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THE REALITY OF FAITH

By

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To Caroline Prescott (Eaton) Johnson
A Beloved Mother
and
A Precious Memory

CONTENTS

SYNOPSIS

This volume of essays is an attempt on the part of the writer to set forth in a contemporary mode of expression the timeless truth of certain major Christian themes. These themes are as significant for our own day and time as they have been for the believers of past decades and centuries.

These essays were written over a period of one or two years during the decade of the 1980s. While they do not constitute a unified subject as does an argument of a work devoted to a limited and specific subject matter, they do, however, tend to coalesce in a structure of thought that addresses the central and essential melodies in the Christian song of redemption. I have, therefore, brought them together under the title of the final essay in the series.

The chapter, "The Beauty of Holiness," shows how the aesthetic category of beauty is related to the ethical-religious category of holiness, so that it may appropriately be said that beauty is a feature of holiness.

The chapter, "The Kingdom Hope" considers the meaning of the eschatological kingdom that Jesus taught, with special reference to termination of historical process as a stage in the conservation of significance and value.

The four chapters dealing with subject of life discuss the various meanings of the subject for contemporary man and culture. The chapter, "The Sacrifice of Life," shows how the idea of blood sacrifice is significant for us today, after the original usage of the theme has passed into the ages. The chapter, "The Transfiguration of Life," works with the historical import of the transfiguration of Jesus and the experiential meaning of the concept for us. The chapter, "The Resurrection of Life," considers the concept of the Resurrection, again as in Jesus' history and the experience of Christians. The chapter, "The Redemption of Life," discusses the Eschaton and the final redemption as portrayed in the book of Revelation.

The chapter, "The Man of Heaven," considers the nature and meaning, for us today, of Jesus as the Son of God. It is probably the most "metaphysical" essay of the series. Its thrust is a discussion of three aspects, organically intertwined, of the Man of Heaven: as centered in eternity, in history, and in experience.

The chapter, "The Sacrament of Existence," develops the argument that existence is not value-free, but rather is of sacramental character as evincing creation by Spirit.

The chapter, "The Brightness of the Saints," deals with the subject of Christian influence in the State and the society. Attention is given to the philosophical question of the ideal nature and purpose of the State and how, in that context, Christian influence is to be exerted.

The chapter, "The Perfection of Suffering," from Heb. 2:10, deals with what the American philosopher, Josiah Royce, called "the religious mission of sorrow." It is a consideration of the meaning of suffering and the Christian attitude toward it.

The final chapter in the work, "The Reality of Faith," is a consideration of the philosophical ideas of substance and evidence, and how these are transformed under the aegis of faith so as to evince the unseen spiritual realities.

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CHAPTER 1

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

"O Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."
Psalm 96:9

In the springtime of impressionable youth, I lived with my family in southwestern Oregon, where we attended a small church whose members were committed to the perfectionist persuasion that had emerged from the American Wesleyan movement. On the wall just behind the platform was a lovely banner, painted by my artistic father, which carried the words of the Psalmist, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Those words, so beautifully

inscribed, remain yet in my deepest consciousness and impel me in the effort better to understand and appreciate their meaning in a day so far removed from an earlier time in my religious life.

The expression, "the beauty of holiness," occurs in several places in the Psalms, as well as in the Chronicles. These latter works, drawn from the Psalms, paint a picture of the past as a way of conveying an Hebraic philosophy of history. But the original inspiration of the expression is found peculiarly in the Psalms.

Psalm 29:2 reads: "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." The same thought is found in Psalm 96:8-9. After the "families of the people" are enjoined to "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name," they are called to worship "in the beauty of holiness." Psalm 110:3 employs the plural, "the beauties of holiness": "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth."

In all of this lovely, and significant, poetry, not only are the ideas of holiness and beauty associated together; these are also associated with the idea of glory, along with other kindred ideas of strength, honor and majesty.

Now the expression "beauty of holiness" (behadrath kodesh), which is found both in Psalm 29:2 and Psalm 96:9, means literally "holy array." Thus Adam Clarke translates Psalm 29:2 as holy ornaments, and Psalm 96:9 as the beautiful garments of holiness. The plural form, "the beauties of holiness," as found in Psalm 110:3, is behadrey kodesh, which Clarke translates as the splendid garments of holiness.

All of these passages allude to the sacerdotal garments that the High Priest wore in carrying out his ministrations. They were given to him for beauty and glory--qualities indispensable in the high priestly function of intercession before the Divine Majesty. Now there is the question of the contemporary meaning of the ancient association of the ideas of holiness and beauty. What is the significance of "the beauty of holiness" for the Christian today? And how may that significance be ascertained?

Some progress has been made already in the direction of an answer to these questions. The terms used in these verses are, of course, Hebrew terms. "Holy array" is array that exudes beauty and glory. There is thus a certain justification for reading the original expression, "holy array," as "beauty of holiness," since the holy array is, inevitably, also splendid and beautiful.

Among biblical scholars there is some disagreement as to whether or not the root-idea of the term "holiness," or kodesh, is negative or positive. The term may be associated with the Sumerian kadistu, which means "free from defect." On this interpretation the term is connected with sacrifice, and connotes separateness--the separateness of the sacrificial offering, thus its holiness. The view that the term is positive is supported by the suggestion that the term is derived from a root that is kindred to "newness," hadhash. What "newness" may connote is the uniqueness of essential character--the character of fresh, vital, self-contained purity. On this reading, holiness is "that which belongs to God and is devoted to God."

Regardless of the origin of the word, the Old Testament fixes the usage of the term: it means "separateness" as the basis of relation to God. And this because God's separateness is, positively, God's uniqueness. God's holiness is His divinity. God is holy because He is God. Thus God's separateness, as His uniqueness, requires of us a comparable separateness in our service before Him.

Now why is holiness beautiful? How can "holy array" be properly translated as "beauty of holiness?" What legitimizes the association of holiness, as separateness, with beauty? The fact that the term "glory" is used by the Psalmist as that which is appropriate to God's name is significant. The term "glory" is kebob, which means "splendor," "excellence." Coming back to the ritual meaning of the passages, then, we have this: the holiness, or the separateness and uniqueness of God, is the ground of that glory, or splendor and excellence, which is due unto his name. Or put somewhat differently, although with the same import, the glory of God is His disclosed holiness. And it is the comparable holiness, or separateness, of the people of God that confers upon them a splendor and excellence, a glory, which shines forth with beauty. So it is, then, with justification that "holy array" is also "the beauty of holiness."

If we look at the question from a more contemporary point of view, however, what we find is this: the expression "the beauty of holiness" associates together two quite distinct ideas, the moral idea of holiness and the aesthetic idea of beauty. What, now, is meant by bringing two such seemingly divergent categories, the moral and the aesthetic, into union? More precisely, what is there about the category of the aesthetic, of the idea of the beautiful, that permits the qualification, or characterization, of the moral quality of holiness as possessing the aesthetic quality of beauty? We have thus far shown that the root meanings of the ancient Hebrew notions support this association, but can we look to more contemporary considerations to lend further support to this association? That is our present question.

It is helpful, first, to consider the term "holiness" with respect to its moral connotation. And it is instructive at this juncture to look into the writings of Wesley, whose writings contain a great deal of discussion of this particular subject.

There are, Wesley writes (Sermon CXXXIV, vii. 455-56)[1], two branches of holiness: negative and positive. Thus,

> **All the Liturgy of the Church is full of petitions for that holiness without which, the Scripture everywhere declares, no man shall see the Lord. And these are summed up in those comprehensive words which we are supposed to be so frequently repeating: "Cleanse the thoughts of your hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name." It is evident that in the last clause of this petition, all outward holiness is contained: Neither can it be carried to a greater height, or expressed in stronger terms. And those words, "Cleanse the thoughts of your hearts," contain the negative branch of inward holiness; the height and depth of which is purity of heart, by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. The remaining words, "that we may perfectly love thee," contain the positive part of**

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1 All quotations are from *The Works of John Wesley*. 14 vols. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House.

holiness; seeing this love, which is the fulfilling of the law, implies the whole mind that was in Christ.

It may be well, at this point, to say something concerning Wesley's view as to how inward holiness is obtained. The "holiness movement" of the 19th and up into the 20th centuries, at least certain aspects of that movement, stressed the instantaneous obtainment of holiness. In placing such absolute stress upon instantaneous sanctification, a certain artificiality came to characterize the doctrine of holiness.

Wesley is clear that justification and sanctification are distinct works of grace. In the preface of his second volume of hymns, he wrote:

> 9. Neither, therefore, dare we affirm (as some have done) that this full salvation is at once given to true believers. There is, indeed, an instantaneous (as well as a gradual) work of God done in the souls of his children; and there wants not, we know, a cloud of witnesses, who have received, in one moment, either a clear sense of forgiveness of their sins, or the abiding witness of the Holy Spirit. But we do not know a single instance, in any place, of a person's receiving, in one and the same moment, remission of sins, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and a new, a clean heart (xiv. 326).

Yet the distinctness of the two experiences, justification and sanctification, does not signify, for Wesley, that sanctification is wholly instantaneous. It has, to be sure, an instantaneous phase, but this along with its gradual phase. Sanctification begins with justification, proceeds in a line of development, but then, at some time, is brought to qualitative completion in an instantaneous bestowal of the Holy Spirit, and then, further, progresses, quantitatively, throughout life. All this is clearly and unmistakably set forth in Sermon LXXXV (vi. 509):

> 1. Afterwards we experience the proper Christian salvation; whereby, "through grace," we "are saved by faith;" consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, shows this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as "a grain of mustard-seed, which, at first, is the least of all seeds," but afterwards puts forth large branches, and becomes a great tree; till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with the pure love to God and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we "grow up in all things into Him that is our Head;" till we attain "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

This passage, too, points up the negative and positive aspects of inward holiness. The negative aspect is stated in the phrase, "the heart is cleansed from all sin." The positive aspect is found in the words, "filled with the pure love to God and man."

It is the positive aspect, as Wesley defined it, which is particularly important in our developing the association of holiness with beauty. Several further references to Wesley are helpful at this point. In his Journal of Thursday, September 13, 1739 (i. 225), he wrote:

> "I believe it [sanctification (or holiness)] to be an inward thing, namely, the life of God in the soul of man; a participation of the

> divine nature; the mind that was in Christ; or the renewal of our heart, after the image of Him that created us.

Throughout his writings there are other phrases that express the same idea of inward holiness: "the image of God stamped on the heart" (iii. 341), "the renewal of the soul 'in the image of God wherein it was created'" (vii. 316). From inward holiness springs outward holiness: "perfection is another name for universal holiness: Inward and outward righteousness: Holiness of life, arising from holiness of heart" (vi. 414). "In a word, holiness is the having 'the mind that was in Christ,' and the 'walking as Christ walked'" (vii. 317).

Now there are passages in Wesley in which he characterizes the content of positive holiness. It embraces, he said, "every holy and heavenly temper--in particular, lowliness, meekness, gentleness, temperance, and longsuffering" (vii. 316). In the Extract from the Difference between the Moravians and the Methodists, he wrote:

> Scriptural holiness is the image of God; the mind which was in Christ; the love of God and man; lowliness, gentleness, temperance, patience, chastity (x. 203).

And, referring to Paul's words to the Galatians, Wesley further listed the qualities of inward holiness: "It is the one undivided fruit of the Spirit, which he describes thus: 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity (so the word should be translated here), meekness, temperance'" (vi. 413).

Immediately following the reference to Galatians, Wesley went on to say:

> What a glorious constellation of graces is here! Now, suppose all these to be knit together in one, to be united together in the soul of a believer, this is Christian perfection (vi. 413-14).

In Sermon XXIV (v. 294-95), Wesley used the expression, concerning which we are particularly concerned in this discussion, "the beauty of holiness." He wrote:

> 1. The beauty of holiness, of that inward man of the heart which is renewed after the image of God . . . . The ornament of a meek, humble, loving spirit . . . . This inward religion bears the shape of God so visibly impressed upon it . . . . We may say of this, in a secondary sense, even as the Son of God himself, that it is the "brightness of his glory, the express image of his person;" . . . "the beaming forth of his" eternal "glory;" and yet so tempered and softened, that even the children of men may herein see God and live; . . . "the character, the stamp, the living impression of his person," who is the fountain of beauty and love, the original source of all excellency and perfection.

Wesley encouraged others to testify to the obtainment of Christian perfection, and the Journal records many instances in which they professed the experience. But he was disinclined to reveal matters concerning his own religious life. Yet there are occasions when he did so. In 1725, at the age of twenty-two, Wesley read Jeremy Taylor's discussion of purity of intention. Forty years later he wrote in his Journal, May 14, 1765, of the profound impact Taylor's discussion made upon him:

> I was struck particularly with the chapter upon intention, and felt a fixed intention 'to give myself up to God.' In this I was much confirmed

soon after by the 'Christian Pattern,' and longed to give God all my heart. This is just what I mean by Perfection now: I sought after it from that hour.

. . . . . .

In 1730 I began to be homo unius libri [a man of one book]; to study (comparatively) no book but the Bible. I then saw, in a stronger light than ever before, that only one thing is needful, even faith that worketh by the love of God and man, all inward and outer holiness; and I groaned to love God with all my heart, and to serve Him with all my strength (iii. 212-13).

The question is now raised as to whether Wesley himself reached the experience that he sought. Is there any indication in his writings that he found "the Great Salvation?"

Dr. Olin Curtis believes that he has found the passage in the Journal where Wesley records his own obtainment of Christian perfection. In the Journal entry of December 23-25, 1744, Wesley writes:

> **Sun. 23.--I was unusually lifeless and heavy, till the love feast in the evening . . . .**
>
> **Yet the next day [December 24] I was again as a dead man; but in the evening, while I was reading Prayers at Snowsfield, I found such light and strength as I never remember to have had before. I saw every thought, as well as action or word, just as it was rising in my heart; and whether it was right before God, or tainted with pride and selfishness. I never knew before (I mean not as at this time) what it was "to be still before God."**
>
> **Tues. 25.--I waked, by the grace of God, in the same spirit; and about eight, being with two or three that believed in Jesus, I felt such an awe and tender sense of the presence of God as greatly confirmed me therein: So that God was before me all the day long. I sought and found him in every place; and could truly say, when I lay down at night, "Now I have lived a day" (i. 478-79).**

Dr. Curtis sums up the subject:

> **To anyone familiar with John Wesley's careful, realistic manner of speech, it is evident that we have here the same sort of testimony to the experience of holiness that we have in his Journal, May 24, 1738, to the experience of conversion. If the one is not quite so near a full definition as the other, it surely is just as expressive of the fact. I find it almost impossible to read Wesley's words in the light of all his later utterance about the doctrine of Christian perfection, and not consider this date, December 24, 1744, as the probable time when he began to love God supremely.[2]**

Viewed from the side of the term "holiness," which is one of the terms in the title of this discussion, we are now in a position to grasp the import of the association of the idea of holiness with the idea of beauty. The beauty of holiness, as Wesley himself suggested, consists in the "glorious constellation of graces," their being "knit together in one, . . . united together." Christian perfection is the harmony of the graces of inward holiness. It now remains, to complete this study, to view the association of holiness and beauty from the viewpoint of beauty. What is there in the idea of beauty that serves properly to characterize holiness as beauty?

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2 Olin Alfred Curtis, *The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Kegel Publications, 1956), p. 376.

Although none is employed in the passages in the Psalms that we have considered above, the Hebrew vocabulary does contain words that are properly translated as "beauty." Thus, in Psalm 27:4:

> One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.

And in Psalm 50:2,

> Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

The word "beauty" in Psalm 27:4 is no`am, which means agreeableness, and, by implication, delight, suitableness, splendor, or grace. It can also be translated as "pleasantness." The word has its root in nawame, which means to be agreeable. This particular form of the term "beauty" is appropriately used in the Psalm, since here beauty--the beauty of the Lord--is the object of our desire and is thus suited to that desire agreeably. Thus we find delight in the Lord.

But in Psalm 50:2 the word "beauty" is yofee, which is translated simply as "beauty." The word is derived from the primitive root yawfaw, which means to be bright. And, it may be readily seen, it is the appropriate word in this Psalm, since the reference is to the shining forth of the Lord.

Thus, in terms of these two forms of the term "beauty," the Old Testament sense of beauty is agreeableness, or pleasantness, and brightness.

We are now at the place where we may approach the question of beauty from the viewpoint of aesthetic theory. And here caution is well-advised. First, care must be taken not to force a contemporary aesthetic theory, in an ad hoc fashion, upon the biblical expression. To do this is but to come up with something artificial and thus irrelevant to the tenor of the ancient literature. Second, there is--as is the case with most of the things that occupy philosophers--no agreement upon an aesthetic theory. That is, there are varied and even radically differing views as to the nature of beauty.

Aesthetic theories are, usually, arrived at on the basis of an already-held theory of reality. A given philosopher will develop a theory of beauty based upon his theory as to the nature of things. For example, Etienne Gilson's theory of beauty is founded upon the philosophy of Aquinas, and through Aquinas goes back to Aristotle. A philosophical naturalism, as in George Santayana, is developed as the basis for a quite different theory of beauty.

Now it seems to me that one cannot proceed in this fashion. Thus, the question is raised as to just how is it that one can come up with an aesthetic theory that does not depend upon a given metaphysical prejudice. Is an alternative possible?

There is, I think, such an alternative. The alternative comes to view when we raise the question, from the standpoint of our human experience of beauty and art, as to what that experience evidently is and involves. We know this for sure: we do experience beauty, both beauty in nature and beauty in the creation and response to art.

We will narrow our investigation to the sphere of beauty in art. This will, it is hoped, give us a platform upon which to come to some understanding of beauty, not only in art, but in nature. Since, now, the majority of us are not artists who create the art object, we will have to begin at the only point where we have the requisite acquaintance with the aesthetic sphere; and that is the response to beauty in art.

We respond to many stimuli. In the process of everyday living, this response is carried out, in the main, through what are called signs. Some datum of perceptual experience, for example, is named, taken as a sign for some further datum of experience, acted upon with either agreeable or disagreeable results. The tissue of our perceptual experiences, the connections among them in which some signify others, is the makeup of our practical living.

The same sort of sign-function is at work at the level of theory and science. A theoretical construct, or scientific concept, has meaning because it refers to some aspect of the world. The reference can be put to an appropriate test and be verified, if, that is, the reference does indeed hold.

Now this characteristic of both the perceptual and cognitive--in the sense of scientific--consciousness is what is known as transitive. By that term it is meant that the sign, whether a perceptual item or a conceptual item, points to something beyond its own occurrence in consciousness, refers to something else transcendent to it.

The response to beauty is wholly unlike the response to a sign, either as perceptual or conceptual sign. In the response to beauty, as in a work of art, the response is locked into the beautiful object. One's attention is fixed upon the beauty that is beheld, and thus does not move away to something else--as an emotion or some happening in the real world--,does not take the beauty as a sign for something outside of that beauty itself. In sum, the response to beauty is what is known as intransitive.

This brief description of the aesthetic response, the response to beauty, raises the question, it will be readily seen, as to just what there is about beauty, as in a work of art, which causes this unique kind of response, this intransitive response, that focuses its attention in an all-consuming fashion upon the object of beauty. Or, to pick up on the language of the Psalms, what is it about beauty that is responsible for that absorption of consciousness in which delight is taken in the brilliance of beauty in and for itself?

There are two, inseparable, elements of a work of art; hence, there are two inseparable elements in artistic beauty. These are form and content. An adequate theory of art must do justice to both of these elements; must not overemphasize one at the neglect of the other.

Thus art is about something. There is a material content that is contained in the art object. In music, for example, there is sensuous, and pleasing, sound. In a poem there is some reference to an element of the experienced world.

But there is also the element of form. In music, again, the sensuous sound is organized, patterned, so that, for example, a symphony is developed, in the organization of which the complex of sound moves through phases of

fulfillment and completion. And in a poem the material of experience is expressed through the forms of cadence and rhythm.

What occurs, now, is that in the art object both the content and the form are changed from what they are outside of that object of beauty. The form is not now the abstract form of logic or mathematics, and the content is not now the content of actual experience. In the grip of beauty, the form is transformed and the content is transubstantiated. We can, to be sure, state what, e.g., a poem is about, or paraphrase the poem, but in so doing we miss the content that is within the language of the poem. Ordinary and scientific language is transparent, the object meant comes through the language. For example, a scientific statement can be made in many different languages and the same content, or meaning, is disclosed without any loss. Here the object meant is independent of the language and thus comes through the language. The content of the poem, what the poem, as a poem, is about, however, is not something that exists independently of the poetic language. On the contrary, poetic content exists, exclusively, within the language, with the result that something of the meaning of a poem is lost in the attempt to translate the poetic language. Poetic language is untranslatable. Poetic language is thus opaque. The meanings and values that the poem carries are disclosed in the language of the poem. This restriction of poetic content to the language of the poem is the result of the organic fusion of form and content, which, as we have observed, is characteristic of all art. Immanent meaning rules the art object in the fusion of form and content.

It may be helpful to give a couple of illustrations of the immanent meaning of a poem, resulting from the organic fusion of form and content.

Take the statement: "I love you and always shall." This statement asserts a subject matter, that of pledged love. This subject matter, as we have just done, can be asserted in a factual statement. The factual statement is the paraphrase. But now the poetry:

As fair as thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in love am I;
And I will love thee still, my dear
Till a' the seas gang dry.

What the poem is about, now, is different from what can be stated propositionally. The choice of words, their organization, yield something entirely new. In contrast to the words of the paraphrase, the logical proposition, "the words of the poem . . . are handled for their own sakes, and with that strangeness which enters into the proportion of beauty."[3]

In the book of Ruth, Ruth expresses the devotion of an alien daughter to her husband's mother. This subject matter, too, can be stated in the form of a factual proposition. But how different is the poetic content:

> **And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more, if aught but death part thee and me (Ruth 1:16-17).**

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3 Samuel Alexander, *Beauty and Other Forms of Value* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1933), p. 55.

In these lines the emotion of love overflows into a perfection of words beyond description in other terms.

The organizing principles that are at work with subject matter, or content, are those of harmony, balance, and centrality. Harmony, which achieves unity by recurrence and complex unification of temporal and spatial items, is especially significant in the temporal arts, as music. Balance achieves unity by contrast, by a close and complex juxtaposition of similar and dissimilar items, especially spatial items. It is particularly important in painting. The combination of harmony and balance yields rhythm. Centrality obtains when items are so arranged in a complex that one item, or group of items, dominates the others. It is these principles, then, that work up the content of experience into beauty, the meaning of which is immanent in the object of beauty and which is beheld intransitively for the sake of beauty itself.

Beauty then, whether created or natural, obtains as the order and unification of the elements of content. Beauty is the proportionality of the material of experience. It is for this reason, when viewed from the viewpoint of the nature of beauty, that it can be said, with accuracy, that there is the "beauty of holiness." In the disposition and life of the Christian, there lie the graces of the Spirit of God, and they lie within the matrix of proper proportionality. For this reason, Christian holiness is a form of beauty. "What a glorious constellation of graces is here," Wesley said. As "knit together in one," as "united together in the soul of a believer," these graces yield Christian perfection, which is, precisely, the beauty of holiness. Inward holiness is beautiful because, within the soul of the Christian, there works the leaven of Godliness: harmony, balance, and centrality. With harmony and balance, centrality lifts the human spirit, with all of its inner resources and powers, into passionate focus upon the clarity and brightness of divine holiness and divine beauty.

Christian holiness is also, as Wesley always insisted, outward holiness. Not only is holiness the having the "mind that was in Christ," it is also the "walking as Christ walked." Christian perfection is, he said, "universal holiness: Inward and outward righteousness: Holiness of life, arising from holiness of heart" (vi. 414). Just as is inward holiness, as we have tried to show, a form of beauty, so is outward holiness marked by the proportionality of beauty. I want to bring this discussion to a close by some mention of this dimension of the "beauty of holiness."

I want to begin this part of the discussion by referring, again, to Psalm 110:3, where the Psalmist sings of "the beauties of holiness."

> Thy people shall be willing
> in the day of thy power,
> in the beauties of holiness
> from the womb of the morning:
> thou hast the dew of thy youth.

Here we find a marvelous example of the immanent meaning of beauty that defies translation into literal terms. Somehow, although we cannot say just how, we yet "know" what the psalmist is saying, although we have no ordinary, or usual, words into which to put the import of the passage. As we dwell upon these words, we see that there are forms and levels of meaning which are combined in a strange, mysterious, manner. These forms and levels reach down into the depth of our earthly experience, yet take those primordial nuances

of our intimate humanity and lift them into the idealized world of spirituality. There is talk of the morning with its dew; there is talk of the womb and of youth. But there is more, for the womb is strangely combined with the morning, and the dew is not the dew of the morning, but the dew of youth. And, further, with all this there is talk of the day of divine power and of the willingness of the people of God. What does all this mean--this gem that glitters with such a wondrous mixture of nuances of significance?

It is the power of grace that saves and brings Christian holiness. "The splendid garments of holiness" are the possessions of the children of God, their holiness of heart and life. These are the noble dispositions and the noble patterns of conduct. It is these splendid garments that become the children of the majestic Lord. The work of inward and outward holiness is the work of God. There is "the womb of the morning," suffused with freshness and purity, from which issue the godly in heart and life. There is the "the dew of thy youth," the divine nativity whose years are ageless in eternal youth and whose offspring, as the dew radiates the brilliance of the morning light, radiate in heart and life the divine splendor.

In the day of power, God's people are willing. The carrying out of that willingness in the conduct of life yields the beauty, the proportionality, of outward holiness. What this means, essentially, is that the unity that brings the inward graces into harmony serves to bring unity and harmony within the fabric of humanity. To live outwardly the "glorious constellation of graces," as these are "united together in the soul" of the Christian, is to see one another, not as many and mutually conflicting creatures, but as gathered into a unity of all human life encompassed within the enclosure of supernatural and divine embracement. The beautiful embodies, as we have seen, harmonious relations. In the harmony of all life, there is, then, beauty. In the beauty of holiness, there lies the promise that all human life can be linked in genuine spiritual unity. The harbinger of the redemption of all peoples is the redeemed Church, the ekklesia of God. In the mystic union of the faithful in the Church, in the very beauty of that harmony, is found the hope of healing and redemption for the world. Holiness is the beauty of harmony, the harmony of the graces of the spirit, the harmony of the people of God, and the final and decisive promise, in the unity with the Lord of all, of the harmony of the children of men.

> Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.
>
> That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
> I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17: 17, 21, 23).

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CHAPTER 2

THE KINGDOM HOPE

I saw in the night visions,
and, behold, one like the Son of man
came with the clouds of heaven,
and came to the Ancient of days,
and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion,
and glory, and a kingdom,
that all people, nations, and languages,
should serve him:
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom shall not be destroyed
Daniel 7:13, 14.

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the
clouds with great power and glory.
Mark 13:26.

While the Old Testament never uses the phrase, "The Kingdom of God," yet the idea of this kingdom is rooted in Judaism. The Old Testament writers meant by this idea the kingly dominion or rule of God. The kingdom was an eternal fact, "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation" (Daniel 4:3); it was being presently realized in the lives of the faithful; and it was a consummation to be realized in the future, "the Lord shall be King over all the earth" (Zechariah 14:9).

In Jewish history the "messianic hope" took different forms. Its early expression envisioned the restoration in Palestine or some other part of the earth of a kingdom in which the people would be compensated for their difficulties. In the book of Daniel, which was written under the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C., a sharp distinction is made between the present age and the age to come. Believing, as he did, in the resurrection of the dead, Daniel foresaw an otherworldly kingdom not bound by earthly limitations, one in which both the last generation and the resurrected dead would share.

Later Jewish thought subscribed to a two-fold hope: "the days of the Messiah" were a time between this present age and the age to come. The book of Revelation voices this double hope in the concept of the intermediate period of the millennium.

There are occasions in the synoptic gospels in which reference to the kingdom is made by others than Jesus. These usages of the term, while familiar to the Gospel writers, are not necessarily synonymous with conceptions ascribed to Jesus. And some of the usages that the writers do ascribe to Jesus are, it should be noted, probably later representations and not the actual words of Jesus. For example, Luke's emphasis upon the delay of the kingdom[4] and his reference to the signs that indicate the end of the present age[5] both reflect a later time than that of the historic Jesus. Thus, in some regards, biblical scholars are correct in disassociating the historic Jesus from the expectation of the new kingdom.

But it is not correct to disassociate the historic Jesus, as attested to by the synoptic writers, from any and all reference to the apocalyptic kingdom. To attempt this is to perform a tour de force that the New Testament does not support.

To the first century Jews, the idea of the kingdom of God was a familiar theme. For example, in the Similitudes of the Book of Enoch, which was composed during the period 163-80 B.C. and fictitiously ascribed to Enoch, Enoch is represented as saying:

> **And there I saw one who had a Head of Days, and his head was white like wool, and with Him another being whose countenance had the appearance . .**

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4 "*And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear*" (Luke 19:11).

5 "*So likewise, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand*" (Luke 21:31).

> . like one of the holy angels. And I asked . . . concerning that Son of Man, who he was, and whence he was . . . . And he answered and said unto me, This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness . . . . And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen will . . . put down the kings from their thrones and kingdom . . . And there will stand in that day all the kings, and all the exalted, and those who hold the earth, and they will see and recognize him how he sits on the throne of his glory, and righteousness is judged before him . . . (chs. 46, 62).

These words, written by an unknown author, are an embellishment of the vision of Daniel in chapter 7 of that book. Now, there is little question but that Jesus was familiar with the eschatological ideas as found both in the books of Daniel and Enoch. His words as recorded by Mark, "the son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory," are resonant with the language of Daniel. And it would be rather foolish to suppose that Jesus was not familiar with the apocalyptic language of the more recent writings, which were written into the culture and thought of his time.

The earliest traditions support the claim that Jesus taught the coming of the kingdom. Mark 9:1 records Jesus as saying: "That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." Here Jesus not only refers to the kingdom, but to its soon-coming. And on his last night on earth it is recorded that he said to his disciples that he would not drink of the fruit of the vine until he drank it with them new in the kingdom of God (Mark 14:25).

The burden of Jesus' message, then, was that this kingdom was near. What was important for men, then, was that they be ready to enter it. And this Jesus taught, again and again, by parable. Jesus' parables are intimately associated with the hope and promise of the coming kingdom--that kingdom, again, that is near at hand.

So it appears, then, that Jesus shared in the eschatological hope, prevalent in his day, of the near approach of the kingdom of God. The question now is, however, whether he added anything to that current eschatological view, and, if so, just what did he add.

It has been suggested that there are two critical additions that Jesus made to the Jewish idea of the kingdom. The first is that he replaced the idea of an imminent catastrophic ushering in of the kingdom with the idea of a slow evolutionary growth of the kingdom. Those who take this view call attention to the "parables of growth." For example, Matthew 13:31-33 likens the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard seed that grows to fruition and to a portion of yeast that spreads throughout the meal. But these analogies do not support the idea of a long evolutionary growth; at most they suggest a brief process of growth--a process that culminates in the harvest, a figure of the judgment that ushers in the kingdom.

Since the days of Origen, it has been suggested that Jesus' conception of the kingdom was that of an inner, spiritual kingdom. Support for this view is found in translating Luke 17:21 as "the kingdom of God is within you." This translation and the view that the translation serves are incorrect. The words entos humon mean, instead, "among you," or "in your midst." It is probable that Jesus was here referring to the new age, of which his ministry was the harbinger.

In reading the New Testament, it becomes clear that Jesus did bring a new dimension to the idea of the kingdom of God. He taught that those who

would possess the kingdom were those who were the least expected to do so. Not the wealthy, but the poor, would inherit the kingdom of God. Not the wise and the sophisticated, but the little children and the childlike, would enter the kingdom. Not the fortunate, or the "beautiful people," but the despised and the suffering, would in that day rise up to be called blessed. Small wonder, then, that those in ecclesiastical power turned against him!

It is clear also that Jesus believed that his own ministry was an early stage in the realization of the sovereignty of God in that new and divine kingdom. He is as the tender branch that sends forth the leaves that witness to the coming summer; he is as the red glow in the eastern sky that heralds the sun-lit day. However his casting out of the demons is to be interpreted, Jesus regarded his healing work as a sign of the realized kingdom: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matthew 12:28).

Jesus brought to the idea of the kingdom a new seriousness. The righteous God of history was about to usher in his kingdom. What was important, then, was that people should strive, with absolute commitment, to enter into that kingdom. In the journey to that kingdom, there is no turning back; the kingdom is as a pearl, or as a treasure in a field, for which no sacrifice is too great.

The great parables of the kingdom have profound ethical significance. Those who have crossed the boundary and now dwell in the borders of the coming kingdom are the recipients of unmerited grace (Matthew 20:1), are therefore disposed to forgive others (Matthew 18:23), are diligent in their fitness for the kingdom as possession of the wedding garment (Matthew 22:2) and of the oil in the lamps (Matthew 25:1), and, finally, are diligent in the employment of their talents in their service in the call of the kingdom (Matthew 25:14). In all of these, and like, parables, it is urged upon us that we be devoted to the ethical values and ideals of the new kingdom that is soon to come in its fullness. For it is the sovereignty of the God of righteousness that secures, finally and ultimately, the kingdom blessedness.

