one. Those who know men will easily understand it. It bases itself on the most common trend of human ignorance. The "exegete", whose philosophy we have tried to put into concrete words above, immediately assumes: Weakness is the diametrical opposite to strength! And he does know strength to be something positive. So weakness must be negative. This is taken for granted. Therefore he concludes that Christianity must be the depository of a weird philosophy. The uninformed critic immediately imagines that he has landed in a philosophical kingdom in which it is customarily agreed that the positive goes wonderfully together with the negative. Even Zen Buddhism could hardly be expected to put its spiritual beliefs in a more sophisticatedly shocking fashion than this.

In the case of the gospel, however, this is a huge mistake. In this present context, "weakness" does not designate any negative quality at all. It is not in any respect negative. It is you and I who tend to take it for negative. The one who is truly familiar with the thought forms and the terminology of Biblical thinking, will react in an entirely different way. To him "weakness" here stands for the most indubitably positive concept that could ever be realized in the realms of Christian spirituality. It actually means awareness of human weakness. And what kind of weakness? A weakness that is always bound to remain the human person's lot in life, because it is simply part and parcel of his creatureliness. Is it not actually the glorious lot of any creature at any time or in any place to find all his strength, all his value, in the One who has created him? How could a creature's awareness of his weakness apart from God be a negative thing? Creaturely awareness is the first condition for creaturely wisdom of any kind. Any true awareness is bound to be, in itself, a positive thing. Or when did it become a virtue to be downright unaware?

By the way, the awareness I am here speaking about is a particularly precious and indispensable thing. It is synonymous to the fundamental motif of Christianity which I have termed other-dependence or God-dependence, as opposed to the pagan motif of self-dependence, which is the bottom of self-delusion.

The one who would dare to qualify a creature's sense of personal weakness before God as a negative property, would thereby commit the sin of blasphemy. For what he would thereby do would be tantamount to stating: humility is a negative property. But Christ claims humility as one of His own principal traits of character:

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matt. 11:29)

To qualify Christ-likeness as negative is blasphemous. In the case of the Christian, that meekness or lowliness assumes the form of repentance. The NT term for this fundamental attitude of the Christian,

in order to have him placed where he can obtain salvation, is metanoia. And this attitude is one he is supposed to keep as long as he lives. It is the gateway of his entry into grace. Only through a gross misunderstanding can this intensive feeling of human nothingness, as opposed to divine strength, be represented as something in any respect really negative. Let us rather get away entirely from the "opposition" viewpoint. Nothing could go more harmoniously together than a sound creaturely sense of personal helplessness and, on the other hand, the Creator's cordial willingness to help.

So what 2 Cor. 19:9 states is perfectly rational and comprehensible: God's strength can be operative, in man's behalf, only at the moment when, distrusting his own forces, man places his whole confidence in God. For God is the only point of reference in the whole world that has proved absolutely fixed and reliable.

Accordingly, it is high time that we cease to divulge the common gossip about "absurdity as a fundamental principle in the kingdom of Biblical philosophy." that is a slanderous myth.

When Paul says, "When I am weak, then I am strong," he is not being absurd. Anyone possessing common sense logics can easily grasp the meaning of such a statement. All we need to know is the sense of the words "strong" and "weak" in Paul's terminology. "To be weak" here means to have an appropriate feeling of weakness, as all men should have it. And "to be strong" means to be strong in the strength of God. So 2 Cor. 12:10 is realistic talk.

This basic Christian sense of weakness, or sense of God-dependence, is not a phenomenon that de-creases in the same degree as the creature becomes more intelligent, more strong in his God-given freedom of volition. On the contrary, it in-creases. For it requires intelligence (the ever deepening insight of the progressing realist) to grasp the fact--the properly most enjoyable fact--of one's basic dependence on the great Dependable One. It requires an increasingly free exertion of one's God-given will-power, within the proper limits set for it by an Omniscient and boundlessly Loving Creator.

In reality, the deepening awareness of a creaturely dependence coincides exactly with a similarly deepening appreciation we call thankfulness; that is an awareness of the fact that creatures owe everything to their Creator. The joy of the gradually growing appreciation of this great fact is not reserved for those creatures only who have been the conspicuous objects of necessary grace, in the dramatic sense of redemption and re-creation. No, it is also extended to the creatures of God who were not unfaithful, and therefore did not sin.

There will, in the fully restored universe of God, be a strange kind of universal emulation; that is, an emulation in "going down", an emulation in the spirit of radical submission. From day to day, God's creatures will realize more and more clearly what constitutes the real basis of all creaturely happiness: It is to submit to God and to one's fellow creatures. It is to excel in lowliness. This means the urge to be of service to the other ones. That will be the glorious pursuit, and the supreme joy, of the privileged creatures who have been granted personalism for all eternity. Christ will be the self-evident center of all submission. Then it will be discovered to what extent submission to Christ is identical with adoration. The culmination of all realistic knowledge will be the knowledge of the Holy One, a daily penetration into further mysteries of His holiness, His character as the entirely Other One.

Otto, in his work, *The Idea of the Holy*, (1958, p. 26), describes holiness as the great *mysterium tremendum*. Hence the feeling of utter awe. The feeling of awe, I think--and this must be important enough to note--does not become less overwhelming in the same measure as the process of the creature's own sanctification goes on and on. Neither will it be less intensively felt by the redeemed

ones than by any other group of intelligent creatures in the heavenly abode of future ages. Yet the awe sensed by redeemed man, when he stands in front of the Holy, will hardly be the bare tremendum described by Otto. Its prevailing element will not be a feeling of standing before a God who is a stranger, a spirit that is foreign (thateron, anyad, alienum). Definitely not. For redeemed men's awe in the presence of the Holy is bound to be graciously tempered by a far more prevalent element in the complex of their feelings, as they contemplate God. In one sense, it is true, God to them will still be "that which is beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, the familiar." God could never become part of anything that is common. But it is also true that only a pagan concept of God could associate Him with what Otto calls the "un-canny". Not so the Christian concept. To the genuine Christian, the child-likely realistic Christian, God will simply never be one who mainly "fills the mind with blank wonder and astonishment."

Of course, I do not deny that this may happen to the minds of unredeemed men. Here man's notion of the Holy One quite naturally may have been tinted by his own stubborn unwillingness to become holy himself, in spite of his vague consciousness that nothing less than such holiness is demanded, if he is to face God and survive. Accordingly, his main idea of God simply is not that of the passionately Loving One. It is rather the lugubrious idea of some cruelly punishing Justice.

Of course, the Church, through centuries of misrepresentation, has become partly responsible for this distorted image of God in the public mind.

Even Christ, the Redeemer, is often, right in the midst of church circles, represented as the not so compassionate One; for instance, as compared to simple creatures (Mary). And, even in Protestant environments, the impression seems to be prevailing that the Father is less inclined to be compassionate to sinners than the Son. The results of these distortions are, of course, a responsibility we Christians must bear.