In Jewish thought "Messiah" was not a concept with any definite meaning. The term, which means "anointed," referred to anyone through whom God asserted his divine sovereignty. While many at that time hoped for a messiah to usher in God's new age, others felt no need of any such regent. God himself would be king in the new age.

It is quite clear that Jesus did not regard himself as a messiah in the sense of ushering in a new political entity in defiance of Rome. He did not claim to be the messiah in the sense of an earthly son of David who would restore an historical kingdom. This, indeed, was always far from his mind.

In the Gospel of John there is unmistakable indication that Jesus believed in his messiahship as the one who brings, not an historical, time-bound kingdom, but a divine kingdom of grace and redemption. But in the three synoptic gospels the situation is remarkably different. For example, in Mark, which is the first of the three synoptic gospels and the basis for the later two, Jesus made no public profession of his messiahship. When Peter, in Caesarea Philippi, expressed the disciples' belief in Jesus' messiahship, "thou art the Christ," Jesus forbid their public proclamation of that belief (Mark 8:29-30). He never defended his authority by recourse to a messianic claim: "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things" (Mark 11:33).

There is the view that Jesus found the key to his messianic mission in the figure of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. Some support for this view is found in Mark's account of the great confession, since immediately after that confession Jesus "began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer" (Mark 8:31). But this is conjecture. In first-century Judaism the passage in Isaiah was not given a messianic interpretation. And Jesus never referred to himself, in the language of the chapter, as "the servant of the Lord," nor did he ever quote from the chapter.

What is significant, however, is that Jesus did, in Mark 8:31, combine the idea of the Son of man, with whom he professed identity, with suffering. In this regard, he broke from the use of the term in Daniel and the later pseudo-writings.

In the book of Daniel, the Son of man comes with the clouds of heaven and appears before God, the Ancient of days, as regent of the divine kingdom. Now, while Jesus had come to realize that his destiny was that of suffering and death, he yet continued to identify himself as the Son of man whose work it was, coming with the clouds of heaven, to usher in the divine kingdom. It was as the Son of man that Jesus connected his person with the apocalyptic kingdom of God, and not as the "suffering servant" in Isaiah.

In Daniel's vision of the Son of man, the figure comes from heaven; there is no thought of any humiliation and death attaching to the figure. How, then, was it possible for Jesus, who saw his saving work as that of suffering and death, to continue to identify himself as the Son of man "coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26)?

Given this apparent contradiction, many biblical scholars believe that Jesus never described himself as the Son of man, that the description is an interpolation inserted by the early church waiting the return of Jesus.

When faced with this difficulty, there are, again, two ways to proceed. A more traditional and conservative approach combines the two ideas of suffering and regency in the claim that the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Jesus will physically come in the clouds to bring the kingdom of God upon the earth. For those who do take this route, the difficulties in a literal interpretation are either glossed over or ignored.

A more rationalistic and liberal approach, which finds an embarrassment in the Danielic Son of man and yet which wishes to find a place within Christianity for the ethical ideals of the divine kingdom, resolves that embarrassment by the suggestion that it was impossible for Jesus to associate himself with the Son of man. But why should it have been impossible for Jesus to do so, to combine regency with suffering? This sort of thing may be impossible for us today, but that is no evidence that it was impossible for a first-century prophet who announced a final divine denouement.

On the surface of the New Testament scriptures, then, the conclusion holds that Jesus did regard himself, in the idiom of Daniel, as the Son of Man and that his mission was to bring, coming with the clouds, the kingdom of God. And he knew, also, that his suffering and death were in the near-offing. And, again, if we cannot, with our logical intellects, reconcile these two dimensions, that is no reason why Jesus could not have brought them together in his own consciousness.

In more recent times, there has been an effort to reinterpret the concept of the kingdom of God so as to bring it into line with modern modes of thought. Immanuel Kant, for example, interpreted the kingdom of God as "the ethical state." Albert Ritschl thought of it as "the summum bonum [supreme good] which God realises in men; and at the same time it is their common task, for it is only through the rendering of obedience on man's part that God's sovereignty possesses continued existence."[6] Walter Rauschenbusch popularized this idea in his "social gospel": "The Kingdom of God is humanity organized according to the will of God. . . . It is the Christian transfiguration of the social order."[7]

C. H. Dodd has proposed the notion of "realized eschatology." On this view Jesus' eschatological message was completely realized in his ministry. The kingdom had already come. The words of Jesus about a future kingdom were an alien importation from the disciples.[8]

Dodd's interpretation rests, however, upon an exegesis that, it has been shown, contains serious difficulties.[9]

All of these non-uturistic views of the kingdom fail to account for the futuristic hope that inspired the disciples. If this source is not in Jesus himself, then just where is it found? At this time, that source has not been found elsewhere. The absence of such a source, of course, is no argument that no such source ever existed. But until it is found it is safer to take the biblical record and accept the fact that Jesus did believe in an eschatological kingdom and that he, the Son of man was, as in Daniel, to bring it "in the clouds with great power and glory."

We must not assume that we need to extricate Jesus, who lived in the first century, from a view that we today find an embarrassment, since that view does not fit in with our own modern forms of understanding. Rather, we need to exercise both caution and modesty at this point. We need to be cautious and not assume that what for us is a logical difficulty was such a difficulty for Jesus, i.e., combining his mission of suffering with that of kingdom regency. Such a caution will prevent us from wresting the biblical record in the interest of artificially squaring that record with what we today find intellectually acceptable. And, further, we need to be modest and realize that, while our contemporary forms of scientific understanding yield knowledge of certain features of the world, they do not, however, yield knowledge of other features of reality with which we are in living transaction and that may be brought to view by the deeper resources of reason. To assume then, that since our own science rules out the specific cosmology in terms of which Jesus articulated his kingdom message, his message has no essential meaning that lends itself to the larger insight of reason is

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6 *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, tr. H. R. Mackintosh (Edinburgh: T. & T. clark, 1902), p. 30.

7 *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1917), pp. 142, 145.

8 *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son's, 1936.

9For example, Kenneth W. Clark, "Realized Eschatology," *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, LIX (1940), 367-83.

but an arrogance born of the myopic view that science is the only mode of cognition.

Yet it is true that, like the first-century peoples, we are conditioned by our particular form of intellectual understanding. Given their form of cognitive symbolism, in which Jesus himself shared, the idea of the divine kingdom introduced catastrophically into the affairs of the world made sense. But, given our own symbolic forms of empirical science, the understanding of God's kingdom that Jesus presented cannot be held by us today in exactly the same way. But that, as we have been at pains to show, is no reason why we should attempt any ad hoc reconstruction of Jesus and his first-century understanding or, for that matter, relegate his eschatological message to the dustbin of nonsense.

If we cannot hold to Jesus' view in exactly the form in which he presented it, what is the significance of the ancient eschatological hope for God's kingdom for us today? If we ought not to excise that view from its source, Jesus himself, what then can we do? We can simply ignore it, of course, and continue on in our unbridled secularism and unconcern for the deeper spiritual initiatives of mankind. Or we can have the insight, and fairness, to admit that Jesus was historically conditioned by the understanding of his own time, and that, while we cannot rewrite any "Jesus" history in the terms of what were foreign to that time, we can still find, amidst the older language, significance for us today. Is that possible? I think that it is.

We have no grounds, fundamentalism and literalism notwithstanding, to transfer the immanence of the kingdom to our own times. When the modern premillennialist predicts that Jesus is coming soon in our own time, he is as guilty of an extraneous biblical interpretation of Jesus' words as is the modern eschatologist who finds only a social meaning to that ancient hope of kingdom. And if the literalist view has its difficulties, so too does the reconstructionist view. God's message, in Jesus, is not directed, essentially, to any social reconstruction. It is the message of God's saving act. It is the better part of wisdom, therefore, to admit the biblical tradition as it is, that Jesus was indeed the eschatological prophet, the Son of Man, and thus find, in an honest way, the significance which that account holds for us in our contemporary culture.

We may as well accept the fact that Jesus carried out his ministry from an orientation radically different from that of our own contemporary orientation, and that he expected that he would bring his kingdom suddenly and soon. Once we realize that he was part of his own world, there is no reason to be troubled that he saw the finality of God's redemption in foreshortened perspective. But there is, in fact, a more essential reason why he stressed the imminence of the kingdom. And this consideration lends a significance to his kingdom message that, as we shall see in the sequel, holds good for us today. In proclaiming the offer of the ideal perfection of the kingdom, Jesus could hardly avoid expressions that foreshorten the time-process. "The very suddenness springs from the need to express a junction between the Simultaneity of God and the Successivenss of man."[10] The realization of the kingdom at the end-time is, indeed, an urgency to which all human history, with its tragedy and pathos, attests without question.

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10 Fr. von Hügel, Essays and Addresses, i. 133-34, in *The Idea of Perfection*, by R. Newton Flew (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 39.

Hence the kingdom must come soon and shortly. That is Jesus' thought, and thus the impulse to announce the immanence of the kingdom in apocalyptic thought-forms. And there is no reason to be troubled that he couched the coming of the eschatological kingdom in a time-bound idiom that we may not take in its exact literality. We must then move on and find the level of significance, relevant to our own day, which that historically conditioned eschatology holds out for us.

We have earlier indicated that the Jewish idea of the kingdom contained the feature of present realization in the lives of the faithful. Essentially this same feature is found in Jesus' thought of the kingdom, in the sense that his own ministry is the initial realization of the kingdom among men. Yet it must be kept in mind that Jesus employed the idea of the future eschatological kingdom as the background in terms of which the presently realized kingdom even now exists in his own ministry. This is an important point, and one that is often overlooked.

What is distinctive about the kingdom in its present, but partial, realization, is that it is a salvational kingdom. It is also an ethical kingdom, to be sure, but its ethical character is dependent upon its salvational character.

The kingdom ethic is found, par excellence, in the magnificent Sermon on the Mount. In that sermon there are promises and injunctions, all of which are possible, not on merely human terms, but on the terms of "the kingdom of heaven." The Beatitudes are promises that can be realized only in the kingdom of God: comfort, inheritance, satisfaction, mercy, and the vision of God. They describe those who dwell in that kingdom: those who cleave to God in trust, are single-minded in their love of God, are merciful to and forgiving of others, and wherever they go are bringers of peace. Likewise with the injunctions: they, too, can be realized only through the power and righteousness of the kingdom. Freedom from that anxiety, or distraction by cares, which, as Mark says (4:19), "choke the word," is possible only in the kingdom of God. Selfishness and greed in the amassing of material wealth, with no thought of the treasures of the spirit and the right use of property, are expunged through the power of the kingdom. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, all of which tyrannize the soul, every root of worldliness, are struck down by the kingdom ethic.

Now, as is the case with the eschatological teachings of Jesus, the ethical teachings are also historically conditioned and reflect the character of the world of that day. And the teachings are couched in picturesque and figurative language. These factors have to be considered when evaluating the significance of those ethical teachings for our own modern world. What may be more important to note, however, is that the purely ethical considerations of those teachings that have to do with both conduct and disposition are absolute. They are not capable of being realized in their absolute import, not only by unconverted humanity, but by those who now share in the presently realized kingdom. It is only in the reference to an eschatological kingdom yet to come that the absolute imperative of the ethic becomes significant. The demands here are those of a new and transcendent age now breaking into the present age. And it is the promise of that new age that brings the saving grace and power to sustain us in our journey to the realization of those demands. In other words, Jesus did take the eschatological kingdom seriously, and that background of thought served as the basis upon which his salvational ethic necessarily rested. The kingdom ethic is an eschatological ethic. In short, if we wish to retain the ethical teachings of Jesus, we

must retain, in some sense yet to be dealt with in this discussion, his eschatological vision.

In Jewish thought the righteous Lord is the Lord of history. God is the God of history. He has raised up a people through whom to make his purposes known in history. When his people forgot this profound truth, they were called to repentance by prophetic appeal to the God of their fathers, to the God who has worked in their history. It is always God in history.

Jesus shared this profound idea, that history has meaning, and that this meaning finds its consummation in God. Jesus' teaching of the eschatological kingdom was the way in which he expressed this idea. It is in a final divine denouement that history finds its meaning. It is in the end of history, and thus the coming of the transcendent kingdom, that history itself becomes meaningful.

When we speak of the end of history, we are at the level of metaphysical thought and language. Admittedly, many people find metaphysics in any form as inadmissable as Daniel's talk of "the clouds of heaven," and when metaphysics turns to the idea of an historical ending, they profess utter bewilderment in the presence of that which they designate as nonsense. Certainly no positivistic historian, which characterizes most of the breed, who find comfort in designating what they do as "social science," would think of touching the question of historical finality or even that of the meaning of history.

With respect to our own individual lives, the classical view has been that individual life is meaningful in terms of purposes and ends. This requires the breaking up of the stream of life into fixed points, in which some points function as means to other phases of life. These dichotomies, in turn, involve an evaluation, according to which the ends, the later stages, are rated higher in value and significance than the earlier stages of means. Much of the modern mood rejects this idea of an hierarchy within the stages of life, arguing, instead, that every stage should be viewed in its intrinsic significance rather than being revalued, or devalued, as but contributory to something in the future. "Man is man," Schilling once said, "only when he plays."

Again, when one reads much modern literature, he finds that the whole sweep of life cannot be given significance. Thus the French atheist Existentialist, Sartre, talks much of what he calls "free projects." He means by this expression that we do, indeed, set up goals, or projects, and work toward their fulfillment. When we do achieve any one goal, it becomes a means to the achievement of other goals. This process continues on throughout one's life. But what does the life itself mean? As a totality, it means nothing, and this for the reason that there is no goal, or purpose, that is external to and transcendent of that stream of experience. In his own way, Sartre is testifying to the truth of the classical idea that meaning, even in the personal dimension, requires a goal and purpose that is external to individual life. Since, for Sartre, there is no external goal, or finality, then the stream of life is without significance; it is like a clear, fresh stream that but fades away into the sands of a barren desert.

We do not like to think about endings. We sink ourselves in the immediacy of the present, drinking from the joyous cup of the moment, grasping for a present vitality, with little thought of any ending of it all. We do not want to bring what we know to be true, our own deaths, into our

purview. Instead, we all-too-often move aimlessly through the phases of life as if all that were involved were an interminable succession of episodes of present experience. Nowhere do we touch any fixed point, in terms of which those episodes, the life-stream itself, take on meaning. Yet, when we find our truer selves, we know that the interminable flow of life-events is intolerable. This means, then, that if there is any meaning to individual life, that meaning lies outside the temporal horizon of life.

Now, there is a price that has to be paid, if there is a transcendent goal that lends meaning and purpose to the otherwise interminable flow of meaningless events. The price is the termination of that process. That requires, for us, our own deaths. An intelligible finality to individual life involves the death of the individual. The ending of the individual's life and the present appreciative awareness of that ending are necessary to the realization and communication of one's personal history. True it is that the natural man does not want to consider his own death. But he, too, pays a price: the price of meaninglessness and ennui, even bitterness and contempt. Nietzsche once said that "it takes genius to make an ending." Natural man does not possess that genius in and of himself. That genius must come from another, transcendental source. But it is otherwise with the believer: that person even now lives in the light of an understanding that in death, the termination of experience as we now undergo it, a transcendent meaning and value are brought to one's own personal history. In this consciousness, one finds victory over death. What else is involved in and beyond death, that we cannot say for sure. What we can affirm, however, is that in the world life, in God, our little span is taken up in the final horizon and made forever a part of that infinite life and bequeathed with the gift of final significance and value.

Now, when we turn to the question of the meaning of man's collective life in history, the situation is comparable. It is, of course, true that within a given historical state, an earlier event contributes to a later event, and the later event then adds meaning to the earlier one, conferring upon it a value that it does not have by itself. From a broader perspective, the events and ideals that characterize an earlier culture and civilization contribute to later cultures and civilizations. Greece and Rome, in this respect, live on in the structures and ideals of western culture.

But what about the historical process itself, does it possess any meaning? Is the world-process meaningful?

When we turn to man's recorded history, we are struck by the fact that it is filled with great cultures and civilizations that come into being for a time and then disappear to be replaced by others. Thus Oswald Spengler taught that a culture and civilization, like any organism, lives in a spring-time, matures in the summer-time of civilization, and then in the autumn-time dies, disappearing from the world-stage. He suggested that there have been seven such cultures, and that the present one, the modern West, is even now in its death-throes. It is only the soul of a given culture that in any sense survives to infuse a new time.

But history itself is but a succession of phases, and while there is some meaningful transaction among those phases, the process itself can be given no meaning. And our own time, too, will give way to the ages and disappear from the world-stage. That is the meaning of the title of Spengler's work, The Decline of the West, or, in the literal translation, The Going under of the Evening Lands.

The British historian, Arnold Toynbee, professed to find twelve great cultures and civilizations. As did Spengler, he realized that the rule of death has been laid upon the past ages. But he believed that the Christian ideals, which for him were definitive of the modern West, would lift our time from the rule of historical death and preserve our own culture and civilization. However, candor requires us to admit that this is but a faith, and there is no evidence that our own time is the definitive justification of historical process. Indeed, if history teaches anything, it teaches that the epochs of history are transitory.

One may regard history as but an interminable sequence of historical times, moving forward to a future whose gates are forever open and in which there is no final realization and conservation of value, and hence no meaning to that historical process. This view may not, strictly speaking, be self-contradictory. But it is, for the valuational life of humanity, intolerable. That man, his history, his values, should come to nothing--that is but to mock at all that man has lived and died for. It is the final futility that pronounces an ultimate worthlessness to what is, however, the grandeur of existence. Springing from the deep recesses of human spirituality, we must think of a transcendent purpose through which the historical finds its significance.

If there are values that are realized in history, these values lie within a scale of the hierarchical ordering of the values. As is the case with respect to our personal histories, if we wish to find and express the meaning of history we must do so in terms of the ordering of certain of those events and times as stages in the realization of the higher values. Otherwise the sequences of historical process, and that process itself, are inaccessible to understanding and interpretation. But this means, in turn, that this realization of the higher and better in history is possible only because there is something that lies outside the actuality of historical stages and process and that, for that reason, is capable of defining that aim and goal of history.

We are thus led to the question, a very difficult one, as to just what the transcendent value, or system of values, is that defines the meaning of history. The dominant view of the Enlightenment, which is the view of Immanuel Kant, is that the purpose of history is the realization of rational freedom. Now, rational freedom, insofar as it is a value, is a finite, limited value. It cannot be turned into an absolute that is definitive for all history. The more recent shifting of the center of gravity from liberty to concord and security attests to the limitation that attaches to the ideal of freedom and its inability to serve as a final, decisive justification of historical process. Liberty is not the highest of all human goods; liberty without the economic ability to possess it is empty. Certainly, recent developments in the modern world, if they attest to anything, attest to that truth.

If history is meaningful, then, that meaning precludes both the postulating of an interminable process into an indefinite future and the use of any finite goal, or value, as the final justification of history. This means, in turn, that if history possess meaning, the transcendent reality in which that meaning is secured must be absolute and supreme. Only real perfection, lying beyond history, can serve to define the relative values that are realized in historical process. In the language of the Bible, the meaning of history lies in the kingdom of God.

Does the supreme, transcendent norm of history require, in a manner comparable to our personal lives, the end of history? Is consummation of all things necessarily a part of the idea of meaningful history?

Now, as the above discussion has indicated, the end, or telos, of history lies outside time and is, accordingly, not a thing of time. Thus, there is a significant sense in which a transcendent providence may be realized in the actual process of history, in which, therefore, history assumes a meaning from that source that lies outside history. Yet, there is something else that must be affirmed here. For if history, as history, the sequences of events and times, is, as interminable continuity, an internal difficulty to the procurement of meaning, then it is, in some sense, necessary that this process come to an end. The fulfillment of history is, then, in some sense a matter of time.

This, as it does for the individual, requires the temporal end of history. The historical process can neither preserve the values that have been realized in its own horizon nor lift that horizon to a sphere of intelligible finality. Rather must it, too, end and give way to the transcendent goal, to "the one increasing purpose" of "the one far-off divine event towards which the whole creation moves." If there is a moral order, a meaning, in the universe, if the relative values that have been realized in historical process are to be conserved, if there is the triumph of good, there must be a last judgment, in some sense, in which those values and the good that they embody are saved. And this very saving of the good is not something to be accomplished in the mere fact of historical continuity, which, as we have attempted to show, by itself cannot sustain meaning and purpose. History must end, and end in a divine denouement.

The choice, finality or futility, cannot be made on empirical or scientific grounds. Modern western man is caught within the shrouds of his empiricism and scientism. But when the deeper resources of reason are allowed to surface, they bring light to the faith that God is, in truth, the Lord of history and that in His own time He will redeem history in His own everlasting life.

While metaphysical thought does support the ideas of the end of history and the divine denouement, it yet is not the last word. For we are in the presence of a profound antinomy of reason. On the one hand, we cannot conceive of the end of our volition and the procurement of the finite goods of temporal experience. We cannot envisage any final rest to the will that searches continually for ends and goals and the deployment of means in the service of those purposes. On the other hand, as the above has sought to demonstrate, we know that, from within the matrix of time and the searching will, no final or decisive meaning can be gained that is able to confer any lasting significance either to our personal or social history. To continue into an indefinite future is but to throw the gates open to an interminable emptiness and void. It does not seem possible to resolve this antinomy by purely intellectual means. A metaphysical consideration of these questions is helpful, to be sure. But metaphysics by itself can never fully or satisfactorily resolve those questions. Metaphysical thought is human discourse in its widest scope and generality; it stretches the symbolism of language to the uttermost reaches of discursive thought. But it arrives at a limit at which it must trench upon the mystical, giving way to an insight that only the seer and the poet can express in an inspirational language fraught with beauty and thus insusceptible of literal translation. The seer

and the poet, to be sure, form their thought and expression from within the backdrop of their culture and time. But their essential message is timeless, and it shines forth in the time-bound form of their language. Such is the case with respect to the teaching of Jesus, that in the eschatological kingdom men and history are finally redeemed. The "man of sorrows" is also "the Son of man," whose kingdom is from everlasting to everlasting and whose kingdom is that kingdom in which the world's life is finally made secure for evermore.

Unfold! Unfold! Unfold, ye portals everlasting!
With welcome to receive Him ascending on high.
Behold the King of Glory!
He mounts up through the sky.
Back to the heav'nly mansions hasting.
Unfold--Unfold, for lo, the King comes nigh.

But who is He, the King of Glory?
He who Death overcame, the Lord in battle mighty.
But who is He the King of Glory?
Of hosts He is the Lord; of angels and of powers:
The King of Glory is the King of the saints.[11]

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CHAPTER 3

THE SACRIFICE OF LIFE

. . . and without shedding of blood is no remission (Hebrews 9:22).

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;
For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:27-28).

Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it (Mark 8:34-35).

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1).

From time immemorial, in myth and ritual, human kind has given witness to the fact that sacrificial death is intimately interwoven in life.

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the universe is represented as originally but an undifferentiated unity, while creation is regarded as a fall, a sacrificial fragmentation of a god. The created world is thus an errant factor in the manifold of being, to be overcome, not by any improvement of temporal conditions, but by the dissolution of creation. Thus, in this view, negativity and death are essential to the very conditions of existence.

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11 Gounod, from the oratorio "*The Redemption*."

The late Joseph Campbell cites the work of Paul Wirz, the Swiss ethnologist, who records the ritual of the "Dema," or gods, practiced among the Marind-anim of Dutch South New Guinea, in which a young boy and a young girl, after publicly cohabitating, are killed and then cut up, roasted, and eaten. Professor Adolf Jensen of Frankfort explains this as a ritual enactment of the relationship between death and life in the plant world. The rite is a dramatic representation of a primitive, albeit cruel, insight that the world lives on death, that man derives his life from death. The sexual element in this rite is the enactment of the realization that reproduction, too, without death would be a calamity for mankind, and that, therefore, it requires the death of the procreators. Thus, again, the structure of existence and life is suffused with an inevitable sacrificial death.[12]

Essentially the same view of death and sacrifice is evident in the paintings of the ancient animal hunters, preserved over the centuries, in the caves of southern France. These paintings of the animals were probably a part of a mythic and ritualistic representation of the truth that, for those people, their lives were dependent upon the death of the animals. The caves were doubtless "sanctuaries," in which were performed the ceremonies designed to insure the continuation of the sacrificial source of life.

In ancient Sumer there developed a civilization of city states. The city was organized around a temple, which was supervised by a priestly order. The temple-city was itself under the guidance of the heavenly bodies, the order of which was to be emulated by the social organization. The death and resurrection of the moon, the cycle of the year, the greater cycles of the cosmic aeons, were, insofar as possible, imitated by the city state.

It is in such a context that the rite of ritual regicide was practiced. In order to insure the continuation of the kingly cycle and power, at a given time determined by the priests the king was immolated, from whose death the promise of a renewed order of kingly office was to be assured. As the dying moon gives way, in three days, to the risen moon, so the dying king is to appear in the new king as the king resurrected. The burial remains of the royal tombs, not only in Sumer but in Egypt, bear eloquent testimony to the ritual enactment of the myths of Tammuz-Ishtar (Babylonian), Osiris-Isis (Egyptian), and Adonis-Venus (Grecian)--the god who is followed, in death, by his consort-goddess who, through her maternal power of fertility, brings to him resurrection.

In later times the Sumerians sacrificed another human being as a substitute for the king, thus retaining the symbolism of ritual regicide but preserving the life of the present king. A new context, a softening, of the principle of sacrifice was now appearing in the affairs of humanity.

We are familiar with the idea of substitutionary sacrifice as it was practiced by the Semites. The ancient Semites were a tribal people, organized as families and clans. The dominant social conception was that of the kin. According to this conception, the group was of one blood, participating in one blood that passes from generation to generation and circulates in the veins of every member of the group. The unity of the group is viewed as a physical unity, for the blood is the life--which is an idea

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12 *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), pp. 176-83.

found in the Old Testament--and it is the same blood that is shared by every descendent of a common ancestor.

Further, not only do the members of the kin share in a common blood, but the god also shares with the people in one life of life-blood. The place of the god in the community is conceived on the analogy of human relationships; thus the relationship is itself physical.

The animal that was offered in the semitic ritual of sacrifice was, not a gift to the god, but a means of establishing a communion "in which the god and his worshippers unite by partaking together of the flesh and blood of a sacred victim."[13]

Originally, the sacrificial meal was a feast of kinship, an act in which the common life is sealed and nourished. To refer again to Smith:

> **The sacrificial meal was an appropriate expression of the antique ideal of religious life, not merely because it was a social act and an act in which the god and his worshippers were conceived as partaking together, but because . . . the very act of eating and drinking with a man was a symbol and a confirmation of fellowship and mutual social obligation. The one thing directly expressed in the sacrificial meal is that the god and his worshippers are commensals, but every other point in their mutual relations is included in what this involves.[14]**

The fourth chapter of Genesis records both the first sacrifices and the first murder. Cain offered to God a vegetable sacrifice, while Abel, an animal sacrifice. And only the latter, as we read, was acceptable. Why? To this question the answer has already been given. According to the ancient Semites--a view shared by the writer of Genesis--it is only in the blood of common life, symbolized in the sacrosanct and slaughtered animal, that communion with one another and with God can be procured. For this reason, then, Cain's sacrifice was ineffectual.

In the myths and rites of the ancient world, then, there are parallel accounts of the nature and value of blood sacrifice. Now, the dominant theme in this culture sphere is that of partaking of the divine life. The animal is a quantum of divine life and power, which, through its sacrifice, is integrated with the giver or givers of the sacrifice.

As we readily see, there are striking parallels between various ancient mythic and ritualistic formations and those of the emerging Hebrews. Yet there is, notwithstanding the parallels, a radical difference between the essential genius of Hebrew thought and practice and the thought and practice of other peoples both prior to and contemporary with the Hebrews.

What Hebrew thought brought to light, for the first time, is the absolute transcendence of God. Nowhere else, in all of the systems of thought that have entered into the beliefs of mankind, has this idea so clearly been affirmed. Against the backdrop of this vision of God,

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13 Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 227.

14 *Ibid*., p. 269.

everything now changes. Instead of man's becoming God, or identifying with God, man is now to assume, as an inviolate individual, a relation to God. And out of this new perspective, the idea of covenant emerges; and now sacrifice is given a covenant value or effectuality. We are now on the way to the Mosaic codification of covenant and sacrifice, as found in Leviticus. And, insofar as the Jewish age is the precursor of a new age, we are on the way to the "new covenant" of Christianity, as set forth, par excellence, in the book of Hebrews.

The great paradox, which we have been exploring in the foregoing, is that life, with all of its sunlight glory, is yet somehow bound up with death and its dark passages. To this the ancient mythic rites give eloquent, although brutal, testimony. In the slaughtered animal, however, the paradox is softened so that man and God may unite in saving, life-giving fellowship. That is the germinal idea of blood sacrifice, as we have come to realize.

The sacrifice of the animal, in connection with the covenant, involves a new paradox, or, if not a new paradox, a further extension of the basic paradox. The English word covenant comes from the Latin, convenire, which means "to agree, be suitable, meet." The English convene derives from the same Latin term, and this gives the basic meaning of the term covenant. Convenire is a combination of con and venire, which means literally "to come together." A covenant, then, is an agreement, and it is so in the further and definitive sense of a coming together of the parties concerned.

There are occasions of covenant-making by the Hebrews prior to the establishment of the Mosaic covenant of Exodus 24. Genesis 15, for example, records Abraham's sacrifice and the covenant made between him and the Lord. But the formal covenant was instituted as recorded in the Exodus account. However, in both cases, as elsewhere in the Old Testament, the Hebrew term covenant is bereeth, which means "cutting." It is a compact made by passing between cuttings, or pieces, of flesh. That is the paradox: the union of the parties of the covenant is effected through the dividing of the sacrificed animal. Again, the positive life of fellowship between God and man is bought through the negativity of sacrificial dismemberment of the sacred victim.

On that great day of covenant-making, Moses served as the priest. He took half of the blood and threw it against the altar, which represented the active presence of God in the covenantal relationship. He then sprinkled the same blood on the people, thus uniting them and God in sacred fellowship. Here was enacted the sacred meal of fellowship, perhaps in even older times celebrated by the actual drinking of the sacrificed blood. But now, even in this so long ago time, the rite is lifted to the plane of spiritual symbolization--a symbolization, however, spiritually effective in the creation, ideally, of a living bond of union between the worshipers and their God.

The writer to the Hebrews reaffirms the Hebraic principle of covenant sacrifice, but in the new context of the death of Jesus. According to Hebrews, the supreme sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, which entails the shedding of his blood, brings life to sinful humanity:

> And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.
> It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. . . .

but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:22-26).

The New Testament account of the Last Supper makes it clear that Jesus himself saw his imminent death as an act in which, by the shedding of his blood, a new covenant between God and man is sealed.

As the master of the Passover feast, Jesus conducted the proceedings in accordance with the tradition. He asked a blessing at the beginning of the supper, then passed a cup of wine, the bitter herbs, and finally the unleavened bread. After discourse and song, the lamb was carved and eaten. Then a third or fourth cup of wine was drunk, after which the supper was closed by the chanting of a Psalm.

The third cup of wine was called "the cup of blessing." St. Paul refers to that cup in 1 Cor. 10:16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" So the cup that Jesus took when he instituted the Lord's Supper may have been the third cup of blessing, or, again, it may have been a "new" cup in addition to the final cup of the Passover Supper. Having taken the cup, then, Jesus said "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

The "new" cup, then, is the cup of the new covenant. Something radically new is now being brought about, in contrast to the old Hebraic order. The history of Israel had been one of recurrently forgetting the spiritual intent of the sacrificial system. Thus Amos flings against a fallen people the words of the Lord: "I hate, I despise your feast days . . . . Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them . . . " (5:21-22). There were also, in those Old Testament days, words of promise. Isaiah gave voice to that promise in the words: "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light unto the Gentiles (42:6). And Jeremiah foresaw in the offing: "Behold, the day will come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (31:31).

Jesus may have had these words of Isaiah and Jeremiah in mind when he characterized the wine as his blood of the new covenant. In any event, what is clear is that the expression the blood of the covenant is an allusion to Exodus 24:8, where the sacrificial blood was the agency of the covenant. But now the old gives way to the new. "This is my blood of the new covenant." In the shedding of his own blood, Jesus affirms, there is secured the covenant of pardon, the redemption from sin's bondage.

What is the redemptive significance of the shedding of the blood of Jesus? That this shedding of blood has redemptive significance is disclosed in his words, "for the remission of sins"--words that constitute one of Jesus' rare sayings about the purpose of his death. But just what is that purpose?

In his celebrated work, Cur deus homo, "Why God became Man," Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) proposed the "satisfaction theory" of the atonement. The theory is an elaborate exercise in legal mathematics. Sin deserves infinite punishment, since God, whose honor has been violated, is infinite. Man, being finite, cannot recompense for his own sin. It is thus necessary for God to become man in Jesus, who being divine, pays in his death the

infinite debt. Since, being sinless, he owed no debt, was not obliged to die, he receives as a reward for his work of death the forgiveness of our sins. "Can anything be more just," Anselm asks, "than for God to remit all debt, when in this way he receives a satisfaction greater than all debt . . . (Ch. xx)?"

The death of Jesus, through the shedding of his blood on Calvary's cross, is not, as a careful reading of the memoria in the New Testament makes plain, a legal transaction in a transcendental court of law. In his teaching and way of life, Jesus sought to show forth the love and care of the Father in Heaven. The sense of God as "Father," the "Abba" awareness of God as a power cherishing and making free the people, is the distinctive feature of Jesus' ministry. The death of Jesus is that final, decisive act of his in which he revealed--unsurpassably revealed--the healing and redeeming power of the cherishing love of God for the children of men. It is the disclosure that redemption, on the plane of human history, is achieved in the selfless service of love that persists even in the radical failure to achieve its intention and that, even in suffering and death, holds to its course when those whom it serves reject its saving offer. The cross is the reality of the resistance to death against our own human history of suffering and sin; it is, in Jesus, the consequence of God's message of saving concern with man.

There are, to be sure, a few places (three) in the New Testament where Jesus' death is described as a "ransom." But the ransom is not that of a death that removes guilt by bearing a penalty as a satisfaction to God. "That Christ suffered once for sin, the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:19), means that sin brought him to death--the death that love and righteousness compelled him to bear for our sakes. The cross is not a legal transaction; it is a transaction of suffering, the effect of which is to create in the hearts of believers a moral deliverance from selfishness, unconcern, and sin. The cross is the spectacle of divine, transcendent love that to all who pause from within the constrictive enclosure of self-isolation, becomes the power of renewal and service. The shed blood of Jesus, then, is a ransom or deliverance, but only in the sense of a purchase for God, a deliverance from the bondage of sin to serve God.

> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

The consequence of Jesus' death is not merely forgiveness, but renewal and sanctification and service.

Jesus probably spoke in the Chaldean language. In that language there is no term that expresses to mean, signify, denote. Thus Jesus used the expression, it is, in the sense of it signifies. The cup, then, is not the blood of Jesus; it but signifies that blood. The wine, then, is now the blood of a different, vegetable kind. The communion, the "fellowship one with another," is now a blood-bond of a new and higher order. The sacrificial meal is no longer animalistic and physical; it now in its representational import becomes vegetable and spiritual. No longer does the sacrifice of Abel prevail; it is now Cain's sacrifice of the garden, but transformed, and thus made acceptable, into the spiritual. Through this sacrament we are, as forgiven and cleansed, brought into a living, inward fellowship of God.

We have alluded to certain parallels between the older mythic constellations and the New Testament record of Jesus. It is well at this point to give some attention to this subject.

The only Greek god who was born of a divine father and human mother was the god of the vine, Dionysus. As wine has two effects, exhilaration and, when used to excess, intoxication, so Dionysus was at once the god of joy and the god of brutality. He was man's benefactor and destroyer. But on the beneficent side, his cup of wine was

life-giving, healing every ill.

Under his influence it was as if people were quickened and uplifted by a divine power. And as the severely pruned vine flowers profusely in the spring, so Dionysus, the god of the vine, is the assurance of resurrection. He himself, the myth recounts, dared to descend into the lower world, defying and overcoming the power of death.

This same theme of resurrection is also found in the myths of other ancient peoples, as it is elsewhere found in Greek mythic thought. The Babylonian Tammuz, the Egyptian Osiris, and the Grecian Adonis receive new life by their consort-goddesses who follow them in death and yet bring to them a new day of resurrection.

It is such parallels as these that cause many to regard the New Testament account of the death and resurrection of Jesus as a myth on the same level as those just described. It is thus suggested that Christian believers who find a spiritual uplift in their response to the New Testament account are inspired by a mythic view that is comparable to, and psychologically explained in terms of, the impact that the older mythological formations made upon other peoples of other times.

Now, there are questions here raised that require more consideration than can be given in the context of the aim and scope of this discussion. These questions have to do with the account of the birth and resurrection of Jesus. Yet, however these accounts are interpreted, there is a radical difference between the New Testament account of the life and death of Jesus and the accounts of the great mythological figures. For Tammuz, or Osiris, or Adonis, or Dionysus are not historical personages; they never lived the life of humanity, they never put themselves on the line in the sacrificial service of the good. But it is otherwise with the Man from Nazareth. For he did once live, and that life is attested to by writers other than the biblical writers. He actually bore the cross of death, actually trod the via dolorosa, the way of sorrow, and actually gave his life in the service of that transcendent and divine love that, rescuing us from the sin of self-isolation and inhumanity, brings freedom and redemption, commitment and service to the good of others. Here, then, in the death of Jesus, is an historic act that is a moral deliverance, an act that creates upon the hearts of believers the delivering power--a power increased and fulfilled by the quickening of the spirit. That, at the very least, is the distinctive and unique character of the Christian faith. Here Christianity is anchored in history, and it is this anchorage that gives to it that measure of reality that is found nowhere else in the annals of religious claim.

Since the sacrifice of the cross is our own avenue of redemption, that avenue, too, has its cross that stands before us at the entrance.

> Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

The word deny, aparneomai in the Greek, comes from apo, which as a prefix denotes separation, and arneomai, which means "to disavow, reject, abnegate." And arneomai, in turn, derives from the negative particle, a, or not, and the middle of sunarmolegeo, which means "to render close jointed together." This is not a vague word; on the contrary, it is sharp and clear. It is the same word that Peter used in his denial of his Lord. It means here "let him make himself a stranger" to himself. "Let him deny himself." In this passage, the person is made the direct object of the verb, not the indirect object. He is not to deny something to himself; he is to renounce himself. He is to renounce the relation of self-interest and self-control, which the natural man takes to be his prerogative and right, and to live wholly in the interest of God and humanity. He is to refuse to make himself an end. Caught up in a fundamental change of the principle of life, he is to make himself a means in the kingdom of God.

The reference to the cross, taking up the cross, certainly carries the thought of Jesus' death. It may also refer to the martyrs that were, as Tacitus records, crucified in Nero's garden sometime before the Gospel of Mark was written. But Mark probably knew that not all Christians must be crucified, so that the reference to the cross is no doubt figurative. In this sense, the cross has permanent validity for all Christians. For Jesus the cross was his deliberate choice of ministering to others' need of the truth about God, and to their need of love. It was his willingness to pursue this course regardless of the cost to himself. As it was an instrument of death for Jesus, so must it be, in a valuational and spiritual sense, for the Christian. He, too, must go to the place of death, in which the sin of the natural man is destroyed, that he might enter the new life in the redemptive kingdom of grace.

> For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

On the surface this passage appears to be a calculation of "profit and loss," a quantitative adjustment regarding secular profit and spiritual loss. But it is not merely that. In any calculation of quantitative values there has to be some common standard, some unit of measurement, in terms of which profit and loss can be adjusted relative to each other. In the relation between secular profit and spiritual loss, however, there is no common standard. The values are utterly disparate, qualitatively different. The maximum profit, "the world," is set absolutely, never relatively, against the maximum loss, "the soul," i.e., the spiritual life. At this crossroad, there can be no calculation of values in which the opposed values can be relatively adjusted to each other in one's life. Here one is faced with a radical "either/or." There is no middle way; the choice is for the secular or for the spiritual.

> For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

Having bidden the disciples to sacrifice themselves, Jesus now gives the reason for that bidding. Through this sacrifice, they will really save their lives. This is, indeed, a paradox. It consists in the two meanings of the word "life." Life has a dual character: the outward and visible and the inward and spiritual. The endeavor to save the lower "self" will result in the loss of the higher "self," while the sacrifice of the lower "self" will

bring the salvation of the higher "self." The sacrifice in which the Christian refuses to identify himself with lower interests so as to become absorbed in the higher interests of righteousness and service in the divine kingdom is the gateway to the realization of the life of the spirit. It is the reception of the gift of true selfhood. In the words of St. Paul:

> I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

And now, again, the words of St. Paul:

> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Paul here voices the final, fully realized, meaning of the sacrifice of life. What is spoken of in this eloquent passage is the fruition of all that has been heretofore set forth in word and deed.

Paul bases his appeal to the "brethren" on the sacrificial offering of Jesus, made available by "the mercies of God." Paul's use of the term mercies is particularly instructive here. The term is oiktripmos, deriving from oiktereo, which means "to exercise pity." This word in turn, comes from eiktos, "pity." Now, our English word "pity" comes from the Latin pietas, which means "piety." In late Latin the term was extended to include "pity." Pietas is akin to piare, which means "to appease, atone." Thus this association of "pity" with "piety," and therefore with "atone," associates "the mercies of God" with the offering of sacrifice. So the sacrificial offering of Christ becomes, for Paul, the basis of his appeal to Christians that they bring themselves to God as a sacrificial offering. From two spheres--the heavenly and the earthly--sacrifice meets with sacrifice in the concord of spirituality.

The term "present," parastesai from paristemi, and the latter from para "to" and histemi "make stand" means "make to stand beside, to place by or near, to present, offer to one." While this Greek term is never used in the LXX in connection with the offering of sacrifice, it is so used in Greek sources. It is the usual term for the presenting of sacrificial animals at the altar (Xenophon, Anabasis vi. 1.22). Thus Paul, in using the term here, probably had this technical meaning of sacrificial offering in mind.

In the Greek text, the adjectives living, holy, and acceptable, are all in the predicate position. They are therefore coordinate adjectives, making the phrase read literally "your bodies a sacrifice, living, holy, acceptable to God." What they qualify is the noun thusia, or "sacrifice." And the sacrifice is, as it was in former times, the soma, the body.

There is a wonderfully rich constellation of meanings bound up in this phrase. There is in it a reverberating echo of Old Testament times. But from its depth there rings a new, heretofore unheard, chord, clear and pure. In those former times only an animal without blemish was acceptable to God. As dedicated to God, the sacrificial victim possessed a relative holiness. But now, in the new covenant age, it is the sacrifice that possesses a real holiness--an inner rectitude of heart and life--that is acceptable to God.

Paul's use of the adjective, "living," is particularly striking. It is here that the contrast between the old and new dispensations is sharply

drawn. The essential purpose of animal sacrifice was not the death of the victim, but the offering of the life to God. This could be achieved, however, only by slaying the animal and presenting its blood. But now Paul is speaking of a dispensation in which blood and death are forever over.

> Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; . . . but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:25-26).

So it is, then, that the sacrifice of ourselves is a living sacrifice. It is replete with the energy of life, to engage, in righteousness, the continuing work of that Supreme Sacrifice in behalf of a suffering and sinful humanity.

> Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.
> Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,
> I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart (Psalm 40:6-8).

It is also instructive to note that, as it was formerly, the sacrifice, albeit now living, is the body. The "members of the body," Calvin wrote in his commentary on Romans, "are the instruments by which we execute our purposes." It is "the organ of all moral activity." The consecration of the body, then, is an ethical and spiritual act, for in bodily self-sacrifice the means are gained by which we are enabled to live outwardly, in obedience and service, the inward life of the spirit. The body is the outward expression of what we really are, the indispensable vehicle through which our aims and purposes are made visible and effective in life. In an age of vanity and excessive consumption of those material goods that minister to that vanity, at the cost of neglect of the inner treasures of the spirit and the well-being of mankind, how timely is this ancient appeal of bodily self-sacrifice!

There is, in all of this, Paul says, a "reasonable service." The expression, "reasonable service," or in Greek logik• thusia, is difficult to translate. The usual translation carries the thought that this sacrificial offering is reasonable, or rational, in the sense that it is in accord with the abstract principle of rationality. Logik• is derived from the term logos, and one meaning of that term is "reason." But in this passage, logik• probably signifies something much deeper than the principle of rationality. The term "service," latreia, is perhaps best translated as "worship," and this connotation affords some help in our understanding of the term "reasonable." Now, as Hans Lietzmann has argued, the word logik• as used in Romans has a quite different meaning than that of rationality. The term is used by some of the mystics of Paul's day. For example, one writer says:

> Thy word (logos) through me praises thee; through me receive all things as a logik•n thusian (sacrifice) to the word.

We note that the adjective, logik•, is not translated in this passage, since the English cannot handle the connection between it and what it modifies, that is, thusia, or "sacrifice." Thus Lietzmann offers this interpretation: "It is clear that this logik• thusia is the prayer of the divine logos dwelling in the mystic." The Logos is, accordingly, the spirit of God, not merely the principle of rationality. Therefore, the better translation of Romans 12:1, "reasonable service," is "spiritual worship." The truly spiritual worship of God, then, consists in the sacrificial offering of the

body. For, again, it is in the body that the spiritual life is made real and manifest.

In our earlier reference to the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, it was pointed out that there is a view according to which the created world is regarded as a fall, a sacrificial fragmentation of God. The final redemption, then, must consist in the dissolution of creation. It is achieved, at the individual level, by the loss of individuality in Nirvana. And in our reference to the rites of the Dema, it was noted that, according to some authorities, these signify the dependence of life upon death, that as long as there is life there is also death. From the reality and anguish of this predicament, there is no escape.

In the work of Wolfram von Eschenbach (c. 1170-1230), the Castle of the Grail is the symbol of spirit. Within that spiritual enclave dwelt the young, wounded king, Anfortas. The name means "Infirmity." Although the Grail was within his purview, Anfortas' wound is never healed. The meaning is this: that the spiritual life, with its rapture and glory, does not yet remove the anguish of existence. In the natural life, the wound remains--the wound of sorrow, pain, and death. The Grail hero, Parzival, whose name, perce a val, means "pierce through the middle," accepts this irresolvable tension of spirit and nature and, depending upon himself alone, sustains his uncharted journey on the middle way.

In his opera, Parsifal, Richard Wagner departs from Wolfram. For in that work, the Amfortas wound is healed by the sign of the cross. In the castle of the spirit, even nature, in all of its anguish, is redeemed. The middle way is overcome. Nietzsche, who had admired Wagner, broke from him over this.

> Richard Wagner [Nietzsche wrote], apparently the greatest victor, actually a now decayed and confused decadent, sank suddenly down, helpless and in pieces, before the Christian Cross.[15]

Now, there is a significant respect in which Wolfram is correct. For, as St. Paul has put it, the life that we live we "now live in the flesh." We are, therefore, as living in the middle way, subject to the anguish of existence. We bear the Amfortas wound. In our natural life we are susceptible to pain and sorrow and are caught in the cycle in which life yields, ultimately, to death. As the rituals of the Dema show, even in their cruelty, life is interwoven with death.

Yet there is, finally, a respect in which Wagner is correct, finding in the cross what Nietzsche could never see. For in the consummate promise of the divine kingdom, there awaits, beyond the sunset, the redemption that heals the anguish of our dual existence. It is not yet realized, to be sure, and for this, as Paul says, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain" (Romans 8:22). But the promise is assured, and that assurance is as strong and valid as God's own indissoluble life.

We have had occasion, in this discussion, to observe that the ancient Hebraic idea of the absolute transcendence of God radically transformed man's

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15 *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, "*Wieich von Wagner loksam*," Werke (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1960-62), Vol. 2, Sec. 1, p. 1054.

vision of God and made it possible to conceive of a covenant relation to the transcendent God. Now, as long as God is thought of as the immanent principle in temporal existence, fragmented in the manifold of being, there is no basis for either a final redemption of time or of the improvement of temporal conditions now. Rather, salvation can mean only the dissolution of creation.

But in the mystery of transcendence, all is changed. The earth is the Lord's, not as an extension of deity, but as other to Him and the object of His concern and care. The transcendence of God is the guarantee of the ultimate hope, the universal healing of the Amfortas wound, the redemption of time in God's eternal life. And it is, for us here and now, the grand proviso that effectively brings a healing amelioration within the conditions of present existence. For in the sacrifice of life, of that Life that in death brought the light of heaven into our darkened ways of earth, of our lives as sacrificially committed in our spiritual worship, there is brought into the affairs of mankind a life triumphant in spirit, empowering and ennobling the Christian in his service to God and humanity.

There is, then, a remission in the shedding of blood. The blood of the new covenant, "shed for many for the remission of sins," is, in truth, as the sacrifice in which God is most truly revealed as God, the power to ransom us for God, to cleanse the heart from sin, and to enable us to do that which we cannot of ourselves do, to obey and serve God in the kingdom of love.

There is, without question, a mist that obscures the ages, and we barely glimpse the ancient lore of ritual sacrifice. We know of the Man of the Cross, through whose shed blood redemption was once, long-ago, announced to the world. For many today, it is difficult to believe in the reality of that event. And yet, as this discussion has attempted to show, there is, for us today who live beyond those centuries, an enduring validity that holds to that sacrificial act. In an essential and inward sense, we yet may voice, with sincerity and authenticity, that grand hymn that our fathers before us have lifted in exultant song:

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream,
Thy flowing wounds supply
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save,
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave.[16]

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CHAPTER 4

16 William Cowper.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF LIFE

> . . . and he was transfigured before them.
> And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. . . .
> And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. . . .
> And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him (Mark 9:2^{b}-4, 7).

In a previous essay, attention was called to the "Amfortas Wound." Within the sanctuary of the Grail castle, the enclave of the spirit, Amfortas yet bears his dreadful infirmity. This, the Eschenbach account of the legend, sets forth the "middle way" wherein is found the dual aspect of our human existence: the mixture of rapture and pain.

There is a Mahayana Buddhist legend in which the central figure is a man named "Terror-Joy," (Bhairavananda). He stands on a whirling platform, with blood flowing from his body and a wheel whirling on his head. He has sought the abundance of life, but the search has resulted in pain and anguish. The whirling wheel is the wheel of rapture and the wheel of sorrow, signifying the two sides of our human existence. The knowledge and acceptance of this essential duality of existence is itself a measure of reconciling wisdom. This is indicated in the name itself, which means "the exhilaration or bliss (ananda) of what is awesome or terrible (bhairvava)". In some mysterious way, the glory and the anguish of life are inextricably bound together.

Now, Amfortas and Bhairavananda are mythic figures lacking any historical position. Their legendary status, however, does not mean that they are without significance or validity. Rather, they function, in the literature, to express an insight into the character of human existence and experience, as the above has indicated. They draw the lines of our own human reality.

But, insofar as any definitive reconciliation with our own humanity is concerned, there is something lacking in mythic representation. That lack is, precisely, the absence of any historical anchorage of the personages. Mythic figures, who themselves have not lived the life of human actuality, cannot, finally, reach the deep fountains of consciousness and speak authentically to the need and promise of life. While myth does, indeed, mark out certain dimensions of our humanity, yet its lack of historical anchorage dulls its value as a reconciling and redemptive force in our own present experience.

In the New Testament record of Jesus, the Man who shared our history, there is an historical weight that lifts the account, the memoria, to a level of transcendent validity forever beyond the range of mythic abstraction. The account of the Transfiguration is one instance of this truth.

When one reads the older works regarding the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus, one finds that the discussion is couched in a language fraught with modes of expression that are not, by and large, shared by much of contemporary thought and scholarship. The question is thus raised as to the possibility of finding a significance in that account in terms that do speak to contemporary man. Is this possible, and possible in a manner that begs no questions as to the absolute validity of either contemporary or

traditional modes of thought and expression? What is, for us today, the transfiguration of life?

All of the synoptic writers describe the event in essentially similar terms, although there is some variation among them as to details. Close by Caesarea, Jesus went with three of his disciples to a high mountain. Luke says that Jesus' purpose in thus retiring by himself, in company with the three disciples, was to pray. Since it was Jesus' habit to pray at the close of the day, the time was probably late evening or early night. On these remote heights above the Jordan, perhaps on a spur of Mt. Hermon, and enshrouded in the gathering darkness, he was glorified before his disciples. They witnessed, as Peter later records, "the excellent glory" (2 Peter 1:17), and John, too, later writes, "we beheld his glory" (John 1:14). As they gazed with wonder and awe, the disciples saw a change, perhaps gradual, in the countenance of the Master. "The fashion of his countenance was altered," is the statement of Luke, while Matthew writes, "His face did shine as the sun." His very garments, which were probably sad-colored or black, glistened. They became "white as the light," Matthew says; Mark's words are, "shining, exceeding white as snow;" and Luke writes, "white and glistering" (flashing forth as lightning). The two great heroes of the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah, appeared, conversing with Jesus. There then appeared a Greater Presence, the cloud of God himself casting a shadow over them, and from the cloud--not dark and ominous, but suffused with uplit radiance--there came a voice proclaiming the high estate and heavenly call of the beloved Son: "This is my beloved Son: hear him."

There are certain parallels between the transfiguration account and the accounts of the Resurrection. For this reason, some scholars believe that the Transfiguration is a misplaced resurrection appearance.[17] The circumstance, however, that the three synoptic writers meet on common ground in their recording of the event is an argument against the theory that the event is a deliberately misplaced resurrection appearance. The account of the Transfiguration follows, in all three of the synoptic gospels, Jesus' sayings on suffering and his prediction of his passion. This circumstance has led to the view that the transfiguration account is a "theologizing" of that prediction, so as to interpret Jesus' death as a triumph and glory. It is the interpretation of his death through the resurrection experience.[18] But this theory, which makes the account of the Transfiguration but a literary device, thus emptying the Transfiguration itself of any experiential facticity, is only a surmise and for that reason must not be accepted uncritically. This theory, too, faces the difficulty of the unanimity of the synoptic writers in recording what they regarded as an occurrence.

We are aware of the fact that the ancient writers, including New Testament writers, viewed psychological experiences from the side of realism. These experiences were thus interpreted as objective. The accounts of the Transfiguration carry, as is readily seen, this objective weight. For these writers, the Transfiguration is an objective event. That is the sound that is carried on the surface of the narratives.

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17 See C. E. Carlston, "Transfiguration and Resurrection," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 80. 1961, pp. 233-40.

18 See C. S. Mann, tr. *Mark*, *Anchor Bible* (Garden City: Doubleday, Inc., 1986), pp. 354-62.

In our own time, we are prejudiced on the side of the psychological and subjective. Thus an event, as the Transfiguration, assumes the value merely and only of a content of subjective experience to which nothing like the felt quality and character of that experience answers in the world of objective fact. From this premise it is an easy step to the conclusion that the Transfiguration should be interpreted as eidetic imagery or even as a form of hallucination.

One thing, however, is clear. We are in no position to know what, in the experience of the disciples, lies behind the narrative of the Transfiguration. To regard that experience as but a "psychological" event is really of no help in our present understanding of what took place. All events, the most ordinary perceptual ones, are "psychological" insofar as they affect human consciousness. We are, accordingly, never in direct contact with "things-in-themselves"--to employ Kant's famous expression--so as to be aware of them as they are when not responded to and brought within the matrix of consciousness. The world of "real" objects is, for us, a "transactional" world--a world of realities appearing "for us." What these realities may be in themselves we do not know. It is the same with regard to the Transfiguration: what it was, "in itself," we cannot know.

It is best, then, to interpret the Transfiguration as a transactional event, in which the disciples responded to the mien of him whom they adored as he was rapt in prayer. Beyond this, we cannot speak. But of this we can speak, and from within the texture of the event that the disciples experienced and described.

Within the biblical record, there are considerations that buttress this interpretation. Both Matthew and Mark describe the Transfiguration in transactional language: "transfigured before them".[19] Here the experiential character and value of the event is placed uppermost. Luke, who writes to the Gentiles and thus does not use the term "transfigured," because of its association with pagan literature, says only that "the fashion of his countenance was altered." The term "fashion" is eidos, which can be translated also as "appearance." The term derives from the verb meaning "to see" or "to behold." And the term "countenance," prosopon, is a combination of the preposition "toward" and the noun "face." The meaning suggested by this combination is that the countenance, as the index of inward thought and feeling, is transparent in the face that is towards the view of others. Thus the implied connotation of these terms, "fashion" and "countenance," places the Transfiguration in an essential relationship to the viewing of the disciples. Finally, in Matthew's gospel, Jesus refers to the Transfiguration as a "vision." The term signifies, not a dream image, but "that which has been seen."

If we do not know precisely what, objectively, lies behind the narrative of the Transfiguration, yet we may, by close attention to that narrative, come to an appreciation of the experience of the disciples and thus find its significance for us today. To fasten our attention to the experience is not to say, however, that there was nothing objective, in the person of Jesus, that lies, impenetrable to thought and definition, beneath that experience. Rather it is to say, that we do not know, in rational terms, just what that is. And we do not need to engage in dogmatic

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19 Italics mine.

speculation, in order to come, in our own experience of faith, to the Mount of Transfiguration.

The key to the meaning of the Transfiguration lies in the time in Jesus' ministry in which the event occurred. His days had been filled with the activities of public ministry. Then a time came when he went with his disciples "into the towns of Caesarea Philippi." On this occasion, and in response to his searching question, "Whom do men say that I am?" Peter made the great confession, "Thou art the Christ." Jesus then charged the disciples that they tell no one of this. He then spoke of his sufferings, death, and resurrection. To Peter's inability to accept the suffering and death of the Messiah, Jesus responded in those words of immortal paradox, that life is saved in the loss of life.

It was then, soon after the prediction of his death and the discourse on suffering, that Jesus was glorified before the disciples. The event occurred, Luke writes, as Jesus was praying, absorbed in deep meditation over the subject of his recent discourse, the tragical ending of his life. Luke further informs us that Moses and Elijah, also appearing "in glory," conversed with Jesus about "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

This expression of Luke is remarkable. The word "decease" is exodus, which means "departure." Elsewhere in Scripture death is spoken of literally, or it is characterized in its physical effect as "giving up the ghost," or it is euphemistically expressed as "sleep." This latter expression is never applied to the death of Jesus. For his death, with all its bitterness and terror, is not a passive and restful sleep. Rather, it is here set forth as an exodus, a departure, the result of his own voluntary act. It is an event that is more active than passive. It is for this reason that Luke does not use the ordinary word for death, thanatos. The decease of Jesus, then, is lifted up out of the sphere of ordinary deaths. It is a departure that Jesus himself actively accomplishes. Like the departure, the exodus, of old, it is a death that is a splendid triumph, a deliverance from bondage into freedom.

So the Mount of Transfiguration is inseparably associated with another mountain, the Hill of Calvary. They cannot be separated. To be sure, this association of glory and ignominy is paradoxical, something that stands impenetrable by the logical intellect:

> **A strange opportunity! in his highest exaltation to speak of his sufferings; to talk of Calvary on [Hermon]; when his head shone with glory, to tell him how it must bleed with thorns; when his face shone like the sun, to tell him it must be blubbered and spit upon; when his garments glistered with that celestial brightness, to tell him they must be stripped off and divided; when he was adored by the saints of heaven, to tell him how he must be seen between two malefactors: in a word, in the midst of his Divine majesty, to tell him of his shame; and, while he was transfigured on the mount, to tell him how he must be disfigured upon the cross.**[20]

The word "glory" has now been defined anew. It is no longer the splendor of a kingly court far removed from the anguish of the world. This

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20 Bishop Hall, "Contemplations on the Holy Scriptures," in *Mark* Vol II, p. 46, *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), Vol. 16.

"excellent glory," of which Peter later wrote is now the glory, not in spite of, but essentially in humiliation and death. What had appeared to the disciples as a crushing disaster is, in this death, a splendid triumph. In his gospel, John makes this clear, for according to him glory is a whole complex, "passion, enthronement-crucifixion, resurrection." Luke's passage, they "spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," read, in the Gospel in use in St. Chrysostom's day, "They spake of the glory which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." And it is this new vision of glory of which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks, when he says of Jesus that he is "by reason of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour."

Beyond mention of the subject of conversation, the exodus to be fulfilled, Luke goes no further. Neither he nor the other synoptic writers attempt to fill in the details of that solemn twilight hour, flushed with the radiance of glory, when Moses and Elijah appeared unto them in converse with Jesus. True it was that the world of that day was alive with the ferment of unrest and fast-coming change. The three might well have talked about political matters: the fate of kingdoms, the fall of dynasties, the power of the Roman empire and its soon-coming fate of dissolution. They might well have conversed about the problems of Jewish casuistry, the divisions within the schools of Judaism. Or, again, the conversation might have been about the beauties of heaven, the blessedness of the heavenly state, and the glories of the beatific vision. It might have been about the heavenly atmosphere that Jesus brought down to earth, the perfection of his life, the purity of his precepts, the preciousness of his promises, of his words and works of love. But it was none of these.

The disciples were certainly aware of the history and tradition of their people. They knew of Moses, deliverer of their people and giver of their law. And now, it is this Moses whom they hear speaking. Were they not reminded now, in this shining moment, that it was this very Moses who had long-ago foretold him of whom he was the prototype?

> I [the Lord] will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command them (Deut. 18:15).

Surely, they must have now realized, as Moses appears in converse with the One whom he saw from afar off, that, indeed, Jesus is, even in suffering and death, the greater prophet, the Messiah who therewith brings glory to a darkened world. They also knew of Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah:

> Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5).

And now he too speaks with the Master, and with Moses converses with Jesus about his Messianic work of redemption through suffering and death.

It was, then, a high theme on which they spoke. Not a theme of this world, but of a higher world. We today may, in disciplined imagination, hear something of this glorious theme. No doubt they spoke of the nature and necessity of the decease soon to be accomplished: of how it will bring the hope and promise of salvation, held for ages in humanity's long history, to fruition; of how it will bring peace between heaven and earth; of how it will "by one offering" perfect "for ever them that are sanctified"; of how it will diffuse light and life and love through all the world; of how it will remove the sting of death and shed the radiance of heavenly glory over the tomb.

It had not been very long since Peter had rebuked Jesus when he had predicted that he must soon suffer and die. Peter had just given the great confession, affirming that Jesus is "The Christ of God." Surely, Peter thought, it cannot be that this messianic glory must fade forever away in the ignominy of death. Then the Transfiguration. Then all is changed. For now, as he, with the other disciples, hear the words that the heavenly visitors bring in converse with the Master, they realize that "the excellent glory" is not of this world, but that it is of another, transcendent order, "the glory which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." That is the only theme upon which the three, Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, spoke: the glory of that exodus, or departure, not only out of Jerusalem, but out of this life, by his death upon the cross. The Transfiguration, then was that exalted experience in which those who saw beheld "Jesus by reason of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour." In the Transfiguration, glory has been given a new meaning, coming, not from the voices of earth's discord, but from the voice of the heavenly Presence who speaks from the uplit cloud, the bridge between earth and heaven: "This is my beloved Son: hear him."

"We beheld his glory," John later wrote. This disciple who felt most effectually the power of that appearance also wrote, "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." We shall be like him: that is the significance of the Transfiguration for us. Seeing him in his glory, we too may share in his glory. But what a sharing it is! For as his glory is the glory of the suffering of death, so the glory that overspreads the Christian is, and must be, the glory of death to self and sin, the glory of sacrificial service in the divine kingdom aimed at the freedom and redemption of mankind.

The Transfiguration, as witnessed by the disciples, was a transformation of the humanity of Jesus in such a way as not to remove that humanity. The account does tell us that the physical appearance of Jesus was changed so as to impress the disciples of a heavenly quality. Matthew and Mark speak of the change as a change of form, but the use of this term must not be overly stressed. Both writers give the impression that they use the term with caution and some reluctance. For in this change of appearance, it was still the same Jesus whom they knew and with whom they walked. It was his countenance that assumed a radiant splendor, that did shine as the sun; it was his garments that became glistering, exceeding white. The change, then, was a change in the externality of the person of Jesus and not a change in his substantial personhood. In the Transfiguration Jesus appeared in his transfigured humanity.

Thus the Transfiguration did not involve the apparent change from one mode of reality to another. This is in sharp contrast to the classical concept of transfiguration as found in Greek and Roman literature. The verb "transfigured," which Matthew and Mark use, is the same term that is used in classical literature, namely metemorphoth•. There the term signifies that there is change, insofar as appearance is concerned, from one order of reality to another. Transfiguration, or metamorphosis, is a bridge from one mode to another. For example, Ovid speaks of stones that take on form so as to appear as human beings, of Daphne's change into a tree, and of Io's change into a heifer.[21] To avoid this interpretation of transfiguration, Luke, who is writing to the Gentiles, does not use the term at all. He wishes to make clear to his readers that the glorification of Jesus was one in which he

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21 Ovid *metamorphoses* 1. 402-09, 548-52, 611-12.

still appears in his familiar humanity: it was the fashion, not the essence or form, of his countenance that was changed, assuming a splendor like the sun. His raiment was the same, but shone white and glistering as lightning.

Now, this insistence on the radical difference between the Transfiguration of Jesus and metamorphosis as described in Greek and Roman literature is not mere academic quibbling. The difference is significant, not only with respect to the biblical account, but with respect to the significance of that account for the Christian.

In the Grail legend of Eschenbach, Amfortas passively suffers, pines, with the pain of his wound. And in the Mahayana Buddhist legend, Bhairavananda stands immobile on the whirling platform of life, passively bearing the anguish of his affliction. The existence that is theirs has overcome them.