9. Summary

There is a most wholesome other-dependence we must simply expect to find in all orderly creatures. Now if we call that that "weakness", as Paul does, then this is no term of abuse. By no means. It is the kind of weakness that makes for strength. And this, as we have seen, is no irrational self-contradiction either. It is a concept quite essential to rock-bottom realism. It means throwing oneself on the Rock: that is, the only 100 percent dependable reality in the world. The creature who builds on the Rock is unshakable. He has identified his "own" strength with that of the Rock. No creature--even the great Gabriel, successor to the post of Lucifer, the covering cherub--has any strength whatsoever apart from Him. This was what Lucifer failed to understand. Thus he became a prey to all the weaknesses of the world, weaknesses in the definitely negative sense.

Of course, that kind of weakness is not the weakness that Paul recommends. In that case, his teaching would have been absurd, indeed. We must know what the words of the gospel mean. We must know what "sufficient" means in that same text: "My grace is sufficient for thee". By this the apostle has not made any allowance whatever for some "make-shift" arrangement, a "glossing over". He does not say: "Thanks to the magic of grace, you need not have the real things, the real change of conditions in your life. Your character will not be good in reality. But please be entirely calm about that. Just acquiesce? For the time being, we will have a make-believe goodness. My grace is sufficient for you." No, this is not what the Bible says at all. It does not with one word intimate that you "can always get along" without appropriating in your very being some real force that makes you--you as the real

being you are bound to be--really powerful and able to overcome. You must, realistically overcome! Overcome what? The unsurmountable hindrances that are realistically there, right in front of you, virtually barring your way to the kingdom. What are those hindrances? They are your most real self, with all the corruption in character traits you are bound to have, as a man, without the wonder-working reality of God's grace; that is the grace which transforms human beings through and through.

I must now only apologize for my use of a strange metaphor in describing that realistically transforming capacity inherent in grace: I called it a "second" or "additional" virtue. Such a name hardly reflects "rock-bottom realism". For in reality, there is no distinction whatsoever between the way grace blots out your sins of the past, and the way it enables you to overcome sin in the present. It is the realistic force placed at your disposal through the most realistic redemptive work of Jesus Christ in His victorious life, as well as in His self-sacrificial death. That is what manages that totality of soteriological facts for you. One detail is not less miraculous (realistically creative) here than the other. There is no make-believe salvation anywhere. It is rather spiritualism, not Christian spirituality, that endeavors to find sufficiency in make-believe.

Where Christ, as the great Healer of mankind, goes through the land, it is man in his totality who is restored: physically, mentally, and spiritually. This is no "symbolical" type of restoration. There is no mere "patch-work" repair taking place when true grace enters upon the scene, performing its realistic wonders.

Let us note down in our memory-book, then, just why grace is sufficient: The Bible's reply would be: Of course grace is sufficient. It must be. For its task is to transform the very substance of human lives. And it fulfills the task. How could an agent as radical as that be "insufficient"?

And the next point we should note is the equally important fact: in spite of this tremendous radicalness, the transformation achieved is not at any single point a forced one, or an automatic one. Christianity knows no fatal deadlock. It is rather the fatalistic creeds of paganism that suffer from this "deadlock" way to view the God-man relationship: "Man is a mere puppet. God manipulates the strings."

Whenever we call to mind passages in the Scriptures or elsewhere, suggesting, realistically enough, that God "experiments" on human hearts, we should immediately supplement this fact with another one: It is through grace that God does His "experimenting". And grace, as we have seen from the clearest testimony of the Bible itself, means freedom (liberty and liberality in the best sense). It means gentleness and discreteness, a boundless respect for the dignity of individual wills and intelligences.

That is the reason why there is always, necessarily, something to be done on the part of the human individual himself, the recipient of divine grace. That which is within the realms of his responsibility must be done by him, and by him only. Nobody else in the whole world can replace man as the agent responsible for his own destiny. Grace never kills the initiative of individual human volition. How could it do such a thing and still remain GRACE?

This may to some degree explain why the Bible has expressions which some people think ought never to have been there. One such phrase is: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." What a preposterous idea, some would say. Is this really an earnest command from God to man, telling him to "work out" something as far beyond human grasp as "salvation"? Would not such a command indicate that man is to do this on his own?

Could such a concept ever agree with the doctrine of grace, as it appears in the Bible?

I have a suspicion that Luther may not have been too enthusiastic about this text. And in connection with what would he resent it? In connection with the doctrine of grace.

How ironically absurd! For it is precisely in basing oneself on the divine agent of heavenly grace that man can meaningfully and successfully take the initiative to "work out" anything whatsoever. The words "with fear and trembling", by the way, should give sufficient evidence that the awareness of grace as the only means possible, is a constant presupposition. For "fear and trembling" is just another term for the attitude of metanoia. And metanoia is a sincere contrition of the human heart. If man actually receives repentance (for that too is given to him), he also receives charis, at the same moment. For, with grace (charis), he is virtually empowered to work out whatever should be worked out. The Bible's speech is minutely logical and consistent.

Chapter IX

WHO DETERMINES MAN'S DESTINY? IS IT GOD, OR MAN, OR BOTH?

Romans 9 is commonly supposed to be the text of "formidable problems" par excellence. For centuries it has been the great classical stumbling block. It has nonplussed Bible readers desperately seeking the immaculate image of the absolutely meaningful God. How do we "get around" Romans 9? Or is it not necessary at all to get around that text? Why not go straight through it?

1. What is the Principle of "Double Predestination"?

The doctrine of predestination is something painful we do not feel we can so easily manage to integrate into a theology of Christian meaningfulness. But suppose then that after all, we finally arrive at the same conclusion as so many others, after having read that formidable text: There does not seem to be any way of escape here: Predestination, in fact, even some sort of double predestination seems to form part and parcel of God's reality. The obligation must incumbent upon me to do what I can to integrate that reality, together with all other realities, also, into the realistic knowledge I do have already. At least I must accept any part of the Word of God, including Romans 9.

In mind, and heart, I must give any scripture within the canon a fair chance to become meaningful. Why should not that which was evidently meaningful to Paul, be meaningful to me also? I must make a humble and frank effort to understand, even what does not appear immediately understandable in the Bible.

What, then is "double predestination"? It is the idea that God has destined one group of men for eternal life and another group for eternal death. Is this teaching biblical? It all depends on how you understand it. How could Paul fail to be biblical when he makes his cutting statements in Romans 9?

But, you say, how can double predestination in any sense be meaningful?

Let us see if there is anything at all God has predestined to happen to those free-will creatures he once made up His mind to create? Is Biblical predestination simply that God planned that one group of God's creatures were to have eternal life? For another group he planned that they should have eternal death? If so, what group would have which destiny?