These mythic representations of human life tell of one manner of reaction to the conditions of earthly life. When confronted with the anxieties and defeats of life, we can simply give in and let those forces determine us and even embitter us. We can withdraw in self-isolation and suffer passively and helplessly the "Amfortas Wound" that goes with our temporal life. If we adopt this stance, we become enslaved by the powers of fortune and lose any effective control over the character of our existence. Even a stoical acceptance of the "whirling wheel," the recognition that we must simply persist in our mixed existence of terror and joy, passively submit to these qualifications of a fortune beyond our powers, is to lose our freedom.

But there is a second form of reaction, one that is so prevalent today. If the first form of reaction is one of passively submitting to the poverty of human existence, this second form is one that seeks a grandeur of life beyond its tragic character. It is to seek a glorification of life that abstracts from and removes the pain, anxiety, and sorrow of human life. It is, in short, to seek a transfiguration of the order of the classical myth of metamorphosis, a transfiguration beyond the conditions that beset all human kind. The insatiable urge to enjoy, to experience gratification, the amassing of fortune as a means to the consumption of material goods, are, in actuality, forms of human striving for a false transfiguration of life.

But the wheel turns: the joy becomes, finally, an inescapable terror. The exhilarations of intoxicant drug, the immediacies of irresponsible sex, the allurements of carefree enjoyment, the satisfactions of selfish consumption--these all in the end disappear and leave within the heart a disillusionment and vacancy that mock any remnant of the truer self. No, there is no transfiguration beyond our humanity. To seek it is but to find an even greater sorrow and defeat. They may come soon, they may come later, but they will come. For, finally, the sorrow of misspent life and the anguish of unrehearsed death will announce themselves unbidden.

> Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not (Job 14:1-2).

We are now in a position to understand how the Christian transfiguration of life so radically differs from the order of human life as portrayed in myth and legend and from the metamorphosis of classical lore.

The key to the Christian meaning of human life is found in the biblical account of Jesus' Transfiguration as transfigured humanity. What is distinctive about the Transfiguration of Jesus, we now have come to see, is its essential and inner association with Jesus' accomplishment of his exodus, his suffering and death, his self-sacrificial devotion to the salvation and freedom of others. The whole complex, "metemorphoth•-exodus" constitutes his transfigured humanity. And it is substantially the same complex that brings to the Christian a transfigured humanity and an order of significant life.

For if, as it was witnessed by the disciples, the Transfiguration of Jesus is, in some sense, to be shared in by the Christian, then, as it was for him, the transfiguration of our lives is one that occurs within our own humanity. It does not take us out of, or beyond, our being human. What it does, rather, is to ennoble our humanity. For us the Transfiguration is a changed humanity, but, in the change, our humanity is kept inviolate and intact: "the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God . . ." (Gal. 2:20).

In the Christian's experience of the Transfiguration, then, present life, albeit overspread with a glory, is lived in "the middle way." The conditions of earthly existence, the "Amfortas Wound," remain. But the Christian neither passively submits, in the despair of absolute resignation, nor seeks abstractive transcendence over those human conditions. Rather, in the way of Christ and the transfiguration experience of the disciples, he finds glory, victory, in the willing obedience to the call of the divine kingdom in its ministration of care for the well-being of others. He too, as did Jesus, embraces a sacrificial service, an exodus from the impulsions of natural life, and an eisodos, an entrance, into servitude in behalf of the children of earth.

There is, in all of life, a burden that must be borne. It all depends on what burden it is and how it is borne. In distinction to the burden of natural life, borne on its own self-contained plane, there is a redeeming burden of lightness, shedding glory within and upon one's life. For when one, in the act of self-forgetfulness, ministers to others, he not only lifts their burdens but he finds that his own burden has been lifted and that he has found a joy that is not of his own making. The ease and lightness, the radiant inner light and glory, are now his own transfiguration of life. The grand opposites have now come together as one: the sacrifice of life is also the transfiguration of life. It was so for Jesus; it can be so for us.

> Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
> 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 (Matthew 11:28-30).

> And suddenly, when they had looked round about them, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves (Mark 9:8).

> . . . glorious beauty is a fading flower (Isaiah 28:1).

The synoptic writers describe the Transfiguration in terms that fall into the category of the beautiful. The transfiguration experience was an experience of beauty: the face shining as the sun, the raiment white as the light and glistering as the lightning, and the luminous overshadowing cloud. Suddenly they looked around and saw. In a flash the heavenly vision had vanished, giving way to the ordinary conditions of life. The wondrous beauty had faded.

So is it in the life of the Christian. The high, exalted experience of inward transformation within the encompassing of the luminous cloud of divine presence cannot, as an intense emotion, last indefinitely. As did Jesus and his disciples, we must leave the heights of supreme experience and take up the tasks in the beneficial service of human need. Yet, in the walkways of life's valleys, the aura of that beauty lingers and the transfigured humanity retains its substance as a humanity renewed in the saving work of the kingdom of heaven. For while the sensing of beauty is momentary and transient, the disposition and the will of that transfigured humanity abide as renewed and purified by the heavenly vision. These need not fade, and in their constancy they serve to give direction to the course of life.

Yet we long, as did the disciples, for that beauty, appearing momentarily in the experience of transfiguration, which shall abide with us for ever more. For we now realize, having seen that "excellent glory", that in transfiguration there has come to us a witness of immortal glory. We have seen "the light, the gleam, that never was on land or sea." The purifying rays of beauty have illumined the boundaries beyond this world of time and afforded a fleeting glimpse of those glories that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard of."

So the transfiguration of life, as the sensing of an immortal beauty that yet is not ours, is but an intimation of a longed-for final realization. As fragile as is that presence of beauty, yet it serves in its beckoning call to inspire and carry us onward and upward in the service of God's holy vineyard.

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CHAPTER 5

THE RESURRECTION OF LIFE

> Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,
> And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life . . . (John 5:28-29).
>
> . . . for they . . . are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection (Luke 20:36).
>
> Why seek ye the living among the dead?
> He is not here, but is risen (Luke 24:5-6).
>
> So also is the resurrection of the dead. . . . It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 16:42-44).
>
> So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:54).

In reading the New Testament record of the resurrection of Jesus, there are several features of the account that are striking. First, there are differences in the various accounts as to certain details, although the various writers are in basic agreement. Those differences are due, it is thought, to the distinctive purpose for which each writer developed his

narrative. Second, the narratives all agree that no one actually witnessed the resurrection of Jesus. The biblical accounts of the Resurrection, then, are of resurrection appearances. Third, these appearances, with some exception, were to groups of people, rather than to individuals confined in isolation. This circumstance is a telling argument against any theory that resurrection appearances were but private hallucinations. Fourth, the perception of the empty tomb did not in itself create the belief, on the part of the friends of Jesus, in his resurrection. Rather, the Resurrection explained the empty tomb. Fifth, the "testimonies" of the scriptures were not recognized until after the resurrection experience. And, finally, the resurrection appearances notwithstanding, the early followers of Jesus did not readily accept the truth and reality of his resurrection. Indeed, the record is clear that they did not expect him to be raised from the dead, and they believed in his resurrection only when the evidence was so persistent and accumulative that they could not do otherwise. The experience of Thomas confirms this, since it was only when Jesus offered his wounds for inspection that, without accepting the offer, Thomas recognized the risen Master and voiced the supreme declaration: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). For those early followers, the ground of their recognition of the risen Lord was, as it must be for us today, essentially a response of faith.

There is another element in the resurrection account that is also extremely significant. The assurance of the resurrection of Jesus changed--and drastically so--the attitude and life of the disciples. The crucifixion and burial of Jesus had left the little band afraid, dispirited, and broken. For them, they supposed, the new way that Jesus had opened to them was now forever gone. Added to this despair, was that brought on by the realization that, in the hour of extremity, they had deserted him. Peter, who had been so confident, even denied that he knew Jesus--denied him thrice.

But the assurance that Jesus had been raised from the dead, that he was now alive, transformed those disciples through and through. They were no longer afraid, hiding behind closed doors, but went out thenceforth to proclaim a gospel of redemption in the resurrection life of the risen Christ. And they carried out this grand mission with no thought of cost to themselves, even willing to lay down their lives for the heavenly cause. Whatever be said about the reality of the Resurrection, this one thing is clear: the early belief in the Resurrection was such that it transformed the human reality of those long-ago individuals and, through them, the reality of human history. These are the incontrovertible facts, in consequence of which the resurrection experience can never be consigned to the dust-bin of illusion. The resurrection appearances were veridical perceptions--not self-induced hallucinations--and the resurrection effects were actual and real. Of this it is certain: Christianity did not originate and grow in nonsense. In these respects, at least, there is reality in the Resurrection.

The first New Testament record of the Resurrection is that of St. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, written some twenty-five years after the events of the crucifixion and resurrection. The accounts in the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John were written somewhat later. In all of these records, however, there is emphasis placed on the experiential value of the resurrection belief. On hearing the resurrection news from the angel, the women left the empty tomb in both fear and joy, then to worship Jesus when they saw him. The two men who walked with Jesus on the Emmaus road felt their hearts burn within them. John's Gospel, which treats the doctrine of resurrection as part of Christ's doctrinal system, presents the resurrection life of Jesus as the source of one's spiritual and eternal life. But it is

St. Paul, who himself as "one untimely born" saw the risen Lord, for whom the experience of resurrection belief assumes such paramount significance.

The newness of life of the Christian is the effect of the resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:4-5); the Christian is raised with Christ in the exalted life of resurrection faith (Col. 2:13; 3:1); the Christian is "quickened together with Christ, . . . raised . . . up together, and made . . . to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:5-6). The Resurrection, then, is the mystic union with Christ, sharing with him in inward newness of life.

In the New Testament, the "mystical," or "spiritual," resurrection assumes a dominant place, perhaps a larger place than it does today. It was then an age when mature men and women entered into a new life, from the bondage of Judaism or the superstition of heathenism. For these early Christians, the Resurrection meant the freshness and vitality of new life. For them, the risen Christ was a new vitality, his glorified life infused within the personality.

It is incorrect, however, to construe this effect of their belief in the Resurrection as but a "feeling" that Jesus was still with them. All of the accounts agree that they felt no such thing; rather, they accounted him as dead and locked in a sealed tomb. It was only the resurrection appearances that changed this. What happened in those appearances was that they were apprehended by Christ in very Presence. In a shattering surprise of joy, they beheld him in perceptual vision. It was this vision, and only this, which brought to them their new insight, new love, and new power. In the Resurrection lies the great watershed of history. For from it there flowed the stream of personal and social redemption. It is a cleansing stream, fresh with a new valuation upon man and his history, purifying in goodness all that it over-washes.

We are here in what is called "metahistory." Metahistory is the record of something that cannot be verified by the ordinary procedures of empirical investigation but that, nonetheless, produces verifiable results. The results of the resurrection appearances are not open to question, but are historically factual and verifiable. The resurrection belief, however it be explained as to its basis in fact, did, without question, produce a radical transformation in the lives of the early Christians, and through them, in the subsequent history of humanity. The only explanation that explains this is their assurance that He is risen. It was this belief in a new reality, an abiding Presence, that became the power in their venture of faith and deed.

The phrase, "Jesus Christ, crucified, dead, and buried," speaks of an historical occurrence that admits of verification. These events are not only recorded in the scriptural records, they are also attested to by secular writers. The Roman historian, Tacitus, for example, refers to this: "The man who gave the movement its name, Christ, had under Tiberius been put to death by the procurator, Pontius Pilate" (15,44). The Jewish historian, Josephus, also writes of Jesus' death.

Now, while the death of Jesus is an occurrence on the plane of historical fact, it assumes, however, a dimension that in nowise emerges out of its mere historicity. Paul, therefore, writes, not that "Christ died," but that "Christ died for our sins"[22] (1 Cor. 15:3). The significance of the

22 Italics mine.

death of Jesus is, in our terms, metahistorical, although it is bound up with history. And that significance is realized in the experience of faith, not in shifting through historical data.

With respect to the Resurrection of Jesus, the historical and metahistorical poles are in the reverse order. The resurrection of Jesus, for which there is no direct empirical evidence, is metahistorical. There is, to be sure, absolutely no question but that the early Christians believed in the actual resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and it is this strong assurance that, as we have indicated in the above, produced those remarkable salvational effects in personal life and social history. Given their assurance, born of the resurrection appearances, they were primarily focused upon the redemptive meaning and value of the Resurrection, upon the Resurrection in its mystical and spiritual significance. The literal pole, although present in their awareness, functioned within a background of implicit affirmation.

Now, we today are constrained to consider the Resurrection, not first from the side of the metahistorical, but rather from the side of the historical. We ask, "Is the Resurrection literally factual and true?" We want this question answered, one way or another, before we attempt to experience the valuational import of the Resurrection. We want answers for the head before we yield the heart to the life-inspiring message of the risen Christ. Unlike the early Christians, for whom the Resurrection was a datum in the background of the consent of faith, for us it is in the foreground of the problematic of faith. That is our contemporary predicament.

We are here faced with a difficult and complex question, one that must not, therefore, be taken lightly or answered in a cavalier fashion.

We do not need to be reminded of the fact that many people today lack the sense of having anything that is ultimately worth saving. In a life in which there is absolutely no place to stand, such a life is not deemed worth preserving. Out of the barrenness of life, then, the Resurrection is simply dismissed, both as a faith and as a reality.

But this may be an over-simplification. It may not be that disbelief in the Resurrection springs from the vacuum in life and culture. It may be, and probably is, just the other way around. The dismissal of the Resurrection is the cause of the modern wasteland of life and culture. If this is the order of things, then perhaps we should not go about constantly wondering if the Resurrection is really so. Rather, we ought to face up to the real question, which concerns the dismal prospect of a life and a culture that attempt to go on in their own meager resources without any sustaining faith in the Resurrection and its promise of the triumph of God over evil and death. Few today are able to say, in the words of Emily Dickinson:

The only news to me
Is bulletins all day
From Immortality!

Yet, this is not the entire story. For there is a theoretical roadblock, part of our modern intellectual heritage, in the way of consent to the Resurrection. Many objections to the Resurrection have their origin in philosophy and science as formulated in the post-Renaissance period. These formulations give a reading of man and the universe that, it is argued, now rules out the very possibility of the Resurrection.

Empirical science is a form and procedure of knowing that describes the sequences, largely causal, that obtain in space-time events of physical nature. As thus brought to descriptive view, physical nature is an appearing, phenomenalistic world. It should in nowise be identified with the whole of reality so as to limit the Real with what is known scientifically. From this it follows--doubly follows--that this paradigm of scientific nature should not be read into the nature of man, as if man were but an object in an object-world. Put somewhat differently, the judgments of science are themselves based upon value considerations and are constructed for the specific, but limited, purposes of describing in conceptual terms the phenomena of perceptual experience. The world of nature that science yields is one of our own human world-making. Once this fact is observed, it follows, then, that we have no right, on the supposed and erroneous ground of "scientific objectivity" to rule out the validity of the judgments of value and the affirmations of faith. Nothing from the side of science can legitimately exclude them, including the vision of Resurrection.

Our contemporary problem is that, all-too-often, the scientific enterprise is cut off from an adequate theory as to the nature of science. It is too-often the case that science, with its concern for the phenomenal object-world, is turned into an absolute way of knowing. In all scientific procedure, the "object-datum" has priority. And if this "object-datum" is made into the ultimately Real, then nothing further remains as significant and valid.

Now, it is true, however, that, in order to achieve its goals, modern empirical science must put its prior emphasis upon the object-world. And it is also true that, in this context, no other mode of reality comes into purview. And, further, if this were the end of the matter, it would all be over insofar as any other dimension of experience and reality is concerned.

It might appear that we have reached an impasse. If empirical science cannot disclose any transcendent reality, fraught with real values, must we say that there is no such world? Yes--but only if we take the scientific standpoint as absolute? But, one may very well ask, is there any evidence in our experience that discloses realities that evade that standpoint? If there is not, and if, accordingly, we must regard the standpoint of scientific knowledge as final and absolute, then the resurrection account is, without question, placed in jeopardy for modern man.

We are now at the point where we are able to realize why it is that the concern and procedure of science, when left to themselves as unanchored in the deeper resources of reason, are problematical and even fraught with dire consequences with respect to the larger, predominately spiritual, initiatives of human experience.

Put rather tersely, behind the object-datum of the world of scientific knowledge, there stands that which, unnoticed by the focus of the lens, is disclosed in experience as the primary reality that yet never appears as an object-datum. And that is the subject for whom the object-datum is a datum. The primary reality, then, even at the root of all science, is not objectivity, but rather subjectivity. And it is precisely this that we are in danger of forgetting, or overlooking, and that, therefore, blinds us to the transcendent world of personality and spirit.

We are prone, however, to suppose that there is but one order of reality, the order of nature. We are prone, further, to view nature as if it were a "reality-in-itself," enjoying a self-existence isomorphic to the manner in which it appears in perception and cognition. When, or if, we use the term "spirit," we usually use it in the sense that it is a by-product of a complex biological and neurological system. In this sense, we sink spirit in nature. It is precisely for this reason, then, that we are unable to give credence, not only to the unique and distinctive status of the spiritual subject, but to the resurrection life that personality is, in principle, capable of appropriating in the gift of divine Grace brought in the Resurrection. And we cannot, finally, give credence to the Resurrection of Christ because of our fundamental rejection of spirit as a distinctive mode of reality. In thus sinning against our own subjectivity, or spiritual selfhood, we are lost in the abstractions of an intemperate objectivity.

Once we realize, however, that there is not just one mode of reality, but two--spirit and nature--we are on the way to that correction of our thinking that allows for the claims of spirituality, involving as it does the initiative of the Resurrection. And in this realization, nature as experienced in both perception and cognition is nature in transactional relationship with the spiritual subject. It is thus suffused with the values of that personal subjectivity and becomes, accordingly, a sacramental universe. That is not to say that there are not events or processes independent of the living subject, but it is to say that nature as given is so given in relationship to the standpoint of the living subject. Underneath and beneath it all, then, is the standpoint of irreducible subjectivity.

What this view amounts to is an introverted view of man. The human being is, not merely body, but spiritual selfhood, radical subjectivity. While the inner life of man is, so far as we are aware, always evident in connection with the body, that does not mean that it is legitimate to reduce that life to the body and its functions. We cannot say that the body is the cause of that inner life; correlation is not causation. Released from this prejudice of the "natural," the way is open to the affirmation of the life of the spirit in the resurrection fellowship with God. That is the claim of the ancient apostolic message. And it is a claim that we cannot lightly dismiss, as the above discussion has indicated.

The above, all-too-brief, discussion of the distinctiveness of spirit, or personality, as the essential being that we are, is not, to be sure, any "proof" as couched in terms of empirical authentication. If that is what is desired, then the entire question is begged in the assumption that empirical knowledge is exhaustive of all knowing. And it is precisely that assumption that is here being contested. So it is futile to seek in science any answer to the fundamental mysteries of spiritual reality, including the mystery of the resurrection life. Yet, as we have argued, the order of nature is necessarily a correlate of the order of spirit, or personality. And personal existence is evident in the awareness of our self-identity as a system capable of sustaining itself, without destruction, amidst all the vicissitudes of experience. Precisely this ontological distinctiveness of spirit provides the ground for the reasonable belief in its preservation in resurrection--the resurrection of Jesus and, as we share in his order of life, our own resurrection beyond bodily death. We have thus reached the fork in the road: one road leading to myopic resignation in the gratuitous assumptions of an uncritical scientism; the other, leading to the venture of faith--the venture that trusts the deepest initiatives of our own spiritual reality and the promise of God's continuing creative sustenance in the power

of the Resurrection. It is the latter road that leads to victory in life now, and to victory in the inward assurance that life outrides death. That, for us today, is the meaning of the Resurrection.

And it was precisely this meaning that the Resurrection had for the early Christians. If we will linger awhile, we can find in those idioms of that by-gone age in which men first glimpsed the glories of Resurrection a language that yet can grip our truer selves and lead us into the sunlit uplands of spiritual victory and hope.

The basic idea of the Resurrection is that the God who provided the conditions for the realization of self-manifestation here will also provide the conditions for continued self-manifestation in life beyond physical death. The assurance of this has been ratified in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. That, essentially, is the Christian doctrine of Resurrection.

There is nothing in the nature of man that can itself bring this to pass. Mankind has, to be sure, envisaged an existence beyond the curtain of death. Plato, for example, held that the soul is pre-existent and immortal, incarcerated in the body yet seeking its true destiny in bodiless immortality and the fulfillment of the Ideas. And Jewish thought conceived of a shadowy half-life in Sheol. In more recent times, Kant based the idea of immortality in the demands of "the categorical imperative," which in this life remain unfilled. Finally, there is the view, both ancient and more recent, that regards immortality as impersonal absorption in the infinitude of the eternal Spirit.

None of these views is consonant with the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection. For, again, immortality is not something that belongs to man in virtue of his nature. Rather, it depends on the nature of God. Thus St. Paul disavows all speculative fancies. He appeals not to the unfilled Ideas or the unfilled imperative of ethics, but rather to the Man of heaven who knew no sin, to the fulfilled idea of Christ. For him, the hope of the resurrection is life "in Christ."

The great fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, which has been rightly called "The Hymn of the Home Eternal," portrays, in unparalleled beauty, the present spiritual meaning of the Resurrection. It means, first of all, that forgiveness is real and sin is vanquished. Reference has been made earlier to the fact that the Cross, an historical event, has metahistorical significance. It is this significance that is decisive in Christian faith. For the Cross is that redemptive act that demonstrates the ultimate and final extremity in God's effort to overcome sin in the selfless service of love. This is why the Cross holds moral and spiritual sway over humanity. But imagine, if you will, that the last words are, "Christ crucified, dead, and buried." "Then," Paul says, "is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15:14). Regardless of the majesty of his life, spirit, and teaching, if it all ends in the grave of humanity's common destiny, if it all ends in the final triumph of evil, then the Cross is but another stanza in man's sorry story of anguish and death; it can have no power to lift the spirit of man in victory and hope. The Cross is a saving death only in and through the Resurrection. The Resurrection of Jesus is the very possibility of faith.

But the phrase, "Jesus Christ, crucified, dead, and buried," is not the last word. That last word includes, to be sure, that "Christ died," that "he was buried." But if this were all, it is an incomplete word. For, finally, the last word is that of God's triumphant adequacy, declaring of Christ that

"he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). And it is faith in that triumph over evil that brings the assurance that we are forgiven and the victory won.

> **The world constantly needs to hear and believe that message. Individual men and women need to hear it. For the cleansing away of sin on the widest, as on the most individual scale, a gospel of forgiveness is needed. For the possibility of new ways of life, richer ways of life, with all the promise and potency of a justice for all mankind, of economic plenty, of social and individual freedom, of high thinking and noble living, the prerequisite is the cleansing of the springs of human nature. Sin was defeated, and its power broken, for those who have faith to believe it, when Christ rose from the dead. Man's spirit can, if he believes, be free forever.**[23]

The Resurrection also means that death is vanquished. The Resurrection involves Christ, but also involves humanity. It has a representative significance for all believers. For in his resurrection Christ has "become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). Thus his resurrection involves the solidarity of the race; Christ has become the forerunner of a new race, a new humanity. He now is the "second Adam," the Man of heaven, even "a quickening spirit," in whose resurrection life all believers may share. Thus Luke speaks of Christ as "the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead" (Acts 3:15). He is the "Prince," the Archegos, the "One who begins to lead," and is therefore in truth "the pioneer of life," even of the life everlasting.

From antiquity humanity has sought a glimpse of the farther shore. It has been supposed that there is a bodiless immortality, an impersonal absorption into infinity, even a mystical divinization of mankind. For St. Paul, however, these are but fanciful conjectures that miss the mark. While Paul did emphasize the mystical and spiritual significance of our present sharing in the resurrection life of Christ, he also took care to emphasize, and clarify, the nature of resurrection immortality.

In 1 Cor. 15 St. Paul brings the whole complex of the Resurrection into unity. He recounts the tradition of the resurrection appearances and points up the present significance of the Resurrection of Jesus. He follows this with his discourse on the reality and nature of the resurrection. It is in this section of the chapter that he develops his concept of the "spiritual body." His essential point here is that immortality is personal, that it involves everything that is necessary to recognizable individuality. Thus the resurrection involves the resurrection body.

Now, obviously, the idea of a "spiritual" or "resurrection" body seems to much of modern thought but a superstitious fantasy. However, we must recall our earlier discussion, that spirit is a distinctive order of reality and that its interiority is presently manifested in bodily existence. Personality is essentially spiritual and cannot therefore be reduced to the bodily life with which it is associated. Thus, the Pauline idea that spiritual identity is, in God, capable of preservation and of manifestation in a different order of bodily presence may not be as far-fetched as many are led to suppose.

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23 John Short, *I Corinthians*, *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, c. 1981), Vol. 10, p. 233.

It is important at this juncture to consider carefully Paul's own statement of the matter. In verse 35 of the chapter, he sets the two-fold question: "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" To this first question, Paul attempts no answer; none can be given, save that it is a work of God. The second question, "with what body do they come?," literally reads, "with what kind of body? This question Paul answers indirectly and with analogies. His essential point is that the resurrection body is the same body, not by way of a material identity, but as of glorified individuality.

Now, the idea of spiritual body is an apparent contradiction in terms. This is inevitable. Paul uses this paradoxical combination of terms to express a double negation: the negation of the "nakedness" of a merely spiritual existence and the negation of the participation of flesh and blood in the kingdom of God. He is no bumbling logician; a careful reading of his writings reveal, on the contrary, a powerfully argumentative intellect. But he has enough common sense to realize that not everything of significance can be captured in the precision of logic. So his use of the oxymoron is intentional, the result of his interest to make it clear that the resurrection life is one of full individuality. That is the positive meaning that shines forth in the dual negation of the expression.

The basic analogy in depicting the nature of the resurrection body is that of "sowing." Its import is to show that there may be, even is, a personal identity under a complete change of material conditions.

The complete change of conditions means that it is not the earthly body that is raised in the resurrection. Paul nowhere speaks of the resurrection of the body, just as he nowhere speaks of the resurrection of the flesh. Rather, his language is the resurrection of the dead. Here there is a vast difference. For, Paul argues, in the resurrection of the dead God gives a new body, an imperishable body, a body of glory that belongs to the spirit and through which the spirit may continue to enjoy self-manifestation in God's everlasting life! That is the resurrection life.

It is a false understanding that regards the analogy of sowing to mean that what is sown, as precursor of the resurrection body, is the body of physical death. It is this interpretation of the analogy that is responsible for the erroneous view that the physical body, upon death, is actually and literally resuscitated. Nowhere in scripture is there any indication of this crude notion. In the resurrection God gives a new body. If, now, it should happen that the skeletal remains of Jesus were discovered, that would make absolutely no difference as to the reality of the Resurrection. For, again, resurrection is not resuscitation; it is the divine gift of glorified individuality under totally new conditions of bodily self-manifestation.

In Paul's contrast of the natural body and the spiritual body, he speaks of the natural body as "sown in weakness." Obviously, Paul knew that one does not call a corpse weak. A sick person, not a corpse, is weak. He employs the analogy of sowing to show how the resurrection body is totally different from the physical body. The analogy does not describe a natural process. There are no powers of germination in a dead body from which another kind of body grows by natural development. Yet there is, as in the seed and the plant, a continuity between the natural body and the spiritual body. But, again, it is a continuity that is established, not by the processes of nature, but by the act of God. And the continuity is subtle, not readily discernible by a causal glance. This the accounts of the

resurrection appearances make quite plain: the followers of Jesus had difficulty in recognizing him in his resurrection glory. Yet, with spiritual understanding, they did recognize him: the continuity amidst difference is there. That is the force of the analogy of sowing.

Sowing does not refer to the burial of the body; it refers to the birth of the human individual. In this regard, Paul refers to Genesis 2:7, where it is said: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Man's soul is planted like a seed into the matrix of mortal life in which it manifests itself in this life. In this sowing it is subject to the conditions of mortal life, those of change, decay, and death. And yet these conditions of mortal life are the "seed-time" of resurrection. The "psychic" [natural] body has in it the "making" of the spiritual. But it all depends upon the quality of this "making." That is, it all depends on the use made of the powers of the natural life. If those powers are centered inordinately upon the immediate impulsions and desires of natural life, deflected from their legitimate place as instruments of the spirit, the sowing of the natural life will be ineffectual. Only as the natural life is saved from itself, redeemed in the fold of Grace, will the natural life become the seed-time of resurrection. That is Paul's thought: the resurrection has its reality, for us, in spiritual affinity with the Lord of the Resurrection:

> For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:7).
>
> And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
>
> But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by the spirit that dwelleth in you (Rom. 8:10-11).

For believers the Resurrection is the promise of an immortality that involves everything that is essential to personal identity. The term "immortality, "which Paul uses in 1 Cor. 15:53-54 is athanasia. It is a term often found in Greek literature. The gods were thought to be immortal. Plato believed the soul to be immortal. The Greeks sought the elixir of immortality in the fantasy of their mystery rites. Their craving for immortality was insistent, lacking though it was in any well-grounded assurance. In his use of the term, however, Paul gives it an entirely different meaning. Immortality is not something that humanity can achieve of itself. It is not something that man has by virtue of his nature. Rather is it, in Paul's language, "put on." And it is put on when God raises one from the dead. It is God's gracious act. The basis of that act, further, is

> our Lord Jesus Christ: . . . who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen (1 Tim. 6:14-16).

Believers are, Luke writes, "the children of God". Then he continues, explaining that they are so, because they are "children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36). This is indeed a remarkable passage. It is remarkable because the phrase, "children of the resurrection," defines what it means to be "the children of God." That is, one becomes a child of God on the condition that he or she is, even now, a child of the resurrection. The child of God is brought into that relation through the spiritualizing work of the Christ of the Resurrection. The seed-time of natural life thus becomes the time when

the soul of man is spiritualized by centering it upon God. It is the time when believers welcome a new dawn. Does that dawn herald an undying day, or does it portend but an undying night? Is there any assurance that God will conserve and complete his saving work?

The ultimate scandal, the last enemy, is death. The Resurrection is the witness that death is not the last word in human life and history. The resurrection of Jesus means that God has transformed the negativity of death into a living communion with him. Precisely this is the mystic, spiritual sharing in the resurrection life of the risen Lord. Further, the resurrection of Jesus means that the dawn of our present spiritual quickening will not be snuffed out in the catastrophic stroke of death. It means that personality will abide with the enhancement of all of its spiritual powers. It means that the work of inward grace and the return of our own love of God will be preserved and continued as dear, not only to the believer, but to the Father in heaven. For we live now in the assurance that what is precious to him, our love, which he can have only as we live, will be saved for ever more in the full measure of glorified individuality. For it is as we are the children of the resurrection that we are, finally, the children of God.

A small girl stood by her father as they watched the glory of the sunset. She looked up and asked, "Daddy, what's behind the sunset"? Such a simple, yet so profound a question. What is behind the sunset? There is an answer: it is the Resurrection.

But now Thou art in the Shadowless Land,
Behind the light of the setting Sun;
And the worst is forgotten which Evil planned,
And the best which Love's glory could win is won.[24]

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom
Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendour and gloom.

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet--
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision--were it not He?[25]

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CHAPTER 6

THE REDEMPTION OF LIFE

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth:
for the first heaven and the first earth were
passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,
coming down from God out of heaven,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying,

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24 Sir Edwin Arnold.

25 Tennyson, *The Higher Pantheism*.

**Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,
and he will dwell with them,
and they shall be his people,
and God himself shall be with them,
and be their God.
Rev. 21:1-3**

The term kalupsis signifies the act of covering with a veil. The prefix apo, is a preposition that means off. Thus, the term apokalupsis, which is translated as revelation, signifies the removal, or the taking off, of the veil, so as to dis-cover what has thus far been hidden from view.

The book of Revelation, then, falls within what is known as apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic literature must be distinguished from prophecy. Prophecy is a message addressed to those who enjoy a current prosperity, but must be warned against the arrogance of self-righteousness and sin and called to repentance in order to avoid divine judgment. Apocalypse, on the other hand, is a message written in a time of trouble and that, therefore, bids the persecuted ones to wait with patience and trust for the coming divine deliverance. Thus the book of Revelation is apocalyptic, speaking in a time of crisis of a future time of redemption.

It will readily be seen that the Old Testament book of Ezekiel contains apocalyptic material, although it is prophecy that begins the turn to apocalypticism. The book of Daniel, however, is the oldest form of complete apocalyptic writing. In the first and second centuries before the Christian era, a number of apocalyptic works were written in Palestine. The books of Enoch and 2 Esdras are of this genre.

As a careful reading of Revelation will show, the writer of Revelation was familiar with, and drew from, both Old Testament and noncanonical material. Yet, it must be pointed out, he handled and recast this material to serve the Christian message for a different circumstance and age. Thus Revelation is, essentially, a Christian apocalypse.

One significant characteristic of all apocalyptic writing is the use of vivid imagery and striking metaphor in the expression of ideas. The book of Revelation shares this feature. The writer is possessed of a "feeling intellect" that is caught in the transport of vision. The vision is his means of giving a greater effectiveness to his writing. The ideas that are thus embodied in the imagery cannot be taken as literal, but they are not merely fantasy symbols. On the contrary, they are poetic coefficients of the author's insight into the meaning and implication of his faith as it is lived out in the present world and in anticipation of the future victory of that faith.

There is, then, a tenuous balance between concept and metaphor, between the literal and the figurative, that runs through the Apocalypse. This may be brought out by a brief consideration of the allied questions of the authorship and date of the writing.

The author gives his name as John. Beyond this, there is no further indication of the author's identity. This circumstance has led to a considerable difference of opinion as to who this John was. One theory is that he was the writer of the Fourth Gospel. This was the view of some of the early church Fathers, as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, as well as of some of the later Fathers, as Tertullian and Origen. Yet there are such

differences in conception, style, and construction marking off Revelation from the Fourth Gospel that it is unlikely that these writings are composed by the same person.

There is the suggestion that the author was John the presbyter, who lived in Ephesus early in the second century. Little is known of him, except that he was an important person of great authority who was in touch with the Apostolic tradition. There is also the suggestion that the Revelation is pseudonymous, the author writing under the name John in order to gain an added authority. However, the book so differs from the usual pseudonymous writings as to make this hypothesis highly unlikely. Whoever he was, however, the author was connected with the Christianity of Asia Minor and in all probability was closely related to the church at Ephesus.

The question as to the date of the writing of Revelation is closely related to that of its authorship. It is at this point that the references in the book to literal events becomes crucial. The book was written to give the early Christians of Asia Minor encouragement and support in the midst of their persecution for their refusal to worship the Roman emperor and cultus. If the Apostle had written the book, the persecution would have to be that instigated during the reign of Nero, 54-68 A.D., dates that parallel those of the writer of the Fourth Gospel. However, while Nero did kill the Christians whom he accused of burning Rome, there was at this time no demand that the Christians worship the emperor. Thus there is in his reign little to explain the date of the Apocalypse.

In Revelation 17:10-11 there is a list of eight kings. The numbering of these kings is literal and not symbolic. Augustus, who reigned from 27 B.C. to 14 A.D., is probably the first king mentioned in the passage. The sixth and reigning emperor (69-79 A.D.) is Vespasian. Titus, who had a short reign (79-81 A.D), is the seventh king. The eighth king is described in verse 11 as "the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth." It is this "beast" who embodies the powers of evil, or Satan, and persecutes the Christians. He and the evil that he represents are to be done away with, and the persecuted ones are to be brought into ultimate triumph by the victory of God and the Lamb.

The phrase, "that was, and is not, even he is the eighth," is an allusion to the Nero-redivivus Myth. This was a legend, which sprang up on Roman soil, that Nero would reappear at a later date. The writer of Revelation uses the myth to portray the character, despotic and evil, of the present emperor who was responsible for the present crisis in the Christianity of that time. He, the Nero-redivivus, is the emperor Domitian (81-96 A.D). It was during his reign that the imperial cultus was seriously prescribed. It was instituted, at first, as a means of bringing about the unity and solidarity of the empire, and finally became the religious sanction of the empire. It flourished particularly in Asia Minor. During the latter part of Domitian's second reign, the cultus was seriously enforced, with the result that the Christians of that time were faced with a serious conflict of loyalties: either worship of the emperor or the adoration of Jesus as the Christ of God. They could not do both, for the two were incompatible. It was to reinforce the resolve of the Christians to be true and faithful to God that the author wrote the Apocalypse. The Apocalypse is a call to arms, a summons to be patient and loyal, to find in their passive resistance the ultimate deliverance from their evil day. Since the work was written out of the practical necessities of this particular time, it is, then, quite

improbable that its author was John the Apostle, who lived at an earlier time. The author is either unknown or, more than likely, John the presbyter.[0]

We have observed that Revelation, in common with Jewish apocalypses, couches its message in figure and metaphor. While there are, as we also have seen, literal references contained in the work, yet it is a mistake to find in its figure and metaphor detailed literal or factual references to coming historical events. The attempt to do so has been responsible for a great deal of fanciful, even superstitious, treatment of the message of the book. Both the author and the readers of the book were well-acquainted with the mysterious language of the apocalyptic tradition. Thus the author employed the apocalyptic method to present vividly the message concerning the proper Christian reaction in a time of extreme crisis. It is, to be sure, a time-bound language, and we today have difficulty in responding to it; indeed, we cannot respond to it in exactly the same fashion as did the early Christians. And yet the work does have significance for us today. We can appreciate that significance only if we let the imagery, much of it drawn from an archaic mythology, fall into the background insofar as any literal application of it is concerned, and allow the imagery to speak metaphorically of the spiritual realities that it serves to disclose.

In the line of the poet Robert Herrick are the words "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may." We know what a rosebud is; the term rosebud indicates that object. But Herrick is not telling us to go out and actually pick rosebuds. Rather, he is using the term, which refers to something in the real world that is both beautiful and fragile, as shining forth in splendor but soon to vanish, to tell us something about the values and aims of life. The term rosebud is a metaphor. A metaphor is a term taken from one domain of experience that, because of the primary meaning that it has for the users of the term, is applied to another, quite different and secondary, field of experience. In this metaphorical transfer, the meanings of the primary level of experience are indispensably necessary, because of their intrinsic form, to the evocation of the meaning of the secondary, and higher, level of experience. Thus the metaphor is not something that we can take or leave, but something that is vital and crucial to the disclosure of a further range of our experience of reality. It is an indispensable medium of insight into what is otherwise closed to view.

We ordinarily take our metaphors from the realm of perceptual experience. But that is not always the case, nor is it essentially necessary to the nature of metaphor. For there are forms of inner consciousness, even as reaching down into the well-springs of the pre- and sub-conscious, from which metaphorical meaning may be derived. Thus the writer of the Apocalypse, moved by the crisis of his time that threatened the very existence of Christianity and conscious of the ultimate supremacy of God over the powers of the present evil age, was constrained, under the urgency of

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0 *1*It should be noted here that in nowise are the questions of authorship and date of composition closed. Thus the *Anchor Bible*, which is a contemporary work, subscribes to the view of composite authorship. According to this view, chapters 4-11 came from the circle of John the Baptist; chapters 12-22, from the disciples of the Baptist at a later date, when there was preoccupation with the impending fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans in 70 A.D. The predictions of disasters are those that did occur in Palestine during the first century A.D., and the prediction of triumph heralds, not the Christ of the Cross, but a warrior-leader who is to redeem the ancient city and temple. Chapters 1-3 are regarded as a Christian redaction. This interpretation would mean that Revelation was written prior to 70 A.D.

inspiration, to draw from the vital imagery of his time and transfer that imagery to the evocation of the reality of the perfected redemption through the Christ of Calvary. In his choice of language the writer knew what he was doing, and his readers of that time understood his message.

Now, it is true, of course, that we in our own day cannot be expected to respond to, or appreciate, the vivid color of the apocalyptic imagery in exactly the same manner as did those of a previous age. On the other hand, there is sufficient continuity in the diverse range of human language modes, even those of an ancient time that, if we will, enables us to enter into the conversation and find in that language an indication of spiritual meaning and reality. There is, then, a significant sense in which the book of Revelation may speak to us substantially as it did to those long-ago Christians.

To find out what this message is for a modern world, we have initially to take our stand in the metaphorical language itself. Just as it was necessary for the Christians of that day to utilize that imagery and then transfer it to what the imagery signifies, so we must take that imagery, coupled with our understanding of the complexion of that culture, and use these resources as avenues to spiritual understanding. That is our task in this essay.

The author's seventh vision is of the new creation and God's eternal age (Rev. 21:1-8). The remaining portion of the chapter through chapter 22:1-5 is a detailed description, rich in symbolism, of the New Jerusalem.

Second Isaiah, writing to encourage the exiles who have returned to a diminished land of Judah, holds out the hope of the glorification in Zion, and, more significantly, of the universal deliverance of mankind:

> For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.
> But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy (Isa. 65:17-18).

Ezekiel, who wrote while in Babylonian captivity, envisioned the restoration of Israel:

> Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.
> My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Ezek. 37:26-27).

The parallel between this Old Testament language and that of the New Testament apocalypse is strikingly evident. And there is also some parallel between the language of the noncannonical writings and that of Revelation. For example, the book of Enoch records the writer's vision of a new age:

> The book of the courses of the luminaries . . . which Uriel, the holy angel, who was with me, who is their guide, showed me; and he showed me all their laws exactly as they are, and how it is with regard to all the years of the world and unto eternity, till the new creation is accomplished which dureth till eternity (1 Enoch 72:1).

Finally, in 2 Esdras the angel tells Ezra that:

> Then the world will return to its original silence for seven days as at the beginning of creation . . . ;
>
> After seven days the age which is not yet awake will be aroused, and the age which is corruptible will cease to be (2 Esdras 7:30-31).

While the Apocalypse does have affinities with other apocalypticisms of later Judaism, it nevertheless shows an incomparable superiority. It omits many of the frigid and grotesque cosmic details, the self-satisfied comparisons of God's people with the pagans, the querulous complaints of the living, and, more importantly, the pessimism about the cause of God. Viewed positively, it breathes the hope that only the faith in the Messiah can provide. Revelation is, as the others of its class are not, a Christian apocalypse.

If there is one single verse in the book that can be called its leading text, that verse is 21:7. Its correct reading is: "He that overcometh shall inherit these things [not all]; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." In the Revised English Bible the verse reads, accentuating the specificity of the inheritance: "This is the victors' heritage; and I will be their God and they shall be my children."

The victors' heritage: that is the grand theme of Revelation. What is, now, this heritage? It is the perfected redemption--redemption bought in sacrifice, adumbrated in transfiguration, and realized in resurrection. For now the Prince of Life, "he who begins to lead," proceeds in solidarity with "the children of the resurrection" and leads them to the high plain of final redemption: "I will be their God and they shall be my children" for evermore.

It is this glorious vision that John the Revelator sets forth in spiritualized symbol and metaphor. We must let the symbol and metaphor speak, allowing the literal to subside into the background, to catch our glimpse of that vision. For, couched as it is in the language of mystery, it today can speak to us of spiritual realities.

The perfected redemption, John writes, is one in which many things of this present world are no longer present. There is no sea. The sea is the symbol of unrest, "There is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet" (Jer. 49:23), and now the unrest and sorrow are buried in the depth of the past. There is no mourning or crying. There are tears, Virgil once said, in all things. Those tears, become streams of sadness throughout humanity's long history, are wiped away in the divine gift of serenity: "God will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isa. 25:8). There is no pain, no aching from disease of body or anxiety of spirit. There is no curse, no condemnation of conscience or pollution of soul. There is no alien, "there shall enter nothing that defileth." There is no night, no pause in the activities of the daylight time. There is no temple, no earthly medium through which to approach and see God. There is no light of the sun, for now there is no need of borrowed light. And, finally, there is no death, for there is no sin.

But there is infinitely more, the in-bringing of the new. There is "a city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10). It is a heavenly city, but more, it is not alien to us, for it is "descending out of heaven from God" to be the abode of the children of earth. It is filled "with the dazzling splendor of God." With its twelve-fold foundations and gates it bears the impress of Christ's apostolic circle and the ancient prophets, for it is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." As was the holy of holies (1 Kings 6:20), the new city is shaped in a vast cube, perfect in completeness and symmetry. With a golden reed it is measured for everlasting security, peace, and blessedness. The city is adorned with those precious jewels with which the breastplate of the High Priest was adorned and is therefore radiant in brightness and purity. Its street is of pure gold, for its people walk the golden ways of holiness and peace. From the eternal fountains of grace, "the throne of God and of the Lamb," there flows the life-giving river. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God" (Psalm 46:4). The Good Shepherd who here leads us beside the still waters shall there lead us to the fountains of life. The river of life is lined with the trees of life, now accessible to everyone, yielding the twelve-fold fruits of sustenance and bearing the leaves of healing. These, then, are the truthful symbols of the Church triumphant.

But there is yet a fuller and completed symbolism portraying the final redemption of life. This is found in verses two and three of chapter 21. Here the holy city is that city that is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," and that city that is "the tabernacle of God with men," the city in which "he shall tabernacle with them." The two metaphors, that of the bride and that of the tabernacle, complete the thought of Revelation.

Ezekiel had prophesied, "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Ezek. 37:27). Now the voice from heaven announces the fulfillment of this prophecy. It is significant that John uses the term "tabernacle" both as noun and verb: "the tabernacle of God"; "he shall tabernacle with them." In Exodus 40:34 it is recorded that "the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." Here the term "tabernacle" is mishkan, which derives from the root shakan, meaning "to reside" or "to stay permanently." From this root the later Jewish term, "shekinah," which is not used in the Bible, is derived. The tabernacle, then, was the shekinah, the abiding presence, of God. John employs this term to center his thought upon this most essential meaning of redemption, the abiding presence of God.

But there is, further, a distinctively Christian significance in John's use of "tabernacle." As found in his Apocalypse, the term is skene, which means "tabernacle" or "habitation." The term is found in the Fourth Gospel, where the writer uses it of the incarnate Christ on earth: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt (eskenosen, "tabernacled"] among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Now, in the holy city, new Jerusalem, the Lamb once-slain and now with the Father is on the throne of everlasting presence with the redeemed, truly Immanuel, "God with us." The central meaning of redemption is the presence of God: that is the full meaning and value of the new Jerusalem.

The second metaphor at the heart of Revelation is that of the "bride." Throughout the book there are but three feminine references. In Revelation 21:1-6 the heavenly Mother is, in one variant of the symbolism, the mother of the Messiah, and in the second variant, the Church that is persecuted. In this latter regard, the author is portraying one aspect in the life of the Church. Revelation 17-19 tells of the Harlot, the great enemy and rival of the true and faithful Church. The second aspect in the life of the Church is presented in the symbol of the Bride. The persecuted Church is now the Church triumphant, the "bride adorned for her husband."

The metaphor of the bride is used earlier in Rev. 19:7: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." This verse expresses the idea of divine marriage. It is a theme found in the Old Testament. Of this Hosea writes: "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies" (Hosea 2:20). In the New Testament Paul writes to the Corinthians, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). John now takes this marital figure and speaks of the coming time of joy when the marriage of Christ, the Lamb, and his bride is to be celebrated.

In Revelation the metaphor of the Bride has various shades of meaning. In the passage just mentioned, the Bride is the redeemed of God. She is arrayed in the resplendent garments of righteousness. She is thus the "wife of the Lamb," a figure that represents her faithfulness and purity. When we come to Rev. 21:2, the marital figure changes. Now it is the new Jerusalem that is the Bride. Here the Bride is the abode of the people of God. However, the two--the people and the abode--are not really distinct. For there remains here a unity of thought under the marital figure. In Gal. 4:26 Paul writes, "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Paul is here characterizing the heavenly city as the mother of the true Israel, the Church of God. And in this passage in Revelation John personifies the holy city, the eternal home of the redeemed Christians, as the bride of Christ. Further, in vss. 9-10 of chapter 21, John merges the "bride, the Lamb's wife" with "that great city, the holy Jerusalem." This completes the metaphor of the Bride: the holy city is the Church of God, now glorified and enjoying perfect communion with her Redeemer-Bridegroom.

While the metaphor of the tabernacle bespeaks the presence of God with his people, the metaphor of the Bride bespeaks, as can no other figure, the intimate communion of the redeemed saints with their Lord. For this figure draws from the most sacred and intimate relation in our earthly life and transposes the marriage relationship to the spiritual and the heavenly. The final redemption is the marriage-sharing of spirit with Spirit.

Thus, the apocalyptic symbolism signifies the presence of God in the life of the redeemed. This is the full meaning and value of the holy city.

Now, we would ask, is all this true and real? Can anything further be said to aid us in our quest for understanding? The answer to this, I believe, is "yes," but a "yes" with reservation and caution.

The Apocalypse presents its message metaphorically. But that does not mean that the message is fictitious, untrue, and unreal. While the metaphor keeps its meaning to itself, within the scope of the primary intuitions, it yet admits of an expansion of that meaning in other terms that, while not replacing it, throw light upon it. In the above discussion this process of expansion has been at work, culminating in the statement just made, that the holy city means the presence of God in the life of the redeemed. Can the metaphor be further expanded? I believe that it can.

In our science of the day we can describe, to an appreciable extent, the existence that is ours. But we cannot explain it, in the sense of fathoming its mystery. Each one of us knows that he or she is living, and living in personal, self-conscious existence. Now, to exist, as the Latin existere indicates, is to "stand out," to stand out from all else in isolated

individuality. As paradoxical as it may seem, it is precisely that isolated individuality, with all of its present powers and capacities for the future, which must be redeemed. Life, at its very center, stands in need of redemption.

When we act merely and only on the urgencies and demands of self-existence, we enter into sin and selfishness. The uncontrolled drive for what in one sense is our right, our strength of individuality, brings hostility and conflict into the fabric of humanity. As long as individuals attempt to act out their individuality on the plane of physical impulsion and psychological assertiveness, there can never be the harmony of community. Even the controls that society exerts upon the individual but in the end reinforce the proclivities of egoism.

And yet, we know that we cannot fully live as individuals unless the streams of our lives are mingled in harmony and concord with one another. How shall this be brought about? We cannot achieve this on the basis of individualism and its impulsions, for that is the problem. Neither can we achieve this on the basis of community, for that is the goal that is desired but not yet won.

The ultimate and final resolution of this, our human problem, is found in one source. And that is the love of God. God, and He alone, is our redeemer. He has shown the way of redemption in the Cross of Calvary, the scene where his Son revealed the Father's way of self-sacrifice.

The phase of our present existence is what Alfred North Whitehead calls "full actuality." We stand out from everything else in stark and naked individuality. But there is, notwithstanding, a "deficiency in the solidarity of individuals with one another." It is this irresoluble tension between individuality and community that the divine program of redemption is designed to overcome. For here, among us, neither our individuality nor our community is complete. There is but one perfected actuality, and that is God, in whose life "the many are one everlastingly, without the qualification of any loss either of individual identity or of completeness of unity."[27]

In the transaction of God's redemption, the value that he saves in his everlasting life is not lost, but passes back into the world to ennoble and elevate the ways of mankind. This is the holy city, new Jerusalem, which the Revelator saw "coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband." He saw no illusion; he saw a reality. What God has done for us passes into heaven, and streams back again into the world. Even now the kingdom of God is with us.

But there is more. For the value that God saves is not only what his love has accomplished in and through us. For we are his children, and therefore are of value to him. His promise is that he will redeem us in full individuality and in concord with all of his saints. In this respect, the holy city, new Jerusalem, the marriage of the Bride and Bridegroom, are yet to come. How shall all this be conceived? It cannot, for here the static forms of reason must yield to the fluid intuitions of inspired faith and speak, as did John the Revelator, in the forms of metaphor. For we are now in the realm where "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered

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27 Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 532.

into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

And now, the figure changes. The scene is no longer heaven; it is again the earth. But there is even now the Bride.

> "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

The Bride is now the Church of the present age, called to be pure and faithful, called to carry out her redeeming work among the peoples of earth. Yet this Church knows itself, all the while, as the Bride of her Christ whom she loves. And she waits with faithful expectation the day of light and glory when she will be joined in eternal love with her beloved. Thus does she, with the Spirit who is her indwelling life, call for the Bridegroom to come. In the meantime, her invitation is open, for, with the Spirit, she asks all who will to join with her in mystic union, together to become, in the morning of eternity's cloudless day, "the bride, the Lamb's wife."

"These words are true and faithful," for they are the words of him "that sat upon the throne." They are certified by "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Rev. 22:13), by him who holds the destiny of the ages in his hands. They are certified by "the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16). Not only does Jesus have the Davidic past in his claim to authority, but he has the infinite future in his province. He is the "bright and morning star," the light that guides the redeemed to the fields of eternal fellowship and peace and to the living waters of life everlasting.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

* * * * * *

CHAPTER 7

THE MAN OF HEAVEN

> The second man is from heaven. . . . and the heavenly man is the pattern of all the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:47-48).
>
> She will bear a son; and you shall give him the name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).
>
> So the Word became flesh; he made his home among us, and we saw his glory, such glory as befits the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).
>
> Jesus asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?'. . . 'And you,' he asked, 'who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered: 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God' (Matt. 16:13-16).
>
> -Revised English Bible

The text, quoted in the above, from Matthew's Gospel contains a double characterization of Jesus: the Son of Man and the Son of God. St. Paul in Romans 1:3-4 expresses a parallel two-fold representation of Jesus:

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

It is this double view of the man Jesus that permits his being designated as "The Man of Heaven." In some significant sense this man is unique as bearing, in his earthly history and beyond into eternity, the quality of deity. It is our task in this essay to come to some understanding and appreciation of this very two-stage Christology.

As we hope to demonstrate, there are three basic aspects in the designation of Jesus as the Man of Heaven. They are: 1) the Man of Heaven is centered in eternity; 2) the Man of Heaven is centered in history, and 3) the Man of Heaven is centered in experience. However, it is not possible to articulate these three aspects in terms of some static structure of thought. For these aspects cannot be isolated and treated as if each were a self-contained structure. On the contrary, they are inter-twined in a unitary complex, interpenetrating each other in a way that prohibits any separate analysis. Thus, we must work through this complex interrelationship if we are to gain authentic insight into this man Jesus of Nazareth. And our own patient journey, emphasizing first one and then others of these inter-weaving lines, and doing so back and forth repeatedly, reflects the process in the experience of the disciples of Jesus as they themselves struggled to arrive at a final and definitive understanding of their Master.

A careful reading of the Scriptures, viewed in the light of Jewish culture and thought, discloses the fact that there was a progressive development in the manner in which the disciples viewed Jesus. There are, accordingly, early designations of Jesus that were but partial representations of him, and that were filled out only after the Resurrection. This is seen to be the case with respect to Peter's confession.

In the narration of the great Confession, Jesus referred to the Son of Man. With the exception of Acts 7:56, it is a designation used by Jesus himself. There is question as to whether or not Jesus ever explicitly identified himself with the Son of Man. However, the fact that he alludes to this figure in the context of the conversation in which he asked his disciples to identify him, indicates that he did associate himself, in some sense, with the Son of Man. And it is clear that after the Resurrection this identification was made by his followers.

The phrase, "one like the Son of man" appears in Daniel 7:13. It may have formed the background of Jesus' use of the term in reference to himself. In Daniel the Son of man establishes an everlasting kingdom. What is the character of that kingdom? This question is answered in the preceding verses in Daniel, where the kingdoms of earth are designated as "beastly" kingdoms. They are kingdoms of avarice and destruction. In contrast, the kingdom of the Son of man is a kingdom of humanity, a kingdom in which the proper destiny of humanity is fulfilled. Jesus as the Son of Man, then, is, unlike others of mankind, unique and exceptional in that he speaks of and ushers in a different kingdom, the Kingdom of God, which at the same time and for that very reason, is the kingdom of humanity. There is thus, in this title, Jesus' close identification with mankind--with its real interests, hopes, and expectations. He is intimately with and for men, in the real sense the Son of Man.

In his great Confession Peter uses two terms, both of which were in current usage at that time, namely, "Messiah" and "Son of God." In Jewish expectation the term "Messiah" denoted the one who was to assume kingship over Israel and thus to establish a theocratic monarchy and to exercise political power. And many of Jesus' followers lived in that expectation. The writer of Acts records that, even after Jesus' resurrection, the disciples voiced their expectation that Jesus would now restore the kingdom to Israel: "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus' answer was that they cannot know when the final end-time will come, but that they are to receive the Holy Spirit and thereby become witnesses to the now-given Kingdom of God in the new dispensation of redemptive grace. Mark's account of the conversation between Jesus and his disciples states that after Peter made the great Confession, Jesus then told the disciples that his mission and destiny were those of the Cross and Resurrection. To this Peter protested, for he realized that these words were totally inconsistent with the hope and expectation of regency that were still burning in the consciousness of the disciples. Peter, even in his Confession, was thinking yet of Jesus' messiahship as earthly and political; for he "savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men" (Mark 8:33).

The title "Son of God" had many meanings in the Old Testament. Among those meanings, were those of the theocratic king and, correlatively, the theocratic people. Nathan assured David of the word of the Lord, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (2 Sam. 7:14). And in Exodus 4:22 are the words, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first born." In the more explicit messianic passages, e.g., Psalms 89 and 2, the two senses of sonship coalesce into one: the king and people unite in that theocratic rule that is God's sonship on earth. The Messiah is the embodiment of Israel's rule, with the result that it makes little difference to say that Israel has or is the Messiah. Thus, insofar as Peter's Confession associates the Messiah with the Son of God, and insofar as the idea of divine Sonship carries with it the ideas of theocratic king and people in an earthly regency, it is quite likely that this is what Peter meant in the Confession: Jesus the Son of God as ruler of an earthly kingdom, as Messiah administering a theocratic earthly kingdom. Again, as is the case with respect to the term "Messiah," the term "Son of God" is at this time in the experience of the disciples the term that connotes the fulfillment of Jewish expectancy: the restoration of the kingdom to Israel through the personage of a political Messiah.

The time of Caesarea Philippi, the time of the great Confession, is, nevertheless, the first glimpse of a wider horizon that was at this time beyond the clear view of human vision. It was the glimpse of an horizon that only the Resurrection could bring to clarity. To say this is not to devalue the import of the Confession, for it was a significant, but limited, step in the long journey toward the light of decisive revelation--a light that came only with the sunrise of resurrection morning.

In this germinal seed-time of the faith of Peter and the other disciples, there was, however, an expression, which fell from the lips of Peter, that, upon analysis, serves to show something of the burgeoning significance of the Confession. That expression is the designation of the "Messiah" as not merely "the Son," or even as "the Son of God," but as "the Son of the living God."

In this passage the adjective "living" is in the attributive position, but is in the form that literally means "the Son of God, the living One." God is "the living One."

The idea of God as the living One is dominant in Hebrew thought. For example, in Deuteronomy 5:26, which records Moses' summary recapitulation, after forty years of Israel's wanderings, of Israel's relation with God, God is spoken of as the living God. Just before crossing the Jordan, Joshua assures the people that "the living God is among you" (Josh. 3:10). Later on the kings and prophets validated their declarations by securing them on the assured life of God. The Psalmist sings, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God (Ps. 42:2). Thus the biblical God of Old Testament times is the God who is life, and who is always associated with the life that he bequeaths to His people.

Thus Peter's ascription of life to God was resonant to the times in which Jesus and his followers lived. The eternal God of majesty and awe is the God who lives everlastingly.

There is, in much recent philosophical and religious literature, a discussion of what is known as "the problem of the two Gods." The problem involves a distinction between "the God of philosophy" and the "God of religion." With respect to "the God of philosophy," it is the case that there is, from the standpoint of abstract thought, a logical witness of God. If we think of God as the unconditioned Absolute, we must think of God as self-existent. To deny reality to that which is thought of as unconditioned, as beyond even the conditions of thought, is a self-contradiction in thought. However, beyond our knowledge that God is, our thought cannot disclose the nature of God. To the natural intellect God remains, as for the ancient Athenians, "the unknown God."

It was Aristotle who introduced theism to Greek philosophy. However, the God of Aristotle was an impassive Being, both unaware of and unaffected by the affairs, human and nonhuman, of the world. The God of abstract thought stands in radical contrast to the God of religion, the God of the Bible. For this God is the God who creates and sustains His creation, who in His love brings His goodness to creation, who moves in human history, and who is affected by that which befalls mankind. Thus He is the God who lives.

Thus the biblical God is the God of revelation: the revelation that is found in the divine process in Israel's history and that is made final in the Man of Heaven. Now, if revelation is to be accomplished from God's side, there must be in man a harmony between humanity and deity that makes the reception of revelation possible. That harmony is found in our own experience of life. It is from that experience that we are able to catch the revelation, to find in God the divine correlate of our own experience of life. It is precisely this that Peter saw in his Confession, which designates God as the living One.

Our own experience of life, the life process, discloses a threefold dynamic structure. First, there is the initially given self-center, the core identity of self-consciousness that in its unity is the basis from which all life experience is elaborated. But in itself this center is abstract, lacking in any fullness of content. Thus, the second pole of life experience is self-alteration, a process of awareness that takes into account all that which is outside the initial self-center. It is in this taking account of the "other," most essentially in the participation of the self in the "other

self," that brings the content of one's own life to him with its fullness and richness. Yet, in this going out of the initial center into what lies outside, one's self-identity is not lost; the initial unity is retained, albeit enriched. This duality, then, is now brought together into an indissoluble unity in which the episodes of experience are unified as one's own experience of selfhood. Precisely this process is the reality of personality, which is a reality beyond the psycho-physical individuality that lies as its basis. Personal life, in short, is trinitarian.

From the depth of our own experience of life, then, there is given a key--not an explanation--that discloses the nature of the divine Life. The living God is trinitarian. This is expressed in the terms of "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit." The trinitarian concept is not mathematical, for in no respect can the number one be the number three or the number three be the number one. But to regard the trinitarian formula as a mathematical one is to miss its meaning and import. It is an expression, emerging out of the analogue between divine and human life, that registers the triune nature of the divine Life. And it is this analogue--one that is written into the structure of life--that lies at the foundation of our own reception of the more explicit revelation of the living One as the triune God.

The "Other" in the eternity of the divine Life is called by John the "Word," or the Logos. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1). The Logos is the eternal "Other," the Son, in the life of God the Father. Further, God in self-centeredness and self-alteration is one in the Spirit, the bond of unbroken eternal unity. God is thus the living God.

All this is contained implicitly in the great Confession as it carries with it the designation of God as living. Now, John, as we have just seen, develops the thought further, emphasizing the position of the standpoint of the "Other," the Logos, in the divine Life. As employed by John the term "Word," Logos, designates self-disclosure, the standpoint in the divine Life in which that Life is disclosed to its own center of identity. The God who is the unoriginative givenness of primordial mystery is in the Logos the mediated and disclosed God of light and clarity. But John argues further. This Logos is also the mediation of creation in time. "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." The eternal Son is, beyond the self-mediation of the Father, the mediation that brings the goodness of God to creative expression in a world that is meant to shepherd, in man its crowning achievement, that creative goodness.

Now, the concept of the Logos is a Greek concept that is found in the earlier literature of Greek philosophy. Heraclitus, who lived approximately a half century before Jesus, meant by the Logos the lawfulness and orderliness inherent in the world process. It was a kind of wisdom inherent in the world process. Later philosophers used the term metaphysically to designate a quasi-personal Reason immanent in and directing the world process. The Greek concept of the Logos, however, cannot be simply identified with the concept as it is employed by John in his Gospel. In that Gospel the Logos is not merely the order that is immanent in the universe, but rather the Johannine Logos transcends--and does so eternally--the created world. The Logos is one with the Father, having equal glory and honor. This Logos has, to be sure, a cosmological function as the mediator in the creation of the world. As we shall see in the sequel, the Logos has also a salvational function as the redeemer through revelation. As brought into the historic union with Jesus, the Logos is not the law of the cosmos, but rather

the reconcilor of the cosmos. The Logos is realized in the historic person of Jesus, and is thus the salvational summation of the world process to a unity. In this respect, then, the Logos fulfills and completes the function of mediator of the cosmos. No purely philosophical theory of the Logos has ever reached this plane of revelational insight.

It is also a mistake to make the Johannine Logos into the modern theory of natural law. There are at least two reasons for this. First, natural law is not thought of as transcendent to the world process, but is found only in the web of natural events. Second, the system of natural law embraces only the typical events in nature, and thus cannot embrace the whole of reality. Contemporary natural science cannot speak of the total process of the world. The Johannine Logos, as creative and redemptive mediator, overcomes both of these limitations.

The writer of the Gospel of John now carries the idea of the Logos further. In the language of the Bible, "the Word became flesh." The eternal Logos, the eternal Son, in some sense appeared in history in the person of one man, Jesus of Nazareth. That is the Christian claim. It is, most assuredly, an audacious one, but nevertheless it is the claim that defines Christianity. Thus the question is, "How is this claim to be understood?"

In the early centuries following the apostolic age, the attempt was made, through several Councils, to come to an understanding of the unity of Jesus with God. For our purposes, it is necessary only to point out that the theological terms in which the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus was formulated were the terms of Greek philosophy. The terms, therefore, were alien to the type of problem that they were supposed to clarify, and thus did not, even then, provide a satisfactory explanation. And throughout the successive centuries, this unsatisfactory conclusion has but been compounded.

The terms "nature" and "substance," along with certain other terms, were crucial in the early formulations of Christology. It was then believed that there "existed" in a metaphysical sense such real substances as the substance of humanity and the substance of deity. These substances were, in the language of the time, "real universals." This view reflected one line in the philosophy of Plato, the reality of the "Ideas." Individual human beings were regarded as "individuations" of the one universal substance, humanity. In a corresponding fashion, the persons of the Trinity were individuals sharing in the one divine substance. Given this conceptual apparatus, Jesus' unity with God was conceived as the unification of the two substances in his historical individuality.