Let us tentatively consider two groups we can place opposite each other with indisputable reason:

1) There certainly is one group of recipients of intelligent life who gratefully accept the role of creatureliness assigned to them, and thus obligingly comply with the conditions established by God for sharing the blessings of life together with Him.

2) There also is a group of such who do not accept and who do not comply.

Now, what the term eternal and double predestination could very well mean, then, is simply this: It is certain potential groups or categories that have, from eternity, been predestined. And that "general principle" type of predestination would not seem so difficult to accept as meaningful. For then there would still be an indisputable freedom for each human individual, also, to determine something for himself: He could still have the freedom to choose which of those generally determined groups or categories he personally wanted to place himself in. He could not determine, of course, the fundamental principles, according to which there existed just those two categories. For that has been predestined by God, from eternity and with absolute irrevocability. This is bound to be an eternal and irrevocable predestination for the simple reason that God's character is eternally and irrevocably changeless. God has predestined from eternity what His own character was to be like. And it is this character which decides the principles to be followed in God's practical dealing with every man. Where is the creature who would dare to challenge God's right to that kind of "predestination"? And now, what were those general principles God set up from eternity (that is, "predestined")? They were an unalterably fixed law, in full accordance with the love which governs all His acts.

2. A Predestination of Categories, Not of Individual Men

What God has determined, from eternity, is the categories, the laws, the patterns that are according to His nature. These patterns could be one way only, because God is one way only. But it is man's prerogative, as a free-will creature, to decide which pattern (or category) he wants to adhere to, the pattern of good or the pattern of evil. With that decision, however, he has then signed his own death sentence, or his own "life sentence", as the case may be. In other words: God decides and man decides, each one in his respective field, and truly decisively.

It is all as simple--and as meaningful--as this. And this is the meaningfulness any intelligent Christian can find in the "doctrine of double predestination"; i.e., if he insists at all on using a term as badly connoted as that, for what he finds in the teaching of the Scriptures; God cannot move one inch from His pre-established rules for the lives of His creatures, for that would be moving away from Himself, from the core of His character, which is certainly a fact of eternal predestination. Once He has decided to make me a creature, even a creature on the tremendously high level of worthiness characterized by will freedom, I am safe from any possibility of His forcing upon me a salvation I do not want. I am sovereign in my choice of life or death all the time. This sovereignty of mine is fully

respected by Him forever and ever. So the autonomy of God and the will freedom of man are maintained side by side. They were firmly established from before the foundations of the world were laid. From everlasting they were perfect realities in the God-man relationship.

The wholly unwarranted fear men today have when they read Romans 9 is a fear that Paul's "doctrine of predestination" might take away individual man's prerogative of deciding for himself anything whatsoever. What we have to realize then is rather that Paul is not here dealing at all with the predestination of the individual in this narrow sense. Note what other writers have said regarding this concept.

"Paul is here not speaking of election of individuals, but rather of that of the Israelite nation." (Walter M. Booth: "The Doctrine of Election in the Greek Bible," MA thesis, AU, 1953.)

Even where Paul speaks about Jacob and Esau, the reference is rather to nations than to individuals:

"From Malachi i. 2 f., where again the context indicates it is the nations of Israel and Edom, rather than their individual ancestors Jacob and Esau, that are in view.... Israel was the elect nation, and Edom had incurred the wrath of God because of their unbrotherly conduct towards Israel in the day of Israel's calamity." (F. F. Bruce: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, p. 196, 1963).

God is pointed out as the Sovereign Lord who leads history in the directions He deems profitable for the whole plan of salvation without any undue respect for human family-traditions. This is what Romans 9:11 intends to teach the proud Jews. The reader has no right to deduce from the example of Jacob and Esau here, that God had, from eternity decreed one for eternal salvation, the other for eternal damnation.

"It is not talking about this here, but about God's freedom to cut across natural ties, according to His choice, through His history of redemption. That the history of redemption runs through Jacob and not Esau is God's free act: there is no word here regarding the bliss or wretchedness of Jacob and Esau." (Brunner: Letter to the Romans, p. 85, 1952.)

In Romans 9, some Bible readers have found verse 11 to be particularly offensive to a spirit of generosity and will freedom. Of course the whole chapter is sometimes thought of as making God an arbitrary tyrant of the most cruel and unfair kind. But what does the passage really say:

"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, it was said unto her (namely Rebecca): The elder shall serve the younger."

This last sentence is, of course, not a commandment, but a prediction. What God actually says is: Notice what I foretell about the future of these two infants: The common order of things shall not prevail in this case. On the contrary, the elder brother is going to serve the younger. I tell you in advance in order that you shall know, when it happens, that I am God, the One who sees the end from the beginning, and leads the lives of men.

Let us observe the difference between the following two statements:

1. "Esau shall choose wrong and obstinately put into effect that choice."

2. "Esau shall be repudiated by me for this obstination and eventually perish."

In both cases, in English, the same help verb "shall", might happen to be used. But the meaning in the two sentences is not the same.

Case 1: God's foreknowledge enables Him to make a prediction. But it would be an elementary error in logical thinking to equate foreknowledge with predestination and the ensuing prediction with a command. The Omniscient One perfectly foresees and predicts an event without desiring its fulfillment at all, and accordingly, without predetermining it at all. The non sequitur is evident. From the fact of foreknowledge it does not automatically follow that there must also be predetermination. Let me give you an example from my classroom: I do foresee that you students will leave my classroom when the bell goes at twenty minutes past the hour. But is that foreknowledge of mine what causes you to leave at that time? Not at all. You would leave whether I foresaw this or not, wouldn't you? My lack of foresight would not prevent you one bit. It is simply an instance of poor philosophy or deficient logic that causes us human beings to establish, in our minds, an absolutely indissoluble tie between God's pre-cognition and His pre-destination. (i.e. Predestination in the sense of His desire and provision for having even the most tragic things happen.

Case 2: Here the matter may have a different aspect. That "Esau shall repudiated", this is something God has not only foreseen, but also predestined. So in this case it so happens that here His pre-cognition and His predestination in terms of determined command coincide. But please notice: in what sense has God predestined and commanded that Esau should perish? Again it must be pointed out that the predestination is an eternal one, a rigidly fair one, carefully based on incorruptible laws, and accordingly applicable to all men, and absolutely bound up with the unchangeable character of God's very being. It is the general group into which Esau has had the willfulness to place himself that is predestined, from eternity, to die. And when we say that this devolves infallibly from God's very essence, then that is saying a lot. For what is God's very essence? It is love. So, in the last analysis, it is God's love that predetermines the very laws. Accordingly it is love that, in the last analysis, predetermines that Esau should perish. Nothing but that. We sometimes seem to think that God's love is something entirely separate from His righteousness. This again is a dangerous concept of duality, due to deep internal splitness, not in God, but in man. To ascribe it to God is a fateful slip in human thought.