There were then, as there are now, difficulties with this "two nature Christology." Viewed from today's perspective, it is difficult, if not impossible, to subscribe to the classical and medieval doctrine of real universals. We do not now believe that there exists somewhere real universal substances, as humanity and deity, and that individuals are, as it were, points set within the space of some extensible substance. While we do, of course, speak of the unity of humanity, we regard the unity as functional rather than substantial. There is a further difficulty. Even if we could accept the substance metaphysics of former times, there is the problem of the radical difference between the substance of humanity and that of deity. The substances are on totally different planes of reality, and thus their blending in one historical occasion becomes an insuperable problem. Finally, there is the resultant impasse to which Christology was brought even in the doctrinal statements of the various Councils.

The two nature doctrine, as set forth repeatedly in the various Councils, resulted in either a "unification Christology" or a "disjunction Christology." According to unification Christology, the Logos united with the man Jesus, both of whom were previously independent beings. The resultant unity, then, is neither the Logos nor the man Jesus, but a third thing. Since Jesus can be thought of as apart from that unity, he then is no longer, as an historic individual, one with God. According to disjunction Christology, the Logos found in the incarnation only a universal human nature. Jesus is man only through identification with the divine Logos. This means, in turn, that Jesus possessed no real human individuality, that as an individual he was never a man, but was a super-man, the God-man. This alternative, too, destroys the unity of the historical Jesus with God. Small wonder, then, that so much of our modern western world views the question of the Christ with such suspicion!

We have reached a turn in the discussion that is critical. The Christian claim is that Jesus, this historic individual, realized in his own person a vital unity with God, and, further, that there is some sense in which this unity is a function of the eternal Logos. Precisely here is the paradox, an aspect of the larger paradox, namely, that eternity should become implicate in time and that, in consequence, time should be comprehended in the vastness of eternity. How shall all this be conceived? There is but one way. And that way is not by way of the conceptual forms of philosophic thought, either classical or modern. Rather, it is by way of coming back to the Jesus of history, who in his life and message realized a personal unity with God. This way is the way of the disciples, who in the days of old, progressively came to realize the identity of their Master. And it is our way today, for we have the memoria, the record of that former journey of revelation and discovery, which promises to lead us, likewise, to the Man of Heaven.

Luke writes, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). This verse captures the distinctive message and life style of Jesus. He proclaimed the now-appearing Kingdom of God, the Kingdom in which men and women are to be liberated from their alienation from God and one another and brought into a peaceful, reconciling society. He backed up this message with his own distinctive life style. He was bereft of the world's goods: "the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). As he walked the byways of ancient Palestine, he consciously sought out the poor, the weak, the disenfranchised, and, while proclaiming the coming Kingdom, ministered to their physical and spiritual needs. He kept company with, even ate with, the outcasts who were frowned upon by the social elite of that day. His message and style of life brought him into increasing disfavor with the established religion of Jewry, until, in the end, he was put to death as a common malefactor. "He came unto his own," John writes, "and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

What is distinctive about Jesus in the pre-Easter "days of his flesh" is his freely-given offer of love in behalf of those who, in the end, turned against him and rejected that offer. And yet he kept on, true to his mission, offering reconciliation and redemption to all. He thus showed, as has no other, that God's way is the way of refusal to seek one's own advantage, the way of selfless service to others, even at the cost of final rejection and to the point of death with the result of radical failure. This, his message and way of life, brought him to the Cross. His death was a death such as no others are called upon to undergo. The Scriptures disclose

the fact that, in that extreme hour, Jesus suffered the experience of being radically abandoned and forsaken by his Father, the living God. And this despite his own way of sacrificial service in behalf of others, in spite, even of his dedication to fulfill the will of the Father in Heaven. Thus the agonizing cry from that ancient Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34).

It is crucial here to note, again, the fact that in his way of life Jesus committed himself to the path of selfless service in behalf of others, assuming nothing that would serve any selfish interest or in any way advantage himself. He gave himself completely, even to the point of death, to benefit others by bringing them into the heavenly Kingdom of reconciliation and peace. In this regard, it is important to note that in this manner of life the unity of Jesus with the Father is revealed. Some specific attention must be given to this all-important consideration.

We have previously called attention to the distinction between psycho-physical individuality and the reality of personality, observing that personality is an achievement toward the fulfillment of one's potential and destiny. We have also made mention of the fact that life is itself trinitarian, the process of moving out from the center to embrace and participate in the other, and thereby to bring that other in one's own unity of experience. These two observations may be combined in reference to the nature of personality. For personality is precisely the process of the self living in, for, and through other selves. Personality is essentially social, and is won only when the self lives in sacrificial relationship with others. Personality is fulfilled to the degree and extent to which that life for others is one's own way of life. This is, so far, an Hegelian concept of personality, i.e., a relational theory of personality. It is, Hegel wrote,

> **the character of the person . . . to supersede its isolation, its separateness . . . . In friendship and love I give up my abstract personality and win thereby concrete personality. The truth of personality is just this, to win it through this submerging, being submerged in the other.**[28]

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28 G. F. W. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Humanities Press, Inc., 1962), Vol. III, pp. 24f.

In his message and activity of the Kingdom, Jesus knew himself to be united with God. Precisely this is the key to our understanding of his unity with God. The great Christological confessions are significant, even today, in that they express that unity. But they do not penetrate to the inner structure of that unity or explain how it came to be. This means that we can come to an understanding of that unity only indirectly, and that by way of sensing, as did the disciples, the community of Jesus with the Father. Jesus' divinity as Son is disclosed, established, through his absolute dedication to the Father. As did no other, Jesus showed that one's personal existence is not established on the basis of his own resources, but only on the basis of receiving all from the Father. From this unity there flows another. For Jesus' participation in the divine Life necessarily expressed itself in his absolute self-service for the salvation and good of others. His work was to do the will of the Father, and in carrying out that work he gave himself absolutely and without qualification for others. In his infinite participation in the destiny of his fellows, in his infinite submergence in others, those for whom he gave all at infinite cost, he wins the infinite stretch of personality, and is thereby established in the true divinity of his Sonship. Jesus is divine, one with God, not as a demi-god, but in his humanity, manifest in his infinite dedication to the Father and to the Father's lost children of earth. Jesus is the Son of God in his humanity.

Yet it must be observed that if the fate of Jesus were that only of death and the grave, he would not, even in his humanity, have been the Son of God. Notwithstanding the establishment of his person as the Son of God, as one with God by way of the infinitude of his taking into account the "other," if his death had been the last word, it could in nowise be said of him that he is truly the Son of God. His last cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", would have been forever unanswered. Then the message of the salvational Kingdom would have been written off as but a grand, although illusory, dream, perishing in the grave common to the children of earth. The last word, then, would have been the victory of evil over the vision and reality of the good.

But God did bring the answer of triumph and victory. That answer came on the morning of Easter: "He is not here, for he is risen" (Matt. 28:6). He who in death was made captive, now not only triumphs over death, but, in the Resurrection, has "led captivity captive" (Eph. 4:8).

The sunrise of Easter morning changed forever the landscape of human experience. The pre-Easter confession of Jesus' lordship, bound as it was to the vision of an earthly kingdom, is now, by the Resurrection, transformed into the vision of a spiritual kingdom in which men and women are reconciled to their God and to one another. Jesus is now seen as in his true messiahship and divinity. The first indication of this transformed vision is found, perhaps paradoxically, in the disciple who persisted in his doubt to the very end. For it was Thomas who first brought the great Confession to its completed expression: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

There is a further clear witness to the unity of Jesus with God, as affirmed in the Resurrection. As Stephen lay dying, his own confession he gave in the words, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). This, too, is a confession of the Lordship of Jesus, for only he who is one with the Father can receive the human spirit.

In the context of Stephen's witness, the writer of Acts introduces a "young man" before whose feet were laid Stephen's clothes. That young man, as

all Christians now know, was Saul of Tarsus, later, under the name of Paul, to become the supreme advocate of the Lord Jesus. It was on the Damascus road that Saul saw the Man of Heaven, the "spiritual body" of the resurrected One, present in the effulgence of heavenly light: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (Acts 9:5). Saul then recognized this Jesus in his true identity as the divine Lord: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do" (Acts 9:6)? From henceforward, Saul of Tarsus became Paul the Apostle, for, as he later wrote, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:8). Thus, finally, the Man of Heaven becomes centered in experience, having found his rightful place in spiritualized consciousness.

The dawning consciousness of Jesus' unity with God, voiced haltingly in the early Confession, has reached its completion in the experience and witness of that unity, now held and secured in the power of the Resurrection. It is as if there were a faint ray of light, dimly glowing in those pre-Easter days, but now joined with an intense brilliance streaming from resurrection glory, forming a completed arc, resplendent in its prismatic hues, and thus revealing that the crucified One has now triumphed in resurrection unity with God. He is, indeed, the Son of God. He who, Paul later wrote, "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" is now "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:3-4).

Two streams, one from the pre-Easter days and the other from the resurrection reality now merge, uniting in themselves to form the true divinity of the Son. To the former must be added the latter; otherwise Jesus' unity with God is dissolved. The Resurrection is essential, for it is God's legitimation of the divinity of Jesus. In the temporal dimension it has a retroactive power, for it discloses what Jesus was, even in the days of his flesh, namely, one with the Father, the Son of God. The Resurrection does not in itself constitute the divinity of the Son; rather, it legitimatizes what he already was. But that legitimation has a significance beyond time that reaches into eternity itself. It reaches to the eternal Logos, the eternal Son of the Father.

As we have noted, John's Gospel teaches that the eternal Logos "was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). This means, finally, that the man Jesus, even he who appeared in his historical actuality, is yet positioned, and eternally so, in unity with God. Jesus was always one with God, even before his life on earth. From all eternity Jesus is God's representative in creation and redemption. He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Jesus is thus included in God's own eternal deity. Jesus is eternal in the divine intention, yet "in the fullness of time" manifest in the flesh. This very two-sided retroaction, the legitimation of Jesus in his humanity and the positioning of him, in his humanity, in the eternity of God's own deity is the meaning of Jesus' resurrection. He is "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Thus the Man of Heaven is centered in eternity.

Now, it is by virtue of this centeredness in eternity that Jesus is centered in history, is valid for all history. This centeredness is significantly more than the division of historical time.

From the perspective of the individual person, one's own destiny is never fulfilled in any given framework of life. Regardless of his achievements in the successive projects and goals that he undertakes, his life is never brought into realized unity of meaning. Beyond the given moment,

there is the lure of an open future in which the individual dreams of a more adequate comprehension of the life plan. Yet, as we have noted in the previous essays, the openness of the temporal horizon, the interminability of successive phases of experience, cannot in itself bring the sense of fulfillment of one's destiny in unity with himself. Further, there is the fate that we must all accept and someday endure, which is our death--that death that subjects us to the closure of the very nisus of life in the restless search for fulfillment. Thus, it is only as the life stream is taken up in the resurrection of Jesus, and through that resurrection taken up in the eternity that Jesus shares in unity with God, that the individual may find the fulfilled unity that his own historical destiny both requires and promises.

It is substantially the same situation that holds for the larger history of humanity. There are two lines involved in the designation of Jesus as the Son of Man. He is the Son of Man in his humility, in his sufferings, and in his death. He is the Son of Man in his solidarity with suffering humanity. But he is also the Son of Man, in the Danielic sense, in his future coming in glory. That coming is the eschaton, already begun in the Resurrection, in which all events are summoned to unity through Jesus Christ.

On the plane of historical process, the sequences of historical events and epochs, the interminable flow of the ages, history can have no meaning. What it signifies, in terms of intelligible character, remains but a baffling question to which no answer, drawn from that process, can be given. In its own terms, history is an illimitable openness, a future in which events follow one another in meaningless sequence. If the saga of history as a whole is able to take on meaning, it does so only as it receives that meaning in the light of the end that has appeared in advance in the history of Jesus. The fulfilled meaning of history, the divine purpose in history, is the fulfillment of humanity through sonship.

> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;
> That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him (Eph. 1:4, 10).

The broken, disruptive character of historical process, on the temporal plane, has no tendence toward this telos, or summation of humanity in sonship. It is only in the resurrected Lord, the eternal Logos now in his resurrection centered in history, that history receives the summons to unity, within itself, as fulfillment to sonship.

In itself the cosmos possesses no unity. We have mentioned earlier that natural science cannot address the universe as a whole. Rather, it but addresses certain typical events that recur on the temporal plane. It is only man, the trustee of creation, that can effect the unity of the cosmos. Parenthetically, this is increasingly evident in our modern times in which the unconcern of western industrial man is introducing irremediable disruptions in the balance of the cosmic processes. The larger disruptions in the physical world are the result of the even more serious disruptions in the spirit of humanity. Thus, in the light of these contemporary trends, it is evident that unless there is established an inward unity of the spirit, reaching out in unity with others, the cosmos will itself suffer the loss of its essential unity. The answer to this problem is found, as so many today do not even anticipate, in the Lordship of the Christ who brings unity to humanity. The divine summation in Christ that reconciles humanity, healing its disruptions,

also establishes the unity of the universe. For the structure of unity in man and his history now becomes the structuring force in the establishment of unity in the universe. As mediator of the cosmos, the Johannine Logos, manifest in the resurrection history of Jesus, is also the reconciler of the cosmos. The Man of Heaven, centered as he is in eternity, is thus centered in history, the One who reconciles humanity and world.

> But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him (1 Cor. 8:6).

The temporal and eternal unity of Jesus with God is something that cannot be conceptualized. The humanity and divinity of Jesus cannot be conceptually combined. This is the lesson of the Christological creeds. But it can be brought to an appreciative view from within our experience of salvation. Indeed, it is the salvational motif that has throughout history promoted the attempt to state conceptually the humanity and divinity of Jesus.

We all-too-often think that theism is a rational doctrine in which there is found no paradox. We then become perplexed when we find the paradox of the unity of Jesus with God. There is no resolution of this difficulty unless the parameters of our thinking are radically readjusted.

It is incorrect to suppose that natural reason is able to arrive at a satisfactory concept of God, only to be embarrassed by the paradox of Jesus Christ. Rather is it that we arrive at an adequate idea of deity only through the paradox of the Man of Heaven. We then are brought to the realization that there is paradox in the idea of God.

The paradoxes in the idea of God are evident in several respects. First, there is the paradox of creation. All that we know of creation, as a human achievement, presuppose the given existence of material utilized in the creative process. The divine creation, paradoxically, employs no previously existing material. It is, instead, a radical creation, a creatio ex nihilo. There is also the paradox of providence. On the horizontal plane of human history, what happens is a network of causes and effects, a sequence of natural determination. But on the vertical plane, this network of determinants becomes the nexus in which God's providence is administered. The Christian believes that what befalls him discloses the divine providence in which what comes to him comes from Him who is all-good and all-loving. That is a paradox. In this connection, there is the paradox of intercessory prayer. This paradox, too, brings the horizontal and vertical planes into juxtaposition. The paradox consists in the insight that, while God seeks spiritual relationship with men, nevertheless intercessory prayer releases an energy of God that takes that intercession in itself in its beneficent activity.

But there is a central paradox to which these paradoxes point in anticipation. And that is the paradox of grace. It is the paradox that, while the Christian is the agent who is responsible for his right choices and deeds, the impulse is not his, but God's. Divine grace is somehow prior to human achievement, for that achievement is brought to pass as God takes up our human life into union with his own divine Life. It is this paradox of grace, which St. Paul so eloquently expressed:

> But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than them all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Cor. 15:10).

And again:

> **I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).**

"I laboured more, . . . yet not I, but the grace of God." "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The paradox of the Incarnation is this: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). "God was in Christ." How best may this unity of Jesus with God be understood? Only in the Christian experience of the paradox of grace. "Not I, but the grace of God." In a fragmentary way the paradox of the Incarnation is formed in the Christian's experience of grace and is thus a reflection of the unity of deity and humanity in Jesus. This experience is thus the key that, as does no other, unlocks the mystery of the union of God and man in the Incarnation. It is here, then, in the paradox of grace that the Man of Heaven is most truly disclosed, centered in experience.

And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness
Are His alone.[29]

It is, then, in our experience of the paradox of grace that we realize the centrality of Jesus in our own individual history and the universal history of humanity. Through these avenues of experience and history, we are thus led into the sacred province of the ultimate horizon, final redemption in the eternal Logos, who in the days of his flesh, showed us that, indeed, God is with us for evermore.

Nearly a century ago, a Congregational scholar, John Wright Buckham, penned in words that border the beauty of poetry:

> **Many centuries separate him from us; mighty changes have swept across the intervening generations; civilization has moved on through diverse periods and vast developments, but the Man of Nazareth is the same yesterday, today and forever in his hold upon men. Above the now curious and outgrown ideas of his time, the meager life, the archaic customs, he rises supremely real, supremely commanding and supremely winsome.**[30]

But it is, as we have repeatedly seen, in the language of immanent beauty that the full significance of the Christ in us may be viewed, such that we envision his beauty as the Man of Heaven. In poetic imagination, let us climb the sunlit heights, there to view, as the valley mists give way to the light, the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon.

Jesus, Rose of Sharon, bloom within my heart;
Beauties of thy truth and holiness impart,
That where'er I go my life may shed abroad
Fragrance of the knowledge of the love of God.

Jesus, Rose of Sharon, sweeter far to me

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29 Harriet Auber.

30 Christ and the Eternal Order (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1906) p. 65.

Than the fairest flow'rs of earth could ever be,
Fill my life completely, adding more each day
Of thy grace divine and purity, I pray.

Jesus, Rose of Sharon, bloom for evermore;
Be thy glory seen on earth from shore to shore,
Till the nations own thy sov'reignty complete,
Lay their honors down and worship at thy feet.[31]

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CHAPTER 8

THE SACRAMENT OF EXISTENCE

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

The same was in the
beginning with God.

All things were made by him;
and without him was not any
thing made which was made.
John 1:1-3

God . . . hath in these last days
spoken unto us by his son, whom
he hath appointed heir of all things,
by whom also he made the worlds;

Who being the brightness of his glory,
and the express image of his person,
and upholding all things by the word of his power,
when he had by himself purged our sins,
sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high;
Hebrews 1:1-3

The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

Day unto day uttereth speech,
and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
Psalm 19:1-2

I saw that in its depth there are enclosed
Bound up with love in one eternal book,
The scattered leaves of all the universe--
Substance, and accidents, and their relations,
As though together fused in such a way
That what I speak of is a single light.
Dante

The use of the term sacrament in association with the subject of existence may seem inappropriate, since the term is usually associated with

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31 Ida A. Guirey

certain Christian rites. It is advisable, therefore, to give some attention to the meanings and usages of the term.

The word sacramentum (sacrare = "to dedicate") means "something set apart as sacred, consecrated, dedicated." In classical times it referred to a sum that two parties to a lawsuit deposited in sacro. Hence it came to signify the suit itself and also the thing that sets apart and devotes. It was also used to refer to the military oath of obedience to the commander.

It is used in this latter sense by Pliny in a letter to the Emperor Trajan. This is the first appearance of the word sacramentum in connection with Christianity. In the letter Pliny speaks of the Bithynian Christians:

> They had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath [sacramento] . . . (Ep. 96).

The Vulgate sometimes uses the term sacramentum to translate the Greek term mysterion, which means hidden, secret, mystery. Thus the Greek term, mysterion, found in Eph. 1:9, reads in the Vulgate as sacramentum. Throughout the New Testament mysterion, mystery, signifies the purpose and truth of God, hidden to the wicked, but disclosed, revealed, to the godly. It signifies

Thus the term sacramentum came to take on three meanings: (1) that which is set apart as sacred, (2) that which does the setting apart, and (3) a mysterion, a secret once hidden but now disclosed.

It is in this third sense, the disclosure of the spiritual, that the term sacrament is employed in this essay in relation to existence. The argument of the essay is to the effect that existence is sacramental, bears sacramental character, as evincing spiritual reality. Existence shows forth the sacral.

The sacramentality of existence means, first of all, that the spiritual is a distinctive mode of reality. It is so, in the first place, in regard to the existence of human personality.

There is the view, set forth in many quarters today, that there is but one mode of reality, namely, the physical. Mind and consciousness are regarded as caused by and emerging from the physical, in this instance the physiological as itself a derivative of the physical.

Now there is no question as to the existence of the physical. That is not the issue. The issue is whether or not, in contrast to the physical, there exists a distinctively spiritual mode of reality.

There is unmistakable evidence, from the very nature of our subjective experience, that there is a distinctive spiritual mode of being in contrast to the physical. The evidence is this: When we are conscious of an object, for example an object of perception, we entertain that object as something presented to consciousness, as a content standing over against the experience of awareness in which the object is presented. The "objectivity" of the object is its standing in the relation of object to the subjective experience of consciousness.

Now it is impossible to be conscious of the object alone. For the awareness of an object involves the awareness of what it means to be the

subject of that experience. Correlative to the awareness of the object, there is awareness that the object is the object of my experience. The former awareness is that of an object of experience; the latter, of a mode of experience. And it is this awareness of the mode of experience that entails the experience of subjective, self-awareness.

In the experience of objects, then, there is a conscious experience of the self. The contents of experience articulate themselves as contents of a subjective system in which they are organized by the power of the identity and integrity of the subjective system, i.e., by the self that persists in its coherent unity and self-identity.

Now there is a feature of the self as subjective system that discloses, further, that the self is a distinctive mode of being not to be identified with or confused with the physical that is presented as object of experience.

In nature there are, to be sure, systems. The atom and the solar system are examples. But there is a vast difference between system in the physical world and system in the spiritual world. The distinguishing characteristic of a physical system is its uniformity. Uniformity is essential to the maintenance of the system. Even a slight departure from the uniformity of the processes of the solar system would mean its destruction. In the case of an atom, as the displacement of an element by its isotope, the change would be destructive of its identity.

With regard to the self as subjective system, the situation is radically different. Here the incitement to the assertion of selfhood is, not uniformity, but vicissitude. The changes and disruptions, which would be ruinous of a physical system, are handled differently by the self as subjective system. The self is able to assert its identity in, even in spite of, the vicissitudes that pose a challenge to that identity. Thus vicissitude is of the essence of selfhood. This cannot be said of physical system. Hence the distinctiveness of self in contrast to the physical.

It could be argued, as it often is, that the self as subjective system reveals itself as functionally different from the physical and the purely physiological. But, so the argument would go, self-consciousness is a derivative of the physiological. Selfhood emerges from its physiological base.

However, this claim is more a faith than a fact. The theory of emergent evolution holds that in the synthetic process by which the higher and more complex emerges, new qualities do come into existence. But they are not sui generis qualities having their basis in the spiritual. It is admitted that the causal factors that are responsible for the derivation are not known. If they could be ascertained, the derivation could be causally explained.

Precisely here is the difficulty with the theory. It is a metaphysical, not a scientific theory. It is an article of faith, not of demonstrated fact. It is better, therefore, to take the evident deliverances of the structure of our experience of selfhood and to follow that lead in the direction of the claim of the spiritual as a distinctive mode of being.

There is a second major respect in which the existing world is sacramental. Whatever its ultimate nature may be--and this will be a subject of consideration in the sequel--there exists a physical world. Now there is a

mutual interplay between the physical and the spiritual. This interplay generates a new dimension of existence: the realm of values.

There is an order of values, which, while partially conditioned by the percipient subject, is objective. These values, although existing in relation to consciousness, are not merely projections, or phantasms, of subjectivity. Instead, they obtain with an integrity and force of their own, such that their character is resistant to the control of the subject. In this respect, then, they are real in their own right.

The first-order values are the sensory qualities, which the mind, in its relation to nature, perceives. At its root physical nature is a vibratory system of space-time. There are no qualities inherent in or attaching to that vibratory system. While it is not an abstraction, but really exists, the physical is barren and naked in respect of qualitative characteristics. Physical nature is purely a system of quantitative periodicities and relationships. Waves of light, of air, of sound, motions of electrons, are in themselves merely different rates of motion, or different rates of velocities into which motion is differentiated. It is only when these events of physical nature impinge upon the conscious subject that they are transformed into sensory properties. Vibrations then become colors and sounds. Electronic motions then register themselves upon us as tactile properties.

It must be emphasized again, that the sensory properties, which make up the world of ordinary experience, have no existence in and by themselves. This does not mean, however, that they have but the status of dream-images. On the contrary, their locus is in the world of physics, but their originative principle that brings them into existence is resident in spirit. While it requires the medium of the physical, spirit is here the creative force. In fine, the world of sensory properties is a sacramental world.

This is set forth eloquently by a recent writer:

> When physical and spiritual come together the former bursts into life and displays itself in a rich variety of manifestations unknown before. Vibrations become colours and sounds. Space begins to glow with meanings which the physical world cannot bring forth of its own accord, but which it contracts in the presence of the conscious subject. The elements of nature are bathed in the ethos of spirit. Such meanings, evoked by spirit in the medium of nature, belong to the realm of values.[32]

There are other orders of objective values. They are established on the basis of the sensory properties. As we have just seen, the values of the first order, the sensory qualities, are established through a first impregnation of the physical. The remaining orders of values, now, are established through a second impregnation of the physical. These are: the primary aesthetic values, the pleasant, agreeable, etc.; the values of utility; the secondary aesthetic values, i.e, beauty; the value of truth; and, lastly, the value of sanctity.

The primary aesthetic values are related directly to the sensory qualities. Objects affect one as pleasant, agreeable, etc. The values of utilities are established through the relations of objects to one another and to the subject. The secondary aesthetic values are created by means of the

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32Archibald Allan Bowman, *A Sacramental Universe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), p. 349.

organization of the aesthetic object. Truth becomes a value in relation to the knowing mind. Sanctity is a value in relation to spirit.

To these objective values there are subjective equivalents. They are constituted on the basis of what it means to the subject to create and realize the objective values. For example, to the aesthetic values there corresponds an experience of satisfaction; to the value of sanctity there corresponds the emotions of awe and reverence.

The moral values are subjective in that they concern the personality, its dispositions and character. The moral life is the life that is lived as a perfect whole. That is to say, it is the life that achieves the distinguishing feature of selfhood, namely, unity and coherence. That life is an ideal, never completely realized, yet the goal of life itself.[33]

It must be emphasized again that while the values are instituted through the activity of spirit and are resident in spirit, they are not for that reason subjective in any arbitrary sense of the term. They are occasioned by the interplay of the objective world and spirit and for that reason have an objective locus. The moral values, although subjective in the respect just indicated, reflect the nature and structure of personality and for that reason possess an integrity, validity, and imperative of their own.

There are, then, two major respects in which existence is sacramental: (1) the being of spirit, and (2) the emergence of the values through the interplay of nature and spirit. But there is a third respect in which the sacramentality of existence becomes evident. This respect concerns nature itself.

We have suggested that nature is a vibratory system of space-time. It is to this mode of being that we now turn our attention.

Modern physical science has bequeathed us with a highly paradoxical result. As physical investigations have developed over the last hundred years, nature has become a highly un-physical world. There seems to be nothing left to which the term matter can apply. There are two reasons for this state of affairs: (1) While there is an abundance of scientific information about the world, that information is not suited to define the physical mode of being, and (2) where physical science trenches upon the limits of analysis, as in the electronic theory of the atom and wave mechanics, symbols and concepts, which do not directly refer to anything in the world of everyday observation, are created and employed. Thus the real world that is the subject matter of physics becomes something highly tenuous and intangible. In fact, the suggestion has been made, quite frequently, that this world is nothing but our scientific constructs.

However, while it is true that the world of physical science is dependent, as regards its knowability, upon the symbols and concepts of science, it does not follow that there is no independent physical reality. Indeed, a fundamental and necessary postulate of physical science is that a physical must exist.

That world is, as we know it today, a vibratory space-time system. The question thus emerges: what are space and time?

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33 See Bowman, *op. cit.* ch. xiv.

Space is perceptual space. Now much of the world of perceptual space is mind-dependent and mind-conditioned. Many spatial properties and relations of things are of this nature. For example, "right" and "left," "up" and "down," "great" and "small" are perspectival and involve a reference to the percipient subject. This circumstance yields the possibility that there is no real and independent physical space.

There is, however, one feature of perceptual space that serves to establish its independence from the mind of the perceiver. That feature is the measurable in space. The magnitude that is ascertainable by measurement is not itself subjectively conditioned, although, of course, it is related to consciousness as an object of consciousness. Thus "real" space, although partly mentally conditioned, is also mind-independent. Physical space, then, is magnitude.

A second feature of physical reality is the temporal. This temporal is the spatially temporal. Space and time are correlated in the physically real. Thus a question is raised as to just how they are correlated in the constitution of the physical mode of being.

Earlier thought, both in philosophy and science, interpreted time as the successive configurations of matter in space. In these terms the temporal is not of the essence of physical matter, but rather an adjunct.

Modern physics finds the secret of matter and structure in process and thus interprets the spatial in terms of the temporal. This radical change of standpoint is the result of atomic theory. Atoms react, not so much from externally induced causes as from events that are intrinsic to the nature of the atoms themselves. Their identity, then, is constituted in the processes that are internal to them. Events and process are temporal, which means that time is of the essence of the physically real.

The physical mode of being is now defined as a system of events viewed as a universal energy that diversifies itself in these forms that, under the conditions of human experience, assume the aspect of body. Energy is basic and foundational, while body is, not a static substance, but a concentration of energy. Mass and energy are identical.

In fine, space, time, and energy are the constitutive factors in physical reality. The temporal is integral, rather than extraneous, to the spatial and in the concretion of time with energy the physically real is brought into durable existence. Whenever time is coordinated with space in the unity of an event, the physical mode of reality is constituted.

Throughout this essay, we have argued that there are two modes of being: the spiritual and the physical. They are original and mutually independent. This independence, however, does not prejudice the question as to how existence in these modes comes to be. How does spirit come to be? How does the physical world come into existence?

The spiritual is related to the physical as the higher to the lower. Further, the spiritual is the superlative as well as the comparative; the spiritual is being at its highest. For being at its highest, there can be no answer to the question as to its origination. There is nothing from which spirit can derive. Spirit is because it is being at the highest, pregnant with the energies of self-realization.

However, the physical world, the lower, must be thought of as a creation, and a creation of spirit. And as a creation of spirit, it has sacramental significance.

There are, at least, two conditions holding of physical nature that require that it be a creation. Those conditions concern the nature of time and the interplay of experience.

(1) The nature of time.

The older view that physical nature is a system of material objects located in space, and that time does not intrinsically affect those objects but rather merely involves their successive relocations in space, could dispense with the idea of creation. It could view the cosmos as a closed, self-sufficient, mechanical system.

But the modern view that time is of the essence of physical reality changes the situation radically. One of the characteristics of time is that no moment in time is the same as another moment. In the temporal continuum everything is new and un-precedent. Now it is the custom in some theoretical quarters to speak of "the creative advance of nature," meaning that nature is a process that is itself creative. But nothing could be farther from the truth. Nature as "closed to mind" cannot creatively advance. Nature happens and the fact that it happens is not the same thing as creative advance. The physical cannot creatively advance. In consequence of this inability of nature and of the further fact that yet time, with its novelty, is constitutive of nature, the only acceptable thesis is that nature is a creation of spirit. As an integral factor in nature, time becomes a character that requires that nature can be understood only in spiritual terms. Nature itself discloses its creaturely character.

(2) The interplay of experience.

Physical nature is, as we have seen, mind-independent. It exists whether or not we observe it. Yet, although real in itself, its independence of mind is not quite the whole story.

The idea of the independently real includes, as part of its meaning, the conditions under which that real exists. One of those conditions is that it is so constituted as to be capable of being an object of experience. This fact has been mentioned earlier, in connection with the observation that physical nature as a vibratory space-time system so responds to the observer as to occasion the appearance of the sensory properties, and, ultimately, of the other orders of value. What this means is that the experience-factor now becomes part of the essential nature of the independently physical real. What it is in itself cannot be understood apart from its nature as yielding to the interplay of spirit. It is what it is, then, finally, only in relation to experience.

Now these two conditions, the nature of time and the interplay of experience, are satisfied only upon the assumption of divine creation. The role of time in the constitution of the physically real means that it is functionally dependent in its entirety upon the creative energies of spirit. That spirit cannot be our own spirits. The universe is not a product of our own individual energies. We must, therefore, assume God whose creative activity is the source of the existence and maintenance of the world. And the only experience that is adequate as the ground of the experience-condition of the world is the experience of God. For our individual experiences are so

limited that they cannot constitute the condition of experience that is adequate to the cosmos. Our experiences are creative only as they utilize material that confronts us. But the divine experience, which is the correlate of the object-world, has no material with which to create. The old riddle, does God create out of something or out of nothing, is nonsense. If creation is out of something it is not creation, and it is meaningless to talk of creation out of nothing. The meaning of divine creation is that God does not create out of anything. Divine creation is the comprehensive experience that sustains the condition of the cosmos that it be amenable to experience as part of its independent nature. It is the meaning of both physical nature and of experience that requires that the physical universe be the correlate of the supreme experience.

As the creation of the energies of the supreme Spirit, there is some sense, then, in which the physical universe is sacramental. But extreme care has to be taken in the attempt to formulate that sacramentality. Here it must be observed that the detailed information coming from the science of physics cannot pronounce upon this question, and attempts to do this are non sequitur. And generalizations coming from the side of philosophy and religion are likewise suspect. They, too, cannot provide an understanding of the creative process.

Some examples of the problem may be of help. From the side of philosophical generalization, Professor Bowman suggests that physical space is a domain in which the creative energies of the divine Spirit die out into a state of extreme diminution.