What is it that has caused men to insinuate that God is an arbitrary ruler, who enfolds certain creatures in the arms of His love, and "nothing but that", while He exposes others to the cold rigors of His righteousness, and "nothing but that"? It is again our unfortunate traditional trend of dichotomizing almost any reality that passes through our disrupted minds. In this present case it is nothing less than God Himself who is "cut to pieces" by our foolish dualist mania. To our paganism-infiltrated minds, God suddenly turns into a split between some kind of cruel punisher, on the one hand, and an infatuated (sentimental) rewarder on the other. In such thinking, God becomes a two-faced monster who punishes and commits to eternal perdition the creatures whom He arbitrarily created for just such destiny. He gives grace and ivory palaces to others whom He put in an opposite category of election.

The bare truth is, however, that exactly the same principle of a divine Agape works out for both perdition and salvation. According to what rule of distinction? In accordance with the destiny predetermined and widely announced for the general category in which any given creature happens to have placed himself by the exercise of his free choice.

Obviously our splitting up of the most sacred realities will not cease before we have conquered the worst of all our dichotomies; that is, our tragic failure to realize that God's righteousness is just one particular aspect of His love. If love is what God is, God in His entirety, then His righteousness too, is bound to be simply implied (self-evidently included) in that love.

3. An Intelligent Understanding of the "Hardening" Happening to Human Hearts

But if love is all there is in God, some ironic voice may object, then how can He express Himself in the terms of Exodus 7:3.

"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt."

Can this expression be accepted at face value? Evidently the way Paul accepts it in Romans 9, he does not seem to have any trouble with the question of meaningfulness regarding this act of God against Pharaoh. But frankly, what is this now? Is it love that hardens people's hearts?

Yes? There is nothing like love for making people as hard as stone at a furiously accelerated pace. What do I mean? I mean exactly what I say. I do know, of course, that hate, in any person, is an efficient agent to make another person hard. Hate accomplishes that process very fast. But mark you: love accomplishes the same thing even much faster in some cases. If you go on heaping your love upon a refractory fellowman, his heart will either soften, or it will become a hundred times harder in the course of an astonishingly short time. This is an inevitable law of human nature. The result depends on the attitude the loved person has decided to adopt toward that abundant flow of love overwhelming him.

But if this is true, should we not be more careful with the amount of love we permit to flow out over the lives of other persons?

No. Love can never be overdone. It is never out of place. True love simply can't. The fact of the matter is that God ardently wants the acceleration, the crisis, the wild precipitation that love brings about. The person who has a negative reaction to sincere love, is bound to go down anyway, sooner or later. And often the sooner this happens, the better for him, and for anyone connected with him.

"A conflagration is what I have come to spread on the earth, and how ardently I wish it had already been set ablaze." (My own paraphrasing of Luke 12:49.)

Are we a little better prepared, after these realistic considerations, for Romans 9:17?

"For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."

There are at least two questions we must here pay close attention to: 1) What does God do to Pharaoh? 2) What does He do to "people throughout the earth?". In our text we find nothing but a confirmation of the meaningfulness of love we have previously stated. Pharaoh is granted the individual freedom--in fact, all the freedom ever needed by any intelligent creature--to yield up his will to the Creator's will. In the present case, God's will comes clearly out in His touching appeal of mercy in behalf of His particularly beloved ones: "Let my people go!" Had Pharaoh yielded to this command, which is certainly in its own rights a command of love, and at the same time a very reasonable command, what

would then have happened to this great worldly ruler's deepest heart? That heart would have softened. This is according to one of God's great laws, operative in human lives. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart was nothing but the outworking of "the other side" of the same principle, namely the principle according to which creaturely hearts soften. That is what they are really intended to do, and they will, provided that they respond positively to the appeal. Whether you say that God is the One who hardens, or softens, respectively, the human heart, or whether you say that man hardens, or softens, himself, this does not make any essential difference. The Bible, too, uses both expressions. And there certainly is nothing illogical in saying that God hardens the hearts, or softens them. For who was it that created those potential elements for a psychology of hardening or softening, and placed them in the bosoms of human beings in the first place? Was it not God?

But because He was the One who did create in this way, must He, for that reason, be regarded as a merciless Creator? On the contrary, one phase of that principle here mentioned is just as indispensable for meaningfulness as the other; that is, they are both equally just a compatible with the main principle of Agape.

Even in the individual case of Pharaoh's hardening, it is perfectly correct of Paul to accentuate this in terms of God's doing, and God's determination. Of course it is, since Agape is the force constantly at work.

How can this overruling of Agape be true and still not overthrow, in any way, the fact that Pharaoh himself has a decisive part to play in the matter of his own perdition? Is this, a problem so difficult to solve, that it must be declared impossible?

No, it is easy to see, once more, for any common-sense creature, just what it is that has been predestined, from eternity, by God, and this as a tacit implication of His inalterable nature: it is just the great primordial principle. It is the eternally valid Law, operative forever in all realms of life. The way man responds to that eternal principle, or unchangeable law, decides what his future is to be like, blessed or cursed.

In the present case we manifestly have to do with a natural extension of the great law of Agape, as it reveals itself in all kinds of glorious facets: In the heart of every higher creature on man's level there is, from the outset, "built in" some wonderful "mechanism" for "heart softening": Whenever that creature spontaneously yields to the will of God, which is, invariably, a loving will, his heart is being touched and softened. The psychological law of the hardening of a creaturely heart is not "in opposition" to this principle. No, it is simply the same principle that works two ways. You either yield and soften, or you resist and harden. And the hardening is not less important for meaningfulness than the softening.

Why then does not Paul mention both sides of this law in his "problematic" 9th chapter of Romans?

Evidently because he takes it for granted that we have an elementary knowledge of this in the same degree as we know Jesus Christ. Therefore he feels free to mention here only the "side" of that law which actually applies to the case with which he is here dealing. That happens to be the negative one. The willful closing up of the human heart, the refusal to obey, automatically results in induration.

Even formulations in Exodus indicate that Pharaoh had full control of his own life, and accordingly full responsibility for the course it took:

"But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart, and hardened not unto them, as the Lord had said". Ex. 8:15. (See also verse 32, and chapter 9, verse 34.)

So Rowley is certainly right when he states, in his work *The Biblical Doctrine of Election* (1950, pp. 132-3);

"That Pharaoh is not thought of as a mere puppet, is made quite clear by the passages which state that Pharaoh hardened his heart."

In other words, man has perfect freedom to turn down God's invitation. He may refuse to partake of God's gift of love. Therefore man himself is fully responsible for the hardening of his heart, which is the automatic result of that refusal.