> It means that for purposes of His own, the divine Being creates within the ambit of His nature, a region where the undulations of His spirit die out in infinitesimal vibrations and cease to function as a time-compelling consciousness. Space is the unconsciousness of Omniscience, the unconsciousness of God; and the creation of a spatial universe is one of the ways in which the Creator diversifies the infinite, unbroken curve of His existence. The vibrations of the physical world are the faint overtones of the divine orchestration. Or, to vary the metaphor, they are the last ripples that break the surface of the creeks and backwaters of existence, where being dies away into nothingness because it ceases to be spiritual.[34]

As Professor Bowman states, this language is metaphorical. While it may give some impression of what is involved in creation, it cannot be a cognitive account of that process.

In his book, The Secret of the Universe, which argues for the triune structure of the features of the universe, Nathan R. Wood advances the thesis that space is the extension of divine power and that electronic motions are exhibitions of that divine energy.

> That omnipresent power is seen as the evident source of energy and motion, of protons and electrons, of atoms, planets and suns. It is equally the evident continuum, the universal underlying medium, existing everywhere as the reality of space . . . . By it we see His creative power outspread into the dimensions which we know as space, and passing, through

34 Bowman, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

> energy, into motion, and so into all the phenomena of a physical universe.[35]

But, again, this characterization of the ultimate nature of physical reality, in terms drawn from the religious reference, is suspect as to its cognitive credibility.

But there are equal limitations under which answers from science also suffer. For example, astro-physics suggests two possible pictures of the origin of the universe. One picture is that of the universe as we know it today deriving from a state of infinite density and expanding in such a way as to change its smoothness into the irregularities of the constellations. In its presumed original state of homogeneity, there are no laws by means of which to gain any information about the origin of the universe. The other picture is that of earlier universes with their own set of laws and of the present universe with its unique laws having been developed from an earlier universe.

With respect to either alternative, the present laws that yield description of the universe cannot explain or account for the process of cosmic origination. For they cannot broach universes or features of universes to which they are inapplicable.

So the consequence seems to be that, while the physical universe calls for creative origination, and is thus of a sacramental character, we are unable to specify just what that sacramental character involves or how it was brought into being. This seems to be an impasse in thought that cannot be overcome, either from the side of philosophy and religion or from the side of science.

But there may be a way out that provides some resolution of the problem. That way, it is here suggested, is what may be termed the way of concilience. As the term in its etymology suggests (conciliare, "to bring together"), concilience in this context is a process of bringing considerations from different universes of discourse together, laying them side by side, as it were, and observing similarities of the patterns of thought. What is not done in the use of this method is to take the language and thought of one discourse to explain, or prove, the truth of the language and thought found in the other discourse. As we have just pointed out, any such attempt lacks cognitive credence and support. What concilience does accomplish, however, is this: it reveals certain affinities in the different domains that give some insight, although not an explanatory one, into what is otherwise an impenetrable mystery. And such an insight is important, if we are to come to terms with the farthest reaches of our experience and existence.

The nature of the physically real, with time as a constitutive element, is understandable only in terms of the creativity of the divine Spirit. But, as we have taken pains to demonstrate, physical science, although it recasts matter in terms of energy, is unable to show just how the creative energies of spirit account for the physically real. Likewise generalizations from either philosophy or religion are highly metaphorical and ought not to be taken as cognitively valid.

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35 Nathan R. Wood, *The Secret of the Universe*, 10th ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955), pp. 129-30.

Now there is language and thought found in religious discourse that is significant and capable of yielding some insight into the problem when laid side by side with the latest findings of physical theory. But, again, a concilience is all that can be obtained, not explanation or proof from the side of the religious consciousness. Yet precisely that concilience is of significance.

As the passages of scripture found in the frontpiece of this essay indicate, the New Testament characterizes the Word, the Logos, as the divine agency of creation. The writer of the gospel of John says of the Word that "all things were made by him." The term logos carries the idea of the order and intelligibility of the created universe. Here is a concilience between the Scriptures and the findings of physical science, although held to the fact of creation. Again, concilience is not demonstration. In Hebrews 1:3 the writer uses the expression, "and upholding all things by the word of his power." The term word, as found in this passage, is not the term used in John 1:3. There the term is logos. In the passage in Hebrews the term is rh•mati, which is the dative of rh•ma, which means utterance. The noun stems in the verb rheo, which means to flow, to pour forth. Thus the passage in Hebrews may, and should be, read: "and upholding all things by the flowing utterance of his power." The term rhemati as employed here carries the idea of the creative energy of the Creator. This too is a concilience with the nature of the physically real as the process of energy.

Again, while neither the language of the Bible nor the language of physical science is isomorphic with the other, there is a concilience of import that could not be achieved as long as nature was thought of as a system of material substances. And it is this concilience that affords an insight according to which both the languages of religion and science meet in some high degree of consonance. And that is significant.

Whatever is involved in the farthest reaches of divine creativity, it is hidden in mystery. The energizing principle of the universe is manifest only in the vibratory space-time system and in the phenomena that arise in the interplay of nature and spirit. Likewise God is the hidden mystery, disclosed only in the creative and redeeming Word. That Word is

> the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature; for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in the earth . . . (Col. 1:15-16).

In this world there is much of order and coherence. But there is also disorder and conflict. Notwithstanding the latter, the universe is yet the creation of supreme spirituality. It bears witness to its sacramentality.

God's eternity is His everlasting endurance. It is that everlasting endurance that creates, sustains, and redeems the universe. There is a vision of faith, which sees that far-off day when disorder shall yield to order; strife, to peace; conflict, to harmony; and death, to everlasting life.

> Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.
> For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.
> The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.
> For he hath put all things under his feet. . . .

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

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CHAPTER 9

THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE SAINTS

In the brightness
of the saints,
from the womb
before the day star
I begot thee.
Ps. 110:3

Then Jesus spake again unto them saying,
I am the light of the world:
he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness,
but shall have the light of life.
John 8:12

Ye are the light of the world.
Matt. 5:14

But now are ye light in the Lord:
walk as children of light.
Eph. 5:8

In its function as symbol, the term "light" is what is known as a "tensive" symbol. A tensive symbol is one that strikes deeply into and expresses the tensions and contrasts of human existence. One of those tensions is that of light and darkness. The symbol "light" represents and expresses the positive pole of that all-pervasive tension of human existence.

Nowhere is that basic tension better stated than in the language of St. Paul: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph 5:8). In this passage Paul uses the abstract form, skotos, which means "darkness itself." The term conveys the thought that outside of Christ people are not only in darkness; the darkness is also in them. But now in Christ the whole nature of light belongs to them as did formerly the nature of darkness. They are now not only in the light, but they are penetrated by the light, so that they themselves are "the light of the world." They are truly the "children of light."

In its spiritual significance, the symbol of light has three basic meanings. First, light means illumination--the illumination of revelation. Second, it means holiness--the condition of life that is delivered from the selfish and grasping spirit. And, third, it means influence--the contagion that extends outward to others.

Light as illumination.

Light as illumination is one of the oldest of human symbols. In the third millennium B.C. a school flourished in Sippar in ancient Mesopotamia. Young men from all over Mesopotamia, and perhaps from outlying regions, congregated at this school. Some time before the Second World War a buried stone was discovered, which was probably the lintel to the main entrance of the school. The stone carried the characters, which could still be read,

which mean: "May he who sits in the place of learning shine like the sun." Light is the illumination of knowledge and truth.

Isaiah had spoken of God as "the light of Israel." In an oblique manner, Isaiah had designated God as light. But the designation is an indirect, and thus an imperfect, designation. The finally definitive designation is reserved for the New Testament. Accordingly, John defines God as essentially light: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Thus, in the final analysis, light is not merely a gift of God; it is the very nature of God.

Since light is of the essence of God, we now can understand why the writer of Genesis recalls God's first words at the dawn of creation: "Let there be light." And in the New Testament John speaks eloquently of the Eternal Christ, the everlasting Logos, who, being Himself deity, is "the true light" (John 1:9). But more: that Light, eternal in pristine radiance, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

One evening, in that long-ago time, the ancient people of Israel were celebrating the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Court of the Women was brilliantly illuminated by the four golden candelabra. There was festivity and dancing. The glow there shining was perhaps a remembrance of the Pillar of Fire that had led the people out of their bondage into freedom. As he gazed upon the scene, there fell from the lips of Jesus words such as no man has ever dared to utter: "I am the light of the world." What an astounding announcement! What did, and what does, it mean? The occasion itself provides the answer. As the ancient people were led by the light into the realized promise of deliverance and freedom, so by the light of Him who is "the Sun of righteousness" (Mal. 4:2) the people are now led from the darkness of ignorance to the light of the knowledge and truth of God. The anticipation of Isaiah has now been realized: "the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isa. 9:2). We are, Paul wrote, "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; . . . delivered . . . from the power of darkness, and . . . translated into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:12-13).

Thou Sun of our day, thou star of our night,
We walk by thy ray, we live in thy light;
Oh shine on us ever, kind, gracious, and wise,
And nowhere and never be hid from our eyes.

Light as purity, or holiness.

Throughout Scripture there is a marvelous collation of light and life. "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9). John is even more explicit in associating light and life: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

One result of modern science and technology is the disassociation of light and heat. The devices that give light and those that produce heat are not the same. But in the ancient world this disassociation had not yet come about. For those people light and heat were naturally regarded as inseparable aspects, manifestations, of a single entity. Something of this experience of fusion of light and heat, however, can still be felt by us today, when, on a cold winter's day, we feel the heat of the sun penetrating into even the marrow. And the light emanating from the hearth fire is also the power of warmth. Thus the symbol of light carries the connotation of fire as well as that of intellectual clarity. Fire possesses a warming power. In its

spiritual connotations, then, light not only illuminates and instructs the mind, it also stimulates and enlivens the spirit. Light is an infusion of spiritual qualities within the character of the person. The comprehensive meaning of those qualities may be summed up in the spiritual quality of holiness.

There is a light that is the beauty of holiness. In our previous essay, "The Beauty of Holiness," emphasis was placed on the idea of harmony as the defining essence of holiness. Harmony is the criterion of beauty, and it is therefore harmony that defines the nature of holiness. Holiness is an inner harmony in which the various graces of the spirit are blended together so as to constitute a developed character. Holiness means that the excellences of character are harmonized. As was pointed out in that essay, the instantaneous phase of Christian perfection, the experience of entire sanctification, purifies the dispositions and sentiments so as to enable the gradual perfecting of character in which the excellences may be realized in harmonious relation. There should be no excess of one or defect of another. When inner harmony does not obtain, or when the beauty of holiness is lacking, a person may, for example, be upright but harsh. The ideal of Christian perfection, for which in its fuller realization we must always strive, requires that uprightness be combined with kindness and delicacy of feeling. We can be said to truly live--live as human beings ought to live--only when the moral excellences of the spirit are realized in balance and harmony. That is, finally, the meaning of personal salvation.

Heat, associated as it is with fire, enlivens what it touches. From that heat the seed is induced to germinate and develop into a living plant. The warmth of the human body connotes the powers of life and health. Thus there is a light that brings the warmth of life to the spirit. Further, the light of fire also purifies. In our natural, unredeemed state, our "silver is become dross." Yet God has promised: "And I will turn my hand on thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin; . . . afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city" (Isa. 1:22-26). It is this purging that brings that condition of life in which the moral excellences are realized in harmony, and in which, therefore, the life is free from selfishness and the grasping spirit. There is thus established the basis of the outward aspect of holiness, the beauty in which there is harmony with others. In both the inward and outward phases, holiness is the realization of life--life at its highest as realization of the spirit. The light of God, of Christ, is therefore, one with life.

Light as influence.

It is probable that, to men of an earlier time, the light of fire often appeared to come into existence suddenly and spontaneously and to increase and spread with dramatic rapidity. When controlled, fire can be multiplied from torch to torch, from hearth-fire to hearth-fire. As a symbol of the intellectual and the spiritual, fire suggests the ability of the mind and spirit to pass their intellectual and moral qualities along to others in spontaneous and quick contagion. The light, which is fire, is, in short, influence.

The contagion of the light is dramatically expressed in Psalm 110:3:

In the brightness
of the saints,
from the womb
before the day star

I begot thee.

The Revised English Bible translates the passage somewhat differently:

You gain the homage of your people
on the day of your power.
Arrayed in holy garments, a child of
the dawn,
you have the dew of your youth.

This beautiful passage carries the thought of the life-giving light that is entrusted to the people of God, whose work it is to convey that light to others. For God's people are the saints of brightness, arrayed in holy garments, the children of the dawn. This Psalm may have been composed in celebration of the festival when the ark of God was brought from the house of Obed-Edom to Jerusalem. On that occasion David assumed the double function of king and priest. Here is typified that divine act in which the King, Jahweh, constitutes the Son, our Lord, "a priest forever."

As King-Priest, Christ brings the day of divine power in which the people are "made . . . kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:6). The hosts of God now assemble to serve God willingly in cheerful self-surrender. Clothed in the beautiful garments of holiness, they are as bright and numberless as the dew of the early morning dawn, descending by a silent, mysterious birth from the star-lit heavens. They are "the dew of your youth," fresh and vital in regenerative and sanctifying newness of life, a host of goodness, willing volunteers in the service of Him who is forever King and Priest.

The import, then, of Jesus' statement, "I am the light of the world," is his declaration that in Him and His way of life are found the illumination of the mind, the purity of spirit, and the contagion of influence that transmits that light to the world.

And now, "Ye are," Jesus further says, "the light of the world." The light symbol, first expressing God and His Christ, now defines the nature and work of Christians. There is thus a task in society that Christians are to fulfil: a task of disclosing the truth about humanity, of producing character in humanity, and of radiating that truth and character outward into all the walk-ways of human kind.

While the parameters of the symbolism of light have, in the foregoing, been stated, in terms of illumination, character, and influence, yet there remains a certain abstractness that fails to realize in more precise terms just what the light of Christianity implies in respect to the relations of Christians to the society in which they live. Thus, it is the task of the remaining portion of this essay to attempt to specify more precisely the respect in which the brightness of the saints is to affect society.

The State is the organ of society. It is for this reason that any consideration of the place of Christianity in society raises the question of the bearing of Christianity upon the State. Thus the question of the import of Christianity upon society inevitably raises the allied question of Christianity and the State.

Christianity is an ethic, and as an ethic becomes prescriptive, not only of personal life and conduct, but of the character of the larger organism of society and institutions of the State. As thus prescriptive, it says

something, not only about actual conditions within society and the State, but of the ideal ends of society and the State. It issues a pronouncement as to what society and the State ought to be.

Thus, almost imperceptibly, our discussion moves into the area of the ideal nature and function of society and the State. In this regard, the all-important question becomes one of ascertaining just how, in what respects, the Christian ethic is to be a beneficent influence upon society and State, so that these shall better approximate their own essential natures.

Now, there are philosophical theories of society and the State that really misrepresent their basic purpose and aim. In our own American experience, the views of the English philosopher, John Locke, were extremely influential. In the years before the American Revolution, the Americans had the opportunity to study the writings of the English and French social philosophers, and as a result embodied their conclusions in both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. And Locke's philosophy played a dominant role in this process.

What attracted these Americans, of course, was the emphasis placed upon individual liberty. The attractiveness of this emphasis is understandable, given the constraints of the British State that were imposed upon the early Americans. And yet, as we shall see, there is a certain one-sidedness, even falsity, in the emphasis--for example, Locke's--upon what may be called an excessive individualism.

Locke assumed that the individual has, even in his isolation, certain "natural rights." The expression that he frequently used to enumerate those rights was "life, liberty, and estate." The State exists, expressly, to protect these individual rights. The consequence of Locke's view of the individual and the State is that individual self-interest is clear and compelling while the public or social interest is thin and unsubstantial. Locke's theory sets up a system of individual rights that limits the competence of the community and the State, viewing them as but bars to prevent interference with the liberty and property of private persons. Locke assumed, however, that such protection would automatically promote the community interest and the common good. But, to be honest about it, it is hard to see just how the protection of private right is the same thing as the preservation of the common good. And, certainly, much of our own history in the effort to limit the excesses of individualism, the power of concentrated wealth, discloses the falsity of that claim.

Now, there is no logical or empirical proof that there are such things as natural rights possessed by the isolated individual. Jefferson, for example, realized this, and thus held that the doctrine of natural rights is "self-evident." "We hold these truths," he wrote in his Declaration, "to be self-evident." But the appeal to self-evidence is not proof; and, indeed, it prematurely closes off any serious consideration of the question.

Beyond this theoretical difficulty that besets the theory of natural rights, there is a practical implication of the theory that is equally inadmissable. When the individual is given such an extreme priority over the community, then everything exists in order to secure the advantage of the individual rather than of community. The individual must be free to pursue, unhindered by social and governmental interference, his own desires and initiatives. But, as again our history so eloquently records, the upshot of this laissez-faire concept of government is that it allows those who possess

economic power to enhance themselves at the expense of the weak and disenfranchised in society. The few strong are saved; the numerous weak are lost.

In his book, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Max Weber argued that the protestant principle of individualism, coupled with the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, provided a work ethic issuing in divinely sanctioned individual rewards of a material nature. Thus the acquisitive spirit, the amassing of individual goods, associated with individual enterprise, considered in itself apart from the larger interests of the community, coupled with the absence or minimum of governmental interference, was given a religious justification and reinforcement. And even today, in our own land, much of the secular and religious Right--the so-called New Right--argues for this position. God is thus enlisted as the champion of individual enterprise and acquisition. And the patron saint becomes none other than Jefferson, who once wrote that the best government is the government that governs the least.

There are, however, indications that the Founding Fathers caught glimpse of a quite different theory of society and government, one that places priority on the larger social interests of the community and the common good. For example, Madison wrote:

> The public good, the welfare of the great body of the people, is the supreme object to be pursued; . . . no form of government whatever has any other value as it may be fitted for the attainment of this object.[36]

There is another document that gives eloquent voice to the idea of the priority of the common good. It has not been given the notice that it deserves. This document is "A Modell of Christian Charity," written in 1630 by John Winthrop while aboard his flagship, the Arabella, just prior to his landing on the Massachusetts shore. It is a powerful and lovely statement that speaks centrally and essentially of a Christian love, a bond of perfection, which unites people in a civil commonwealth:

> . . . we are a company professing ourselves fellow members of Christ . . . , we ought to account ourselves knitted together by this bond of love, and live in the exercise of it . . . .
> the work we have in mind is by mutual consent with a special overruling providence, . . . to seek out a place in which to live and associate under a due form of government both civil and ecclesiastical. In such cases as this the care of the public must hold sway over all private interests. . . .
> We must love our brethren without pretence; we must love one another with a pure heart and fervently; we must bear one another's burdens; we must look not only on our own things but also on the things of our brethren. . . .
>
> Thus stands the case between God and us. We have taken out a covenant with Him for this work. We have taken out a commission. . . .
>
> So shall we keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us as His own people. . . . We shall be like a City upon a Hill . . . .[37]

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36 *The Federalist Papers*, No. 45.

37 In *The Annals of America*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968), Vol. 1, pp. 114-15.

In our own history, then, there are two visions: one concerning the individual and his interests; the other, concerning the community and its interests. And our own American experience has been one of vacillation, swinging periodically from one pole to the other, with no abiding resolution of the contrasts. And this, because we have, at the political level, no coherent theory; and, further, because at the level of a Christian understanding we have, by and large, failed to come to terms with the issue.

In his book, Habits of the Heart, a phrase from Tocqueville's Democracy in America, Robert Bellah puts the problem tersely:

> **The tension between self-reliant enterprise and the sense of public solidarity espoused by civic republicanism has been the most important unresolved problem in American history.[38]**

It is a better political theory that refuses to accept the radical opposition of individuality and community. The view that isolated individuals in "the state of nature" are free and equal, that they form society, as an artificial creation, in order to protect their freedom and equality, is nothing but a myth. Its mythical status is evident when we ask the historical question as to just when did it happen that mankind formed "the social contract" as a means of providing for individual security. No answer to this question can be given. And, further, its mythical character is disclosed in the fact that the theory of society as an artifact is inconsistent with its basic assumption. For whatever right and equality individuals might possess in their state of nature is assuredly minimum, and it therefore remains a puzzle just how the social order, which exists for the sole reason of protecting those minimal rights, can bring human life from its meager source to further development.

It is better to speak of individual powers rather than of individual rights. The individual possesses certain powers. These powers are those, not only of his natural vitality, but of his reason. It is the individual's destiny to exercise these powers. But--and this is the essential point--those powers are not natural rights. There is nothing in the concept of powers that confers upon them the juristic quality of rights. The rights of individuals are established in the recognition of these powers by others. Individual rights depend upon the conscious interest of the members of society, the exercise of the will and judgment to recognize those powers for all members of the society. The idea of "natural right," rather than being a strictly individualist concept, is a social concept. Insofar, then, as the State is the organ of society, its function is not to protect an alleged primitive status quo of rights, but to create those forms and institutions that bring to individuals, in their mutual relationships, the moral and spiritual development of those powers. It is precisely for this reason that the State itself has its own distinctive powers. This view of society and the State was first most clearly affirmed in modern times by the nineteenth century political theorist, Thomas Hill Green:

> **. . . the ground of political obligation, the reason why certain powers should be recognized as belonging to the state and certain other powers as secured to the state by the individuals, lies in the fact that these powers are necessary to the fulfilment of man's vocation as a moral being, to an effectual self-devotion to the work of developing the perfect character in himself and others[39]**

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38 *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 236.

39 *Works*, ed. R. L. Nettleship (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1893), II, 348-49.

If it is true that a right exists only as recognized by society, it is equally true that this right can only be real in an individual. The purpose, then, of society and the State is to find and develop the individual. But the individual is not found in isolation from others, and his development is not secured as an atomic unit. Self realization is not accomplished in lonely isolation. The realization of the individual proceeds, necessarily, in conjunction with the self-realization of others. Self-realization, too, is a social concept and reality. Only as individuals are knit together in mutual respect and aid can they achieve their moral end.

Now, if society, and in particular its organ, the State, have as their essential task the moral development of individuals, the question is raised as to how this task is to be accomplished. At the level of society, the institutions that it creates are, ideally, designed to enable the individual "to realize his reason, i.e., to enable him to realize his idea of self-perfection, by acting as a member of a social organization in which each contributes to the better-being of all the rest".[40] Society has, not merely a material end, it has, ultimately, a moral end and thus a moral responsibility to provide the conditions that promise to fulfil that end and responsibility.

Now, the various institutions of society are not always operative in harmony with one another. As it actually is, society is a complex of groups and institutions that bring division of interests into the social fabric. It is precisely at this point that the State assumes and exercises its superior force, which is designed to remove the hindrances that various interests exert in hindering the self-development of all the members of society. The legitimate action of the State, aimed at the moral task of the perfection of its citizens, is thus negative and indirect. Its function is to remove the hindrances to hindrances. And its function is indirect, for while the removal of those hindrances is a necessary condition of the development of its people, it is not a sufficient condition. Something else, something spiritual and positive, must be added if, given the opportunity through State action, the people are to respond and together achieve moral excellence. And it is precisely at this juncture that Christians, those who share in the divine light, enter into the picture as agencies of human betterment.

Now, if the State cannot positively secure the moral end for which it exists, restricted as its political action is to the negative and indirect response to social conditions, it follows that Christianity, if it identifies its purpose with State action, is equally incompetent to fulfil its distinctive social promise and mission. It is this consideration that discloses the impotence and illegitimacy of any attempt on the part of the Christian community to enforce by political action and legislation its vision of the perfection of humanity. History itself, to say nothing of theory, shows the truth of this statement. For example, it was not long until the Bible commonwealth of Winthrop, as laudable as its ideals were, broke up on the rock of enforced piety. It is this unnatural alliance of religion and government that Jefferson so forcefully, and justifiably, opposed. And yet he knew, and wrote, about the ethics of Jesus and found in it those springs of cleansing that, if properly employed, could purify and elevate the society.

Now, it is extremely doubtful that an acquisitive society, such as ours, can ever realize the Christian ideal for human society. And it is a grievous

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40 *Ibid.*, pp. 338-39.

perversion to advocate, on religious grounds, the sacral character of individual acquisition, as if this were the goal of humanity to which the State is but its guarantor. This does not mean, however, that a socialist economy is preferable to a capitalist one, or vise versa. Whatever the Christian ethic is, it cannot decide this question. But yet it is competent to address the underlying issue of individuality and community. And it is to this subject that we must now turn.

In so far as Christianity is a social, as well as a personal, ethic, it has the power to address this problem and thus to bring healing to a divided people--not only to the people of this land but to those of all lands. Christianity is, to be sure, more than a social ethic with a social message, but it is also certainly this. For the brightness of the saints also means a brightness that brings a healing and redeeming influence in society.

The quintessence of the ethic of Christianity is found in the words of Jesus:

> Thou shalt love the Lord thy God will all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself (Lk. 10:27).

What the ethic means is this: absolute love of God and equal love of self and other. In its social implication, accordingly, it enjoins a consideration of others that is proportionate to one's consideration of oneself. And it is the equality of regard for self and others that constitutes the norm according to which the Christian is to exert his influence in the affairs of society and the State. It is in the exercise of this principle of equal love to self and others that the Christian is the light of the world. It is this principle that accounts for the brightness of the saints.

There are, to be more specific, two respects in which this principle of the ethic of Christianity may serve to improve the quality of life of a people and thus to elevate a society to a level closer to its moral end. It is obligatory upon the Christian to exert an influence in inspiring and assisting the State in its task of hindering those hindrances that frustrate the moral development of all of its citizens. Christians who serve in economic and industrial capacities must exert their influence in making sure that a powerful interest in society does not take advantage of less powerful interests and thereby exploit those who are at a disadvantage. It is a blot on Christianity that many of those who profess the Faith have engaged in just such exploitative actions. To salve the conscience through philanthropy is not the answer. For, carried out to its ultimate conclusion, it legitimatizes the "poor class." The answer is to remove the conditions that keep the disenfranchised in servile conditions. The Christian must also speak out and call attention to those conditions that frustrate the improvement of the quality of life of all the people in the society. The Christian ethic is not only an action, it is a voice of protest. And as a voice of protest it can then become an agency of active influence. But first are required the conscience and the voice.

An example is of more value here than a discourse. For an example can picture vividly the moral principle involved in acting on the basis of the ethic of Christianity and even doing so at personal cost.

In the days before the Civil War, it was the Christian conscience that advanced the cause of freedom for the slaves. William Jay, the son of John Jay, wrote, "I do not depend on anyone as an abolitionist who does not act

from a sense of religious obligation. That was it: Christianity was "abolitionist-Christianity." It could do nothing else if it were to be true to "the plan of Jesus Christ."

The socially redeeming power of Christianity lies, ultimately, in the consciousness of individuals. And in the days of abolitionist fervor there were times, it should be noted, when individuals had to carry the burden themselves. There is a touching story along this line. A protestant minister in Ohio, Orange Scott, was moved from his district to another, in the effort, as he believed, to shut him up in his advocacy of the cause of freedom for the slaves. But it didn't work. He sent his associate, Joel Parker, out "to secure the outpouring of the Holy Spirit among the people," and to "bring all over to the cause of Christ, and the bleeding slave."

In May of 1865 the triumphant Union armies marched in final review, then dispersed throughout the nation, never to join with each other again. It was a time when men and women dreamed of a new Union, purged of its sin of slavery and equipped with a new moral energy to fulfill its national meaning. The dream took different shapes, but its essence was a reformed and reconstructed America, free of slavery, exploitation, poverty, and injustice. But the dream faded. The old ways soon took over: the country become caught in the clutches of avarice and exploitation. Again it was Christian faith and commitment that took up the cause of social justice.

A young Catholic priest was one of three to pay respects to the slain body of President Lincoln in Baltimore. This was James Gibbons, who became the bishop of Baltimore, and later a Cardinal. He was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, official leaders of American Catholics. He took the side of the labor movement and supported the right of the laborer to strike. This was a time when many in his own church took the opposite side. Many protestant leaders, too, were opposed to his stand, believing that collective bargaining violated natural law and the way God had arranged things. Gibbons was determined to do the right. He combined tact with resolve, getting results by acting on his main-stay principle, which he called "vigilant masterly inactivity." One of the early labor organizations was called the "Ancient Order of the Hibernians." Gibbons had the nerve--and it took nerve in those days--to ask his rival, Bishop Corrigan of New York, to appoint chaplains to the Order, reminding him of what he would probably have liked to forget, that there were 50,000 Catholic Hibernians in New York alone. "If we want to preserve these thousands," he wrote, "let us show sympathy for them." While he did not explicitly endorse the Order, he succeeded in cajoling the other American archbishops into going easy on them. He backed the Baltimore streetcar drivers in their strike of 1886 and also supported the Knights of Labor when they struck some railroads. The following year he was in Rome, where he was made Cardinal. There were those who hoped to persuade Rome to condemn the labor movement. But the American archbishops John J. Keene and John Ireland were preparing a classic defense of labor as "natural and just." Gibbons signed the defense and brought it back to America. "To lose the hearts of the people," he said, "would be a misfortune for which the friendship of the few rich and powerful would be no compensation. . . . [Rome] should not offer to America an ecclesiastical protection for which she does not ask, and of which she believes she has no need." With his "vigilant masterly inactivity" Gibbons worked for the support of the American bishops. There was, to be sure, division within the church. But one mustn't be too hard on the church. Even the New York Times thought the Bishop was siding with brutish and lawless movements. And the Nation said that he had been "partaking freely of the labor beverage," with the result that his head was

unclear. Then came the Chicago riots and the hanging of the "labor anarchists." One of Gibbons' critics wrote that the pets of his Eminence Gibbons were now "breaking to pieces and . . . getting many more kicks than kisses." But Rome refused to join in the kicking and would not condemn the Knights. Gibbons had won, and through him, his church won. He later looked back to the time of 1887-89 as the time when the church had remained faithful to her message. "You were a prophet," Ireland wrote Gibbons from Rome, and Manning wrote him from England, "This is surely the New World overshadowing the old, and the church walking with its Master among the people of Christendom."

There is a second, infinitely more subtle and difficult, respect in which Christianity must influence society, must carry its message of light and life to the people.

In its role of hindrance to hindrances, the State must be the source providing adjustments and holding together a complex of different interests and groups. It has, therefore, a necessary and legitimate role in the regulation, and in cases where necessary, the public ownership of institutions and agencies that all the people depend upon for their physical well-being. And it must effect those adjustments of private interests that devolve upon the public good, and that, if left to private aims, deprive the public of its rights.

It has been argued that the laws of economics are autonomous, and that, although they may conflict with the principles of morality, they must not be interfered with by such means as government regulation. These laws, it is suggested, are as absolute and permanent as are the physical laws of nature.

There are, however, several misapprehensions involved in this claim of the autonomy of economic laws. In the first place, what are termed the laws of physical nature are not "objective" in the sense of being powers resident in nature. They are symbolic constructs representing the interaction of mind with the events of physical reality, the underlying nature of which is not open to cognitive disclosure. Far from being absolute and permanent, they are relative and variable. Thus, the appeal to the alleged natural laws does not constitute any grounds for the assertion of the absolute and permanent character of the principles of economics.

Secondly, economic principles are formulations of the relationship of material goods to psychological tendencies, which, when brought to conscious reflection are articulated as needs and desires, and of the bearing of these on the production and consumption of those material goods. There is, to be sure, what may be termed "the economic man," and his interest is to gain maximum wealth at the minimum cost of labor. If this maxim is made absolute, if the only or even the predominant motive in the economic sphere is self-interest, then, of course, the alleged economic laws are in opposition to the considerations of morality.

It cannot be assumed that the competitive, acquisitive spirit is absolutely and unqualifiedly definitive of human nature. The facts in the case are that the modern competitive industrial system is of recent development, a consideration that shows that it is not something deeply rooted in human nature. Thus, consistent with modern capitalism, there may, and ought to be, other motives than that of profit. The use of capital for private greed and consumption, the amassing of wealth that does not flow back into the society to meet the larger needs and to elevate the quality of life,

is wrong, and must not be justified on the grounds that this profit motive is the only principle in the economic sphere. When this procedure is rampant, then the government does have the right and obligation to interfere with and regulate, in the interest of a moral qualification of economic activity. And the Christian conscience, coupled with knowledge about economic and moral considerations, has a function in regard to the use of capital in the larger social context. The wealth of a society must be distributed so that all the people have the material basis upon which to build an excellent life and together to create a noble social order. And, correlatively, there are moral considerations that can, and should, modify the material desires of people as regards the urge to acquire and consume, so as, in consequence, to qualify the economic considerations in the direction of a moral tone. It is obligatory upon the Christian that his own life of acquisition and consumption be thus qualified, and that he exert his moral influence in tempering the acquisitive impulse in the society.

It is often said today that social legislation, as aid to the poor, and other types of aid to the disadvantaged, is ineffectual in improving lives, and is thus a waste of public money. And, it must be admitted, there is some truth to this observation. But the truth is only a half-truth; it ignores some distinctions that must be made.