We need have no hesitation in using the epithet "automatic" in this negative case. For the hardening of a creaturely heart is just one of those things that happen "automatically" (all by themselves), once the rebellion is the issue decided upon. We have pointed out that disorder is the phenomenon of a God-forsaken world that happens "all by itself". And the hardening of the heart is a signal case of functional disorder in human lives. It results in an accelerating rush into chaos and final death.

"But what I cannot fully grasp," you may say hesitatingly, "is what part God's eternal Agape can have in this painful matter. Where does love come in, as the quality of God, particularly manifesting itself in the negative case? Was it pure love that also brought about that law of relentless hardening?"

I understand your point. The crux of your question is this: Why did the Creator have that wonderful psychological law of heart-softening devised with a "back side" attached to it, which inevitably made it a law of heart-hardening at the same time? "If I had had a hand in the business," you seem to say, "I would certainly have left out that 'seamy side' of the scheme."

As I am putting these sheets of paper into my typewriter I might as well ask a corresponding question: Why did not the firm who manufactured these sheets leave out the "back side" of them? I do not write on that side anyway. Or, one who needs pieces of chalk for his chalkboard might scold his providers for their extravagance by saying, "Why do you make pieces of chalk having two ends to them. We write with only one end anyway."

"The parallel is not too perfect," may be the objection from a new opponent. "Both sides of the paper and both ends of the chalk are equally good and innocent. The hardening of human hearts is not. In fact, is it not rather against the deepest spirit of Agape?"

There the question bumped out with all its venom. The atrocious sting of the whole secret accusation is here. Man's failure to find meaningfulness in his life today hinges on one point: He is unable to see that it can be divine LOVE that lies at the bottom of certain acts of God, or rather certain laws in ceaseless operation throughout the universe, and apparently divine laws, in view of their unflinching validity from age to age. For instance, how can it be precisely LOVE (as the one great characteristic of God's nature, the characteristic including all others) that asserts itself when He inserts, into some invisible part of that wonderful principle of "heart-softening," a corresponding principle of

"heart-hardening", thereby causing the obstinate rebel among creaturely beings to turn automatically callous, and finally kill himself? Does Love Kill?

It has to be admitted frankly, for the sake of the full truth, that God's Agape does include, in its full reality, one aspect which may impress us as rather stern. We call it justice. And notice that justice is not the opposite of mercy. It is mercy. God's justice certainly is! Of course it is not mercy in its usual garb. Rather it is a mercy in disguise. But that disguise does not prevent it from being genuine mercy -- all the time.

Agape Herself does not for one moment cease to be the tender Mother of mankind. I say "Mother" just to accommodate myself to the grammatical fact that the Greek noun Agape (if we shall still insist on thinking of it as Greek) is feminine. It is Eros that is masculine (and that is undeniably Greek, whatever way you look upon it). Here, though, we might be safer if we went back to a more original imagery of spiritual themes: According to Hebrew thought-forms (or image-forms), God is the tender Father. His stern patriarchalism does not prevent Him from having all the tenderness of motherliness, as we tend to think of it. For that great Father, you see, without for a moment stripping Himself of His perfect virility and stern justice, manifestly reveals the most intensive feeling of sorrow over the wayward son's tragic alienation of himself from the paternal mansion. Nor is there a moment's respite in His heartfelt concern to run to His prodigal son's encounter, and rapidly apply the balm of consolation and restored happiness to the life of that erring child, at the very first moment, in fact, when he finally returns home. There is no repentant sinner so deeply immersed in sin that the Father does not take pity on him.

But the thing to be particularly noticed here is this: the titan who persists in his titanism, the creature who insists on his willful decision not to accept the life graciously offered to him, is permitted to die! And, under the prevailing circumstances, that death is the greatest blessing that could be extended to him; that is, being wiped out of existence as leniently as conditions will allow.

The hardening of the heart is, for that matter, part of that very process of permitting the recalcitrant person to die. Do we realize this? Another name for that hardening, you see, is "callousness". And now, let me ask you, is it an abnormal or an entirely meaningless thing that happens to your feet for instances, when they become harder and harder, the more you walk barefoot on rough ground? No. Under the prevailing circumstances, this gradually increasing hardness, and the ensuing insensibility, of your footsoles, is the best thing that could happen to you. We do not, by that, necessarily say that the circumstances themselves are ideal. Nor is hardening and insensibility, if considered apart from the circumstances, to be viewed as "ideal". No-no, insensibility, in itself, is a most dangerous thing happening to living creatures. It is a gradual coming closer to DEATH. But sometimes death turns out to be more meaningful than life.

What a lucky thing that you and I, with our limited vision, were not called upon to give the Lord "appropriate counsel" on the day when He called our world into existence, or on the "day" when the principles for His government were "called into existence". If He were to follow us as His counsellors sometimes there would have been some catastrophic blunders made, I am afraid.

4. Summary

The biblical concept of predestination devolves with perfect naturalness from its concept of divine law. We must realize the divine origin of the moral law. It is a virtual transcript of God's

unchangeable character. That origin makes its eternal validity a matter of axiomatic self-evidence. And the infallible practical applicability of each one of the ten commandments to the lives of all intelligent creatures, simply makes the warnings, as well as the promises, that each commandment contains, a solemn proclamation from God Himself. And that personal proclamation of promise or warning, as the case may be, makes the commandment equal to a solemn verdict of "double predestination" in its most vivid, practical unfolding. If you place yourself where the loving promise applies to you, the commandment has predestined you to live; if you place yourself where the stern warning applies, it has predestined you to die. So God's predestination is a matter of perfect fairness in practical life. It is not a theoretical monstrosity.

Notice what I have here said about predestination. It is nothing but what the Bible says on every one of its pages: There is something which has been unchangeably predestined from eternity. And we have no reason to be sorry about that. On the contrary, it would have been a sad thing, a meaningless thing, if that had not been the object of infallible predestination. What has been predestined is simply the entire law of solidarity. with all its implications. If that law had not been fundamental to all life, there would have been no such thing as personal relationships. There would have been no love, no freedom, no happiness of any kind. What ever you do, don't fail to grasp the basic essence of THE LAW OF SOLIDARITY.

CHAPTER X

WHERE CALVIN'S LOGIC COMES SHORT, TURNING GOD INTO AN ABOMINABLE MONSTER

Calvin, in order to "prove" his predestination dogma, quotes, along with other texts, Ephesians 1:4, "He (God our Father) hath chosen us in Him (Our Lord Jesus Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

Does this "choosing" of a special group, "us", mean an arbitrary partiality on the part of the Creator? No, such a self-complacent interpretation--which is made by some soteriologists--is excluded by 2 Peter 3:9, which says "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Therefore, if some men make it manifest by their lives that they are not chosen by God, what is it that has failed? It is not His urgent desire to save every individual, but the individual's willingness to accept the universal offer. If it were God's "good" pleasure that they should rather perish, then the concept of divine "longsuffering" in this case would certainly adopt a most absurd, nay a most cruel sense. What Christ then would be waiting patiently for would be that some of His creatures should finally come glaringly out on the wrong side, so that He could freely accomplish his "original plan of having them perish." What an abominable image of God!

Another passage interpreted in terms of double predestination is that of 2 Timothy 1:9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own

purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began". Of course there is no logical necessity whatsoever, here either, of such an interpretation.

A third passage referred to by Calvin is John 6:44,45. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets: And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

The idea that is falsely suggested as the meaning of this text by the predestination theorist is that God has not determined to draw all men in that particular way which causes them to become His elect. Allegedly the unrighteous have not got to "hear of the Father". Rather He has found it in His eternal will to teach only a minority of men in the forceful and irresistible way that "automatically" qualifies them for salvation. But this puts a most arbitrary construction upon the text, does it not?

Now, of course the favorite text used for the purpose of "providing" the doctrine of double predestination is the same in both Calvin and his followers. It is Romans 9:20.

Here Paul has just made statements in verses 17 and 18 which, superficially considered, might tempt us to allege a certain arbitrariness in God's dealing--"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and who He will He hardeneth."

At this point Paul imagines hearing the protesting voice of some ironical readers--"Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will." (verse 19)

And then comes the apostle's famous and most severe answer, brushing their proud human objections aside, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God. Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why has thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?"

Many have been dumbfounded by this text. That applies even to such readers and exegetes who were sincerely eager to vindicate God's fairness and all-loving meaningfulness. And such stern theologians as Calvin shall hardly have the effect of calming down their fears or their uneasiness. For Calvin's God may vividly impress them as resembling the terrible figure who appears repeatedly in the experience of human beings through the history of politics. I am referring to the merciless tyrant who shouts to his subjects that they may simply keep their mouths shut, for he is the master and he does whatever pleases him. What an unfortunate description of God this is bound to be to those who feel that meaningfulness can only conquer if Agape is made the great and all-inclusive summa summarum of God's character.

Now I do admit that Romans 9:10 would naturally strike most of us as a problematic text. But what a tragic case of meaninglessness in Holy Writ of Calvin's interpretation of it (the radical doctrine of double predestination) were the only possible one, seen from a logical exegetical point of view! Then many of us, who believe in the God revealed in other texts, such as John 3:16, will be tempted to say approximately the same thing about the Epistle to the Romans which Luther said about the Epistle of James-- It must be a "straw letter", a document worthy of only one treatment: being burned up, root and branches. For if a theory of double predestination in the Calvinistic sense is the only interpretation that can be given to Paul's words, then what a blasphemously ugly idea he must have had of the

character of God. And humanists would be right when they say to Christians: there may be wickedness in us sometimes, but as bad as that God of yours is, we have no intention to ever become.

We must therefore attempt to analyze what the Calvinistic double predestination interpretation of Romans 9 actually represents. Calvin's teaching, when connected with this passage, assumed a God who not only fails to love the wicked and miserable ones among His creatures, but who has even arbitrarily formed them Himself in this ugly way, for the definite purpose of having in existence some creatures made by Him who contain nothing that would give Him any reason to love them. This implication must accurately portray Calvin's position, for he clearly insists that God has actually made the great majority of us human beings as evil vessels, in accordance with His eternal and carefully premeditated plan. And now what kind of fellow would Paul be, if he said yes and amen to this? Well, he might be one reasoning as follows (this has happened among men before): "Let us leave it to God. That is His business. I do not care to have any opinion about it, either ethically or logically speaking. Sufficient for me is the fact that I happen to be among the fortunate ones who have not been made vessels of evil. So I shall just accept the fact that He has made Mr. Jones and Mrs. Smith that way. The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

Calvin says that Romans 9:20 is "the best answer, the only answer, that the Bible could ever give to the question."

This may be perfectly right. In fact, Romans 9:20 may be the best answer, and even the only answer. But the best answer to what question? This is where Calvinism goes wrong. It has not discovered what the correct question is! It is not the one Calvin imagines; certainly not. The question is not: "Why, God, hast thou made Mr. Jones, my next-door-neighbor, to be, according to thy will, that hardened criminal." No, no, the question the Bible asks again and again, and to which it gives the stern answer of Romans 9, is an entirely different one. It may be formulated as follows: Why God, has thou made laws (generally valid and unchangeable laws) according to which Mr. Jones has freedom to choose a course that automatically hardens him at the moment when he willfully refuses to accept thy free offer of the softening taking place miraculously under the influence of the Holy Spirit?

This question is meaningful, because it implies that not only do all men have the opportunity to choose the master they will serve, but that even after they have made this choice, they are in danger every moment of their lives, of permitting themselves to turn away from God, thereby rendering His grace absolutely inefficient. This is because freedom to accept or to refuse to follow God is man's privilege all the time.

This is the question answered in Romans 9:20. But if that is the question, the answer too, takes an entirely different aspect. It is meaningful to us because it presents a reasonable, coherent, and beautiful image of the Creator. And nothing could be more indispensable for human beings than that.

Well, you say hesitatingly, with all the signs of serious doubt on your face, is this really the question, and the ensuing answer? Is there not something far, far more arbitrary about God's dealing with individual men than that? Does He not actually Himself declare that His will is absolutely sovereign. No creature can ever prevent it from being carried out exactly as He wishes. Is not that what is expressed in verse 18.

Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.
Romans 9:18.

Can this mean more than one thing: God wills the hardening, and delights in carrying it out?

Yes, it can mean something entirely different, as we have already pointed out in the case of Pharaoh. Of course, it has to be admitted, God's sovereignty is absolute. His will is unchangeable. But what does that mean? It means something perfectly obvious in the case of the God of the Bible. He is the Eternal One, "with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17). The same is evidently bound to be the case with His law. For that law is just a transcript of God's eternal essence, His unchangeable character. It is men who insist on having a change in God's character. Why? In order that He may be fitted into their pattern of stubborn disobedience. This can never happen. Those who insist on reducing the demands of the law, are simply condemned by it in advance,--indeed, from everlasting. For, according to the inherent essence of that law, as a transcript of God's character, He has determined from eternity that He can have mercy on one kind of responsible creatures only, namely those who choose to accept His sovereignty, His inalterable will for them. It is a vertical impossibility for Him to have mercy on those who willfully resist his offer of mercy. They are many, those willful ones, and they all insist on putting the blame on God. Notice their ironical question right in front of God: "Who hath resisted His will?" Romans 9:19.

What is the answer to that question? They think it would be: "Nobody". This is not true at all. The answer would be, "They have resisted, stubbornly every one of them". "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." (Jeremiah 29:11). Christ heartbrokenly weeps over Jerusalem, the stubbornly rejecting bride, whom He loved as dearly as any bridegroom could ever love. He wanted to marry her, but she just "would not"! (Matthew 23:37).

Paul would have to be utterly ignorant of the spirit inherent in both the tora and the gospel, if he thought there was one bit of intelligence or fairness in the sinner's hateful challenge to God, "Why hast thou made me thus?" (Verse 20).

Here we have reached a salient point. What does this "thus" actually stand for? Precisely how was man made, according to that challenger, and how was he made according to Paul?

Oh, that is evident, you seem to say. According to the crucial following verse, (Romans 9:21), God had made man wicked.

If this is so, then let us abandon all hope of finding meaningfulness in Christianity. I know how utterly meaningless and downright cruel that verse immediately sounds in the ears of most of us. Still, let us face it, and quote it carefully, word by word:

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? (Romans 9:21)

Now, you say, if God is here really compared to the potter, will not this suggest precisely that He makes some men notoriously wicked, and even that He does this on deliberate purpose? He wants them that way, and so He makes them that way.

Excuse me, do you know any potter? I mean a normal average potter, one who is considered to be in his good senses. If God is compared to a potter, you see, you must first have some basic notion of what a potter is usually like; how he normally behaves. For here some people who think they know, seem to be saying: If God is here compared to the potter, then He too must be described by Paul as One who deliberately plans to produce bad things, besides the good ones.

To me this seems to develop into a case of libel, a libel against potters, in the first place. So please permit me to speak up for a while, to simply defend the good name of literal potters. Would it not be a good idea to apply a little bit of common knowledge and common sense to this case? Suppose a decent artisan of that honorable guild suddenly one day sets about making definitely bad and useless pots, or pots of an unusual ugliness: What would you think about him? You would wonder if something was not going wrong, wouldn't you?

Well, you say, could it not be imagined that he just happened to have a mood of youthful wantonness? He felt like trying his hand at producing some exceedingly ugly pots for a change. And that is what he did, maybe just to assert his freedom to do so. Or he might even have some definitely intelligent purpose for his action. By calling into existence that exceptional series of notoriously ugly pots, he might be creating an impressive background. Their very ugliness would tend to throw into relief the beauty of his usual production. The perfect pots would thus be permitted to stand out in a particularly flattering way, by sheer contrast. This would even give him an opportunity to demonstrate his superabundance of material wealth and creative energy. He was the kind of man who can afford to annihilate a whole series of pots without flinching.

Good for you that you are still speaking about the earthly potter, and not yet directly about God, the Creator of human beings. But even so I am forced to say: No, please, let us be reasonable now, and entirely fair to the potter. To express my opinion very mildly, I would have much difficulty in calling that potter you have here been suggesting to our imagination, a really good and honorable potter by any professional standards. To be sure, even the best potters do make pots on different levels of worthiness and on different levels of beauty. (You may call that "vessels unto honor" and "vessels unto dishonor" if you like to borrow Paul's manner of expression.) Even a perfectly decent potter may, of course, have a scale of such differentiation in his production schedule. He may make flower pots and night pots on one and the same day, if you permit the example. But please notice: Night pots are not evil. They may be less poetic, both in design and in purpose, than the flower pots. Granted. But they too are good enough in their proper place.

Similarly God, the great Master Potter of the cosmos, as you may have noticed, has had the creative imagination to form monkeys as well as men. And the monkeys are perfectly good in their place, aren't they?

It is something entirely different to indulge in the fantasy that God has desired the existence of wicked beasts and wicked men, and deliberately set about carrying out his desire. If it is unfair to insinuate that an ordinary potter would commit himself to the extravagances or downright perversions just mentioned, how much more unfair would it not be toward God to suggest that He has purposively opted for manipulations of a similar kind in creating living and feeling human beings who were forced to turn out downright evil.

So, if you now know what a human potter is like, you should not have so great difficulty in knowing what Paul means by his term "vessels unto dishonor". For Paul too, must be assumed to be a man in his normal senses. He simply means "vessels of lesser honor", "vessels for menial use", so not at all "evil vessels".

Intelligent biologists praise God for having made certain lowly creatures in the micro-world, which they describe as life-promoting bacteria. They do not see how sound digestion could take place in the world of higher animals or plants, if those bacteria were not there. But did the same God plan to

have tuberculosis bacteria eating up people's lungs? The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy would say: No! "An enemy hath done this." Matthew 13:28.

It is a constant trick of the Devil that makes it appear in our world as if God had deliberately planned to have evil things emerge. In every such case it can be repeated: "An enemy hath done this." Whatever we do, let us see to it that we place ourselves on the side of God's vindication. He needs us as defenders. And He is not too great or proud to admit that He is glad to have us around in that capacity. He may need us particularly in religious environments in which perfectly well-intentioned, but sadly misled theologians, like predestination dogma Calvinists, happen to abound.

The doctrine of predestination, in the dangerous sense in which Calvin understood it, is inseparably connected with his doctrine of the absolutely bound will. These are two sides of one and the same philosophy. If the human will did not have any say whatsoever in the question of salvation or perdition, then neither salvation nor perdition would depend in the last degree, on what man's attitude would be like. God would have to decide everything at every moment. According to a Calvinist, for some of us it happens to have been his will to decide that we should be saved, for others that they should be lost.

Calvin has certainly here succeeded in reducing man's role to something very close to zero. That, of course, was his aim all the time. For him, our world is as close as it can come to something we, with a Kierkegaardian expression, might call a world of "numbskulls". Man has no option, no worthiness.

To some of us this does not seem to correspond to the factual reality. Of course, we could imagine such a world. It would be a world in which men would be looked upon as meeting the ideal if they could have cabbages for heads and granite balls for hearts. Would not that be the safest kind of people for God to have around? Would it not also be the safest thing for man himself?

Of course it would, provided that the only thing deemed worthwhile was to have a total absence from evil. Granite hearts do not develop any heartaches. I think we might rely on them in that respect. Nor would they engender any hatred. And what is the nature of cabbage heads? They would have some superiority over ordinary human heads, wouldn't they? With them there would be no chance that someone would go around machinating evil intrigues of some kind. So why not opt for the cabbage heads and the granite hearts?

Or better still: When Kierkegaard speaks about "numbskulls", he is still thinking in terms of poor, humanistic men. But why should there be men at all? Would it not suffice to have boulders? Boulders would not involve any risk to their Maker, for they could not make any unethical choices. Of course, you may insist on having something more alive than stones in your world. Well, then there could be here and there, among the boulders, an occasional carrot or cucumber, or maybe even a salamander or primeval mollusks.

But this is all fantasy. The reality related by the Bible is that God wanted a world somewhat more exciting than that. Do we blame Him? Sure we do. But could we forgive Him, sympathize with Him a tiny little bit?

CHAPTER XI

GENERAL CONCLUSION

1. The Goal of Goals and the Reality of Realities: God's Vindication

When pagan idealists (some of which have usurped the name of "Christian theologians") claim that eschatology is one great mistake, then their argument is a typically spiritualistic one: Eschatology, they think, is too deeply involved in such this-worldly phenomena as time and space, human history, definite mileposts. Why should there be such a hurry to arrive at a specific point in time-space reality? They do not accept this specificity as reality at all. To them the Eternal God is in no hurry about anything in this world. Nothing but sheer human tradition has made Him appear that way. This is mere anthropomorphism, they say. It is indeed all too human.

If the Word of God were mere human tradition, yes. But it is not. This is where they make their fatal first mistake. They "know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God" (Mark 12:24). It is sheer ignorance that causes these theologians to see such a lack of harmony between "man's urgency" to arrive at a definite point, and the universe's alleged "absence of all urgency" in that respect.

Let us rather grasp the facts: It is not particularly man who is in a hurry to have a consummation. It is particularly God. And when so many theologians fail to realize this fact, that failure is due to an earlier and fundamental one: They fail to see the importance of God's vindication of Himself--for Himself and for His people.

Man's coming upon the scene was not a mere freak, or something altogether insignificant, seen from a universal point of view. The creation of this world, described in Genesis 1 and 2 was not a mere freak, or something altogether insignificant, seen from a cosmic, universal viewpoint. These historic occurrences constitute rather tremendously important events in God's reality. For they are inestimable links in a chain of happenings most intimately connected with this all-important theme: God's urgent necessity to vindicate His own name. Hence also the tremendous importance of the Judgment, as God's servants of old were led by the Spirit to visualize it. The dramatic biblical notion of judgment, whether in the sense of krisis or kríma, whether in the still glittering flash of hopefulness of decision or in the final fatality of doom, is the culmination of all realism, and becomes a key concept in the drama of the ages, the drama of the entire universe. It is interesting to see how often new Bible translators settle for such words as "vindicated" or "justified", where the KJV has the word "cleansed" in Daniel 8:14, "And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days: then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

What we must fully realize is this: This cleansing of the Holy of Holies in the highest of the heavens aims at nothing less than the vindication of God's righteousness. This brings our own individual human lives, our own individual sins, our own individual redemption into the universal perspective which is the culmination of God's realism. At the moment when my personal life is made clean, it is God's venerable name that is being washed clean also, clean from the cruel calumnies of Satan. So the cleansing of my individual heart is no insignificant link in the great chain of events culminating with the triumphant end-time vindication of God in the universe.

2. The Eschaton of Eschata

What characterizes the time of the final consummation of God's plan is this:

All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." Psalms 145:1-18. KJV

And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." Rev. 15:2-4, KJV

Notice how harmoniously the individual finds its place in the universal in this realism. And notice the role truth has in it, truth as a certainty, truth as something resting on a firm, unshakable Rock as its eternal foundation, truth as something whose reliability can be subject to trial, openly and with such simplicity that a creature endowed with the common sense God provides liberally to all of us, without "upbraiding" (James 1:5), can come and see for himself what is right and what is wrong. What an astonishing "democracy" on the part of an all-wise and almighty God! He never ceases His once adopted plan of going down. In front of us, the little ones, the judged one. He is, of course, the Great Judge. But, not content with being this only, He here again turns the roles upside down. He places Himself "in the dock", as it were. He steps down to the level of becoming the one who is judged. God is "on trial", as the NEB expresses it; and that is the sensational way in which He proves Himself true:

"God must be true, for we read in Scripture: `When thou speakest, thou shalt be vindicated, and win the verdict when thou art on trial,'" Romans 3:4.

What more efficient way could anyone ever find to prove himself in the right. There is no more efficient way than the way of lowliness. And that is a way you and I certainly have not invented. Christ has invented it: the way of going down.

3. The Biblical Child's Jubilant Longing for Judgment

This luminous (self-shining) way is the way of the Sun of Righteousness. It is fundamental in giving everything to us who had nothing. But the phenomenon of grace that makes this possible, is a phenomenon of such total realism that we should have no reason whatsoever to go around with any "step-sonly" complexes of inferiority. There is certainly a tremendous lesson to learn for modern Christians when they consider the logics, the way of thinking, adopted by the men of God in Old Testament times. We sometimes tend to think that they were too childlike, indeed, the way they identified themselves with the cause of God, the family of God, assuming God as their legitimate Father. This concept is thrown into relief by the way they looked upon judgment, compared to the way we tend

to look upon it. Maybe ancient Israelites had a much clearer vision than we have of the reality that the vindication of God's name and the vindication of man's name is one and the same cause.

Now, please consider for a moment in this particular light the differences pointed out by C. S. Lewis between the ancient Jew and the modern Christian.

"The ancient Jews unlike ourselves, think of judgment in terms of an earthly court of justice. The difference is that the Christian pictures the case to be tried as a criminal case with himself in the dock; the Jew pictures it as a civil case with himself as the plaintiff. The one hopes for acquittal, or rather for pardon; the other hopes for a resounding triumph with heavy damages....

We need not therefore be surprised if the Psalms, and the Prophets, are full of the longing for judgment, and regard the announcement that 'judgment' is coming as good news. Hundreds and thousands of people who have been stripped of all they possess and who have the right entirely on their side will at last be heard. Of course they are not afraid of judgment. They know their case is answerable-- if only it could be heard. When God comes to judge, at last it will." C. S. Lewis: Reflections on the Psalms, pp. 10-11.

Are the two Testaments so different in this respect? I permit myself to doubt that. What could be wrong in this attitude of child-like confidence and candor? If we have passed from death to life through an event as total and realistic as a Christian conversion, should we not know for sure on whose side we are standing? If God casts His lot with us, why should not we cast our lot with Him, wholeheartedly in all respects? Either we are on the side of full vindication, or we are not on God's side at all. There is no "both-and" in the matter. It is an either-or. God has done everything in His power to make the option clear.

There was no defect in God's government, no cause for disaffection. When the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed, both the loyal and the rebellious will unite in declaring, "just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." Rev. 15.3.4

The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men.

This is the way God's inspired word portrays Man's supreme reality. Obedience is the highest praise man can offer to God. In being obedient he vindicates God. And in vindicating the Other One, he vindicates himself.

So, by way of conclusion, we may have an interesting formula, as to how the principle of vindication works out:

1) In what particular role of His historical mission did Jesus Christ prove Himself most efficient in vindicating His own great name in the world? It was precisely in vindicating the wavering cause of the other ones, even the downmost of all other ones: man.

2) Does something similar apply to you and me? When, exactly, was it that you and I came closest to a vindication of our own precarious cause in the universe? It was invariably at the precious

moment when we happened to be most self-forgetfully absorbed in the blessed task of vindicating the immaculate justice and perfect innocence of the Lamb of God.

In other words, it is consistently the incomparable spirit of Other-centeredness that takes best care of all true vindication. That is the eternal Spirit of Christ's Agape.