In hindering the hindrances to the best life, the State can secure only external actions. By this it is meant that the State can enforce an action upon an individual or group which that individual or group is obliged to obey, but it cannot reach or determine the motive of that action that would give it value as an element in the best life. The other side to this is, that in removing the hindrances to the best life, for example economic disadvantage of persons, those pre-conditions do not of themselves assure that those who are thus benefitted will improve the quality of their lives. But this fact does not absolve the State from its responsibility to provide those necessary, albeit not sufficient, conditions that lie at the basis of the best life.

It is in the breach between external action and motive, between the creation of pre-conditions and the realization of the excellence of life, that the Church, the called-out people of God, can, and must, make its most significant contribution in society. For it is at this juncture that the spiritual excellences of Christian character can prompt the care and concern, the display of the ethic of equal love of self and other, which can transform the motives of individuals and elevate the quality of those lives for whose benefit the initial actions of the State are performed. The Church of God has the opportunity, even the responsibility, of so caring for and ministering to the people, that, given the opportunities provided by benevolent State provision, they may rise to the best moral and spiritual life. That, finally and essentially, is the mission of Christians as the light of the world. That, ultimately, is the meaning of Christian influence in society and the State. It is a mission of inwardness, of fragility, but yet pregnant with moral power.

Thus Christianity is a principle that is able to reconcile the claims of self-reliant enterprise and civic solidarity. They are both legitimate claims. But they are, finally, not opposites; they are correlatives. There are in human nature two basic drives: the drive for strength of individuality and the drive for harmony of community. Social and political conditions that permit the unbridled exercise of individuality at the expense of civic solidarity are unacceptable. Likewise those conditions that seek to establish community at the expense of the strength of individuality are also

unacceptable. It is the genius of the Christian ethic, the equal love of self and other, that, as does no other principle, provides for the reconciliation of these dimensions of personal and social life.

It is often said that the meaning of life is self-realization. And that is true. But there is a danger here. Self-realization is often but a disguise for a refined selfishness and the culture of the individual that is insensitive to and inadequate to the whole moral situation. Self-realization is the maxim of life only if the individual life is taken out of its isolation and placed in the whole range of relationship to man, and most of all, to God. The human good is not merely individual human good; it is, as St. Augustine of old once said, the comprehensive good of all that is not diminished, but rather increased, as shared in by all.

What this means is that the meaning and maxim of life is not just self-realization. For, as the Christian principle of equal love to self and other signifies, the human good is "self-realization through self-sacrifice." Thus it is in self-sacrifice that the Christian is clothed in the brightness of the saints, that the Christian is the light of the world. There is One who taught us this truth, that self-realization is self-sacrifice--the One who in the agony of his Cross yet found the glory of the transfigured life. He is our Master, the source of our inspiration as we, too, dedicate ourselves to the great task of bringing the Kingdom of Heaven into the affairs of the children of the earth.

The light can, indeed, shine upon the earth. The ancient seer caught glimpse of this when he "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (Rev. 21:2). The conditions of our earthly existence can be appreciably altered, so that humanity can better reach its moral goal. And Christians have, as Winthrop wrote, "taken out a covenant with Him for this work. We have taken out a commission." It is a work, a commission, to aid in the divine summons to sonship. That is the purpose of God in history. Yet it is a summons that, while we must here continually serve its call, can never be realized in the span of human history. It is a summons that will, however, one day be finalized in its consummation in heaven. For then all things shall be subdued unto him. In that scene of the consummation it is not the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, but the Lamb in the midst of the throne, who prevails to open the book of the divine purpose in history and to loosen the seals thereof. For, again, it is in the glory of sacrifice that God's Kingdom, in earth as it is in heaven, is brought to fruition.

> And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28).

> And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;
> And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth (Rev 5:9-10).

It is as the brightness of the saints, as the light of the world, that we now, as Christians, shall reign on the earth. That reign is not only for time; it shall be made, in the divine consummation, an eternal reality as humanity finally answers the divine summons to sonship.

The work that we have builded,
Oft with bleeding hands and tears,
Oft in error, oft in anguish,

Will not perish with our years;
It will last, and shine transfigured
In the final reign of right;
It will pass into the splendours
Of the city of the light.[41]

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CHAPTER 10

THE PERFECTION OF SUFFERING

He is despised and rejected
of men; a man of sorrows, and
acquainted with grief: . . .

Surely he hath borne our griefs,
and carried our sorrows: . . .

But he was wounded for our
transgressions, he was bruised for
our iniquities: the chastisement of
our peace was upon him; and with
his stripes we are healed.
Isa. 53:3-5

For it became him, for whom
are all things, and by whom are
all things, in bringing many sons
unto glory, to make the captain
of their salvation perfect
through sufferings.
Heb. 2:10

Who now rejoice in my sufferings
for you, and fill up that which is
left behind of the afflictions of
Christ in my flesh for his body's
sake, which is the church.
Col. 1:24

For as the sufferings of Christ
abound in us, so our consolation
also aboundeth by Christ.
1 Cor. 1:5

Suffering is a feature of life on earth. This no one will question or dispute. It is found in animals, as part of their life processes and predatory habits. And it abounds in the life of man on earth. Much of human suffering is physical pain, which comes in many forms, from the bearable to the well-nigh unbearable. In human life there is also much mental and moral suffering. Indeed, we are often overwhelmed by the intensity and magnitude of the agonies that are the lot of mankind.

The most grievous feature of human suffering is its chaotic distribution. There is, of course, suffering as the result of inconsiderate choice and wrongful act. Such suffering, for which man is himself

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41 Felix Adler.

responsible, does not create a problem as to the explanation of suffering. But those who are not guilty also suffer. Instead of days of gladness, the little child suffers with an intensity too awful for the little frame to survive.

Then, too, so much of human suffering is meaningless, as far as our thought is able to discern. No reason can be given in explanation of this form of suffering. And it is this surplus of suffering that constitutes the mystery of suffering. Surely, a world that contains such meaningless suffering cannot be the best possible world.

Suffering, which is a form of evil, poses a challenge to theism. Thus the Greek Philosopher, Epicurus, who lived in the third century B.C., argued that the evil that besets human life is irreconcilable with any idea of divine guidance in the universe. His follower, the Latin Poet of the first century A. D., Lucretius, echoed the same view in his De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things):

> **To say further that for men's sakes they [the gods] had the will to prepare the glorious structure of the world, and that therefore it is fitting to praise it as an admirable work of the gods . . . is the act of a fool.**
> **. . . . . .**
> **. . . I would dare affirm from the very ways of heaven, and to show from many other facts, that the world was certainly not made for us by divine power: so great are the faults with which it stands endowed.[42]**

In recent times, the problem is restated in essentially the same terms:

> **This is the way the difficulty is usually stated: If God created the world, of if he sustains, manages, or supervises it, and if God is infinitely good, how shall we explain all the pain and evil, all the sin and sorrow and suffering, and all the thwarted plans and disappointed hopes which are evident everywhere? If he could not prevent them, he is not God; if he could and does not, he is not good.[43]**

It becomes clear that the problem of evil, as formulated in the above references, turns on a conception of God and the relation of the divine to the world. Given God's power and goodness, it appears difficult to account for evil in the divinely created world.

Attempts to resolve the problem very often place a limitation on God, either on God's power or on God's goodness. If God is limited in power but yet desirous of the good, or if He is in some sense malevolent but yet all-powerful, then the existence of evil appears to be more readily accounted for. But how can it be explained if God is both omnipotent and all-good?

It is not our purpose to enter into a discussion of the myriad philosophical attempts to construct a theodicy, or a defense of God's power and goodness in view of the existence of evil. It is sufficient to note that the problem of evil turns, fundamentally, upon the traditional idea of God as a self-centered life aloof from the world. This concept of God had its origin

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42 Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 5. 156-199, tr. W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), 391-95.

43 G. T. W. Patrick, *Introduction to Philosophy*, rev. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., c. 1935), p. 403.

in Aristotle, who introduced theism to western philosophy. For Aristotle, God is the eternal thinker who knows only himself, who in his self-contained life, his absolute self-possession, is beyond all times and all worlds. This concept has persisted down through the centuries, in much of both Catholic and Protestant thought.

Now, this concept of God is simply not the God of religion. The God of religion does not live in solitary bliss, but rather lives in the perpetual giving of himself as he shares the life of his creatures, bearing with them the burden and anguish of their finite and incomplete existence. The God whom Jesus revealed is, for humanity, the Father in heaven, who shares in the suffering of the world, the human world and even the larger world in which humanity finds its temporal home. The divine experience gathers into itself the events and experiences of the world.

The Father in heaven takes notice, even, of the death of a sparrow. Even here the divine knowledge cannot be merely an abstract recognition of a minor happening in the world, but--dare we affirm this?--something of a sharing in the death of a creature of life and beauty. "Fear ye not, therefore," Jesus said, "ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:31). The implication of this passage is that even the sparrow is of value. And, surely, the loss of any value is a loss to a God who cares for his creation.

The magnificent parables of Jesus, those of the lost sheep and the lost coin, speak of a joy in heaven "over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15: 7, 10). These parables are followed immediately by the parable of the prodigal son, whose return brings joy to the Father. Surely, Jesus is speaking of an added quality of divine experience, a divine rejoicing, when a lost soul is, in the wanderings of time, brought to the homeland of eternity.

Whatever the divine life involves in its transcendent individuality, that life is also, and equally, the life that is immanent in the world. This is the eternal truth and genius of biblical religion. It is also, as we came to see in an earlier essay, the truth of physical nature. Physical nature is, in its aspects of temporality and interplay with experience, a creation of the Divine. As the creation of the energies of the supreme Spirit, the physical universe is therefore a sacramental universe.

But this observation reintroduces the problem of evil. How can the universe, as brought into existence and dependent entirely upon the creative energies of the divine Spirit, sustain, as part of its fabric, the discords of evil?

There is nothing in the objective knowledge of nature that gives a clue as to the nature of God's creative relation to the world. There is, as we have argued, the quality of physical nature that requires its creation. Beyond this assertion, our knowledge of nature cannot lead further into the mystery of physical reality. Does this mean, then, that we have no clue, at the level of human thought, as to the relation of God and the world?

It is both possible and legitimate, however, to appeal to the manifest character of our experience as ethical individuals. From this character of our experience we may, and indeed can, extract the meaning of our personal lives and find an indication of the nature of the Divine immanence in the life of the world.

It may be helpful, at this juncture, to speak of an ideal of human life that has been, and is even now, espoused by many people. This ideal is a purely hedonistic one: that the goal of life is pleasure and happiness. David Hume, for example, puts the matter as follows:

> **His power we allow infinite: whatever he wills is executed: but neither man nor any other animal is happy: therefore he does not will their happiness. His wisdom is infinite: he is never mistaken in choosing the means to any end: but the course of nature does not tend to human or animal felicity: therefore it is not established for that purpose.**
> **. . . . . .**
> **Why is there any misery at all in the world?**[44]

Hume's question, "Why is there any misery at all in the world?," presupposes that the meaning of life is pleasure and happiness, or passive enjoyment. Given such a view of the purpose and goal of life, the presence of evil and suffering becomes something wholly inexplicable. For the universe is not perfect in the sense that it contains nothing but undiluted enjoyment.

For the hedonistic ideal of happiness, it is necessary to find another concept and word to indicate the meaning of human life. The term that is truest to the highest and deepest experiences of human life is satisfaction. Satisfaction, in its turn, involves and requires self-sacrifice.

Our most profound experiences, then, are those that bring self-realization through self-sacrifice. Now, if, as the Bible attests, we bear the image of the Divine, it is not at all unreasonable to suggest that this, the deepest insight into human life, is also the final secret of the universe. It is not unreasonable to think of God on the analogy of the highest in human kind. God is, then, not aloof from the world in solitary bliss; rather He lives in the perpetual giving of Himself as He shares the life of His creatures. He bears with his children the burden of their finitude and suffering.

God is, indeed, ". . . the great companion--the fellow-sufferer who understands."[45] **Creation itself calls for this to be a reality. The God who creates the world must also be the eternal Redeemer of the world. World-redemption is not incidental to creation; it is an essential component in Divine creation.**

Creation brings the completeness of the eternal order into the deficiency of the temporal order. Particular events and individuals are limited and finite. This is the price, as it were, which must be paid if creation is to occur. Every finite individual suffers dissatisfaction, and is driven to find some Other in order to experience fulfillment. Insofar as dissatisfaction is an evil, finitude then bears its inescapable burden of evil. This burden of finitude brings, inevitably, the clash of individuals and thus an element of contingency in the realm of moral action. Since the world of nature is the scene of this action, it too takes on the element of contingency. It is this contingency that brings, as its fruition, suffering and sorrow in the temporal order of finitude.

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44 *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Norman Kemp Smith, 2nd ed. (New York: Social Sciences Publishers, 1948), Part X. pp. 198-201.

45 A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, (New York: The Humanities Press, c. 1919), p. 532.

The human experience is one in which good is secured through the conquest of evil. This conquest is brought to its highest pitch of victory through those experiences of self-sacrifice in behalf of others. In the giving of life for others, one's own life is found. This is the secret of Christianity. In some analogous sense, it is the open secret of the universe. God Himself shares this human burden of finitude, enters into the suffering without which His creatures cannot be made perfect. He bears, indeed, their sinful wanderings and sorrows, and in His perpetual self-giving of Himself brings the ultimate victory. In His companionship of suffering, He is the eternal redeemer of the world.

The Bible presents this view of God and His purchase of victory through suffering. This is the essential truth of the Incarnation as the expression of the indwelling of God in man. Thus Paul writes:

> **Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 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: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.**
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> **Phil. 2:4-8.**

Isaiah writes vividly of the Servant of the Lord. There are four Servant Songs, 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12. In these Songs the Servant brings, without violence, judgment and teaching to the nations; brings restoration to Israel and salvation to the nations; brings, albeit encountering opposition, instruction to the nations; and, through affliction and death, brings redemption to the people.

Biblical scholars are divided as to the identity, in Isaiah, of the Servant. But one thing is certain: the writers of the Gospels identified the Servant with Jesus of Nazareth. Mark's Gospel opens with the words from Isa. 40:3, "As it is written in the prophets, . . . The voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Mark 1:2-3). Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life for a ransom," is an allusion to Isa. 53. Jesus' words in Luke 22:35 identify Him with the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53: "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors." Philip's preaching in Acts 8:26-39 is based on Isa. 53:7-8. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:3, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."

In the sufferings of the Servant, of the man Jesus of Nazareth, God suffers with His people so as to bring their defeat into redemptive victory.

> **Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . : But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for**

**our iniquities: the chastisement of
our peace was upon him; and with
his stripes we are healed.
Isa. 53:4-5**

The writer to the Hebrews carries further the thought of God's identification with His people through suffering. Jesus is described as the "captain of their salvation," made "perfect through sufferings," so as to bring "many sons unto glory." Here is no God content in the self-isolation of eternal bliss. Here is the God who takes into His own life the sins and sorrows of his wandering people. Even more--the well-nigh audacious--: the One "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," is now to be made "perfect through sufferings." That He, the Logos of creation, who "was with God, and . . . was God," should have to undergo suffering to become perfected--does not this stagger the mind? Yet precisely this is the glorious melody of the Christian song of human redemption through Divine suffering. Nowhere else is there to be found such an exultant strain.

Hebrews 2:9 should read:

> **But we behold him made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, on account of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one.**

The clause, "on account of the suffering of death" is connected with the clause that follows, "crowned with glory and honour." Jesus' crowning is the consequence of his suffering; he wins, by virtue of his suffering unto death, his position of "glory and honour."

The reference to glory and honor in Hebrews 2:9 is an allusion to Psalm 8, where it is said of man that he is crowned "with glory and honour." The term glory is the Hebrew term kâbôd, derived from the primitive root, kâb•d, which means to be heavy. Thus glory signifies something "weighty" in man that gives him "significance."[46] The glory of man, in Psalm 8:5, is the quality in man that brings all things under subjection to him.

In Classical times, the Greek term for glory, d•xa, meant "opinion," either the opinion one has of himself or the opinion others have of him. The term is linked with d•kĕ•, "I think." This meaning of glory has disappeared in the New Testament usage of the term. The New Testament adds, particularly, the meaning of "radiance," "splendor." The glory of man, ideally, is the "radiance," the "light," of high character.

Now the bar to man's glory is his own subjection to the suffering of death and his loss of the radiance and beauty of inward holiness. Hebrews 2:7-8 carries particularly the Hebraic sense of glory and its loss:

**Thou madest him a little
lower than the angels: thou
crownedst him with glory and
honour, and didst set him over
the works of thy hands:
Thou has put all things in
subjection under his feet. For
in that he put all in subjection
under him, he left nothing that**

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46 See 2 Cor. 4:17, where Paul speaks of "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

is not put under him. But now
we see not yet all things put
under him.

Given this predicament of man, the Divine response, that which befitted God, is His sharing in man's burden of suffering. To restore to man his lost glory, the Son, "on account of the suffering of death [is] crowned with glory, . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

The writer to the Hebrews says that Jesus is the "captain of their salvation." The word captain is arch•gos, which means "pioneer," or "leader." The thought is that Jesus is the leader of the redeemed, in the sense of opening the way to access to God. The Son of God goes before the saved in the same path. But the way, the path, is, for Jesus, the via dolorosa, the way of suffering. It is, again, the suffering that makes him perfect, enabling him to bring "many sons unto glory," to bring death under subjection and to restore the light and radiance.

The question now becomes, "In what sense does suffering make the Son perfect?" And, further, what is the meaning of "perfect" as referred to the Son?

The noun tĕlĕi•s means "complete." The verb form, tĕlĕi••, means "to fulfill," "to carry out." This is the verb found in Hebrews 2:10, to present the thought that Jesus' qualification for fulfilling, or carrying out, his saving work consists, necessarily so, in suffering. The suffering of the Son, then, is his qualification to come before God in priestly action and bring redemption to humankind.

The perfecting of the Son does not mean completeness of moral character. There is here no thought of liberation from sin and guilt or completeness of moral character through suffering. It should be observed here, parenthetically, that it is incorrect to suppose, from the example of Christ, that the moral perfection of believers is achieved through suffering. As we shall see in the sequel, this is not the meaning, even, of Christian suffering. Salvation is not brought by suffering; it is brought by the grace of God. Further, the perfecting of the Son does not mean the exaltation of Jesus to heavenly glory. Again, the perfection is that of his fitness to bring salvation, to bring "many sons unto glory." This glory, too, is not heavenly glory. The proper meaning of this glory is described in Hebrews 2:11, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." The many sons are led to glory in that they are being sanctified, and the "Captain of salvation" is now described as he that sanctifieth. The glory is, again, the "beauty of holiness," the precursor to the ultimate victory over death and the restoration of a final glory.

There is, then, an association between suffering and glory. Suffering is the reality and power that issues in glory. The relation between the two is not external, in the sense that suffering and glory are separate from each other. Instead, there is an intertwining of the two, so that, as it were, suffering is itself glory. In the Transfiguration of Jesus, the three disciples witnessed, as Peter later wrote, "the excellent glory." While enrapt in glory, there appeared with Jesus Moses and Elijah, also clothed in glory, conversing with him about "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). So the suffering of Calvary is part of the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration. In Jesus, glory has been defined anew. No longer is it a splendid isolation far removed from the anguish of the world. Now glory is the reality and splendor of triumph in humiliation and death.

Here is found the final paradox, which the logical intellect cannot resolve, but which, nevertheless, opens the final secret of the universe and thereby gives the Christian faith its salvational import. The Gospel that was in use in St. Chrysostom's day read the passage in Luke: "They spake of the glory which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." That reading, too, is correct, for Jesus is "by reason of the suffering of death crowned with glory."

We have spoken of the Divine suffering, Jesus' "suffering of death," as the way of humanity's redemption. The Man of Heaven is now "The Man of Sorrows." Now, strictly speaking, there is a difference between suffering and sorrow. Sorrow is the realization of the meaning of suffering, whether that suffering be physical or mental. If we speak of inanimate nature and the animal world as suffering, we cannot, properly, speak of them as sorrowing. Sorrow is an experience peculiar to man. But since suffering and its meaning are joined in man's consciousness, the terms suffering and sorrow may be used interchangeably. Thus it can be said of the man, Jesus, as of the suffering Servant in Isaiah, that through suffering:

> He shall see of the travail of
> his soul, and shall be satisfied: by
> his knowledge shall my righteous
> servant justify many; for he shall
> bear their iniquities (Isa. 53:11).

Now whether it be the Divine sorrow, in the Son of Man, or the sorrow of humanity itself, sorrow is the sense of discord, the consciousness that things are not as they should be. Without sorrow, those things cannot be put right. Sorrow is the indispensable condition of the struggle against, and victory over, sin in an imperfect world.

In his influence in the world, the Christian, as did the Master, must walk the way of sorrow. The attempt to right things in the world requires the experience of sorrow. It was Christ's experience, and it must be the experience of his followers as they share in his work. As it was for Jesus, sorrow is the Christian's qualification to share in the Divine healing of the world. In this sense, there is an enabling perfection, a fitness, which devolves upon the follower of Christ.

> Remember the word that I
> said unto you. The servant is
> not greater than his lord. If they
> have persecuted me, they will also
> persecute you . . . (John 15:20).

There is, to be sure, a transient joy of the world: "but the world shall rejoice" (John 16:20). The world rejoices in its effort to be free of the condemnation of its obsession with self and sin. But in this the Christian cannot share. His destiny is the destiny of sorrow. Yet, paradoxically, with the sorrow there is joy:

> and ye shall be sorrowful,
> but your sorrow shall be turned
> into joy (John 15:20).

In Col. 1:24 Paul says that he rejoices in his sufferings, which "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ . . . ." The passage is remarkable. It really reads: "and am filling up in my turn the deficiencies of the afflictions of Christ." Now the phrase, "the deficiencies of the

afflictions of Christ" does not mean that his sufferings were insufficient to accomplish their purpose of atonement. Yet the phrase suggests that there is something lacking with respect to the sufferings of Christ.

Some help in properly interpreting the phrase can be gained from a consideration of the verb, antanapl•r•, "I am filling up." It is a rare double compound verb, appearing only in the New Testament. To the verb itself, pl•ro•, are added two prepositions, ana (up), and anti (over against). The import of anti (over against) as it is added to anapl•ro (fill up) is its indication of correspondence. There is a correspondence of supply (filling up) with what is lacking (huster•ma) of the afflictions of Christ. So the passage can be read: "as much as was lacking might be correspondingly supplied."

Thus the thought is that there is, indeed, something yet wanting with respect to Christ's sufferings. This lack is to be supplied by Christian suffering. Paul is here teaching that only as Christians suffer, die to self and selfishness, can the reconciling work of Christ be extended in the world. Were the sufferings of Christians to be avoided, to that extent the reconciling power of Christ in the world is depleted. Thus the Christian vocation in the world, that of service to others, is the vocation of suffering. Suffering is the indispensable route to the higher and enduring good.

Now this passage also teaches that the sufferings of the Christian are not merely his own. They are also Christ's sufferings. Our sufferings are thereby transformed, and in assuming transcendental significance, become suffused with lightness of joy. No longer are we alone, but now we are joined, in suffering, with the reconciling work of the Savior. Thus Paul can write, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation" (2 Cor. 7:4).

Beyond Christian suffering as extending the reconciling work of Christ in the world, there is a second dimension to the Christian conception of suffering. Here we are concerned with the meaning of suffering, the sorrow, that man inevitably experiences in the world. For the Christian, sorrow has a distinctive complexion that sets it apart from human sorrow in general. What, then, is the Christian conception of sorrow?

Sorrow is the sense of discord, the consciousness that things are misaligned, either in the world or ourselves. It is therefore a profound dissatisfaction.

> **The inherent necessity in man of sorrow . . . testifies that his essential constitution and nature, as man, is something which all this world's life and the conditions of it--by the very fact that they are what they are--cannot match, and cannot satisfy. The very constitution of his being and the necessary conditions of his life are out of harmony together. They do not and cannot fit; the one is too small to satisfy the other. Set man, being what man is, in this world, as the conditions of this world are, and the necessary result is, sooner or later, sorrow.**[47]

Now the sufferings of Christ have a wider meaning than atonement. By them he was also perfected in experience, so that he might be able to sympathize with humanity in a manner otherwise impossible.

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47 R. C. Moberly, *Sorrow, Sin, and Beauty* (London: John Murray, 1907), p. 7.

**For we have not an high
priest which cannot be touched
with the feeling of our infirmities;
but was in all points
tempted like as we are, yet
without sin (Heb. 4:15).**

There are various ways in which we can handle our sorrows. On the strictly human plane, there are two contrasting ways. We can withdraw inwardly, become imprisoned within our private afflictions, and become morbid and bitter. Or we can defy our afflictions and determine stoically to endure them. Neither procedure is able effectively to handle sorrow. The former alternative is crippling to the poise and strength of the spirit, while the later alternative but reveals the impotence of defiance and the pride of self-assertiveness.

The Christian attitude to sorrow is that of dutiful acceptance. It is not, however, the acceptance of sorrow as itself a good, but a good only in the sense that it can lead to a good. This is the meaning of the second beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). The term comfort (parakal••) means "to call to the side of." The comfort meant here is the Divine tenderness that gives reinforcement and strength. But such comfort comes only when our suffering becomes an act of the will. In the agony of Gesthemane, Jesus accepted the cup of his passion and death, not as a necessity, but as the choice of his will. When thus chosen, the Cross then becomes the altar-throne of voluntary sacrifice. The sufferer is then transfigured into something higher and purer than himself, the completeness and joy of his true self.

There is a refining and educative influence of sorrow. Thus Malachi (3:2-3) writes:

**He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope;
and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.**

There are three special ways in which sorrow refines and educates the soul. First, it removes a false ideal and a false sufficiency. We earlier saw that, according to Hume, the meaning and goal of life consist in enjoyment. Against this view, suffering is opaque and irresolvable. Indeed, it is the case that the world desires a life that is full, visibly and palpably full. Life is complete and satisfying, it is assumed, when life is full of the things of earth. But how mistaken it all is. "Woe unto you that are full!" is the answer of Jesus. For the earth's fullness leaves the spirit sated and starved. Our real home is not this earth; it is the kingdom of the spirit. Do we not faintly hear the echoes of the past, of one whose life of completeness was yet almost totally empty of this world's goods? "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20).

Second, suffering reveals the power of the eternal. The sufferings of Christ bring to view the principle of self-sacrifice as the supreme expression of self-subjecting love. The realization that our own suffering is one with the suffering by which good is won against all evil is a taste of union with the eternal. This high view lifts us out of the morass of self-absorption and makes us a part of something greater than ourselves, caught up in the service of the good of others. We then know that we are the children of the eternal, bound together in the unity of the Spirit.

In the chapter, "The Religious Mission of Sorrow, of his book, Sources of Religious Insight, the American philosopher Josiah Royce argues that sorrow can afford insight into the nature of the spiritual realm. There are sorrows, he says, that

> **we remove only in so far as we assimilate them, idealise them, take them up into the plan of our lives, give them meaning, set them in their place in the whole.**[48]

Royce discusses a short story that appeared in the November, 1910 issue of the Atlantic Monthly. It is the story of a young man, Oliver Pickersgill, who wishes to mary Ruth Lannithorne, the daughter of a convict, Peter Lannithorne, who is in prison. Both the convict's wife and Oliver's father are against the marriage. Oliver visits the convict in prison, in order to get his view of the question. Lannithorne advises that the marriage should proceed, despite the risks, if the two love each other. He tells Oliver that there is no absolute security in this world, that the only security is courage. This is the insight that Lannithorne won, in his sorrow for his crime. He saw that:

> **"What every man in the world is looking for is the sense of having mastery over life. But I tell you, boy, there is only one thing that really gives it!"**
>
> **"And that is--?"**
>
> **Lannithorne hesitated perceptibly. For the thing he was about to tell this undisciplined lad was his most precious possession; it was the price of wisdom for which he had paid with the years of his life. No man parts lightly with such knowledge.**
>
> **"It comes," he said with an effort, "with the knowledge of our power to endure. That's it. You are safe only when you can stand everything that can happen to you. . . .**
>
> **"Ruth is the core of my heart!" . . . . If you know yourself fit for her, and feel reasonably sure you can take care of her, you have a right to trust the future. Myself, I believe there is some One to trust it to."**[49]

Thus there are sorrows that are bound up with the good. They teach us the deepest truth about the spiritual realm. They enable us to comprehend the spiritual unity of the world, that, despite the tragedies of human life, the spiritual triumph of the good is an abiding reality. The lesson of sorrow, then, is that

> **of showing spiritual power, first, through idealising your grief, by seeing even through this grief the depth of the significance of our relations as individuals to one another, to our social order, and to the whole of life; secondly, through enduring your fortune; and thirdly, through conquering, by the might of the spirit, those goods which can only be won through such sorrow.**
>
> **. . . . . No experiences go further than do these to show us how, in our loyalty and in our courage, we are becoming one with the master of life, who through sorrow overcomes.**[50]

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48 Josiah Royce, *Sources of Religious Insight* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 235.

49 *Ibid*., pp. 249-50.

50 *Ibid*., pp. 252-53.

Finally, Christian suffering is communion with Christ. Paul prays, in Phil. 3:10:

That I may know him, and
the power of his resurrection,
and the fellowship of his sufferings,
being made conformable
unto his death.

In suffering there is, accordingly, a mystic unity with Christ. We are united with him in "the fellowship of his sufferings." This communion of suffering not only delivers us from the false ideal of earthly fullness, it lifts us into a nearer relation with Christ. It lifts our being toward its perfection, "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). The profound significance of Christ's sorrow is found in his detestation and abhorrence of sin. His own contradiction against evil made him the "Man of Sorrows." Our own sorrow, when taken up in Christ's, can bring us into closer accord with the will of Eternal Holiness. Thus is our sorrow truly sanctified, transformed by the power of the Cross as the sorrow of anguish against sin. Spiritually we are one with him at his Cross.

But God forbid that I should
glory, save in the cross of our
Lord Jesus Christ, by whom
the world is crucified unto me,
and I unto the world.

I am crucified with Christ:
nevertheless I live: yet not I,
but Christ liveth in me.
Gal 6:14; 2:20

If Himself He came to thee, and stand
Beside thee, gazing down on thee with eyes
That smile and suffer; that will smite thy heart
With their own pity, to a passionate peace;
And reach to thee Himself the Holy Cup;
Pallid and royal, saying 'Drink with Me!'
Wilt thou refuse? Nay, not for Paradise!
The pale Brow will compel thee, the pure Hands
Will minister unto thee; thou shalt take
Of this Communion through the solemn depths
Of the dark waters of thine agony,
With Heart that praises Him, that yearns to Him
The closer for that hour. Hold fast His Hand
Though the nails pierce thine too! Take only care
Lest one drop of the sacramental wine
Be spilled, of that which ever shall unite
Thee, soul and body, to thy living Lord![51]

While there is, then, glory in sorrow as transposed into the transcendence of the Cross, there is, finally, glory beyond sorrow. Man's glory, his dominance over nature, has been lost. "But now we see not yet all things put under him" (Heb. 2:8). Man's last enemy is death; to death he is under subjection. Beyond the sorrow of Christ's Cross "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). In

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51 Ugo Bassi.

glory he reigns "till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:25-26). Today we know him in the "fellowship of his sufferings." His promise is sure: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). In God's endless tomorrow we shall know him in "the power of his resurrection." In the resurrection life, we shall come, finally and forever, into glory.

then shall be brought to pass the
saying that is written, Death
is swallowed up in victory.

But thanks be unto God, which
giveth us the victory through our
Lord Jesus Christ.
1 Cor. 15:54, 57.

* * * * * *

CHAPTER 11

THE REALITY OF FAITH

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).

The magnificent eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a roster of the worthies of faith. The book was written for the benefit of Jewish Christians who were in danger of apostasy. At the time of this writing, Christians were not allowed any civil rights in the Roman Empire, although those rights were accorded to Judaism. Thus some of the Jewish Christians turned their backs on the new faith and returned to their former faith. The book was written, therefore, in the effort to stem this apostasy.

Thus Heb. 10:35, 36 presents the aim of the book, which is to inspire boldness to affirm the faith and to inspire patience to wait for the divine deliverance from suffering:

> Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.
> For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

To this end the writer presents his list of the faithful. These faithful ones, he in effect says, disclose to us the truth that faith, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, is finally triumphant.

Verses 3-11 give seven illustrations of the life of faith, all opened by the expression pistei, "by faith." There is, first of all, faith in the mystery of creation, of God as creator of the visible universe, drawing it from the invisible fountain of Being. There is Abel and the inwardness of faith; Enoch and the faith that pleases God; Noah, whose faith condemns the world; Abraham with his faith in the God who holds the unwritten future in his hands; Sarah and the faith of the hardheaded, who first laughs at the promise, yet finally accepts it.

Verses 13-16 are a brief summary that points up the fact that there is a homeland, a heavenly country, which, while yet not possessed, is for faith a reality and not a mirage. Verses 17-19 recount Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, showing that faith preserves even when circumstances seem to thwart the ends

toward which faith is directed. Verses 20-22, referring to Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, show that faith secures the promise of the future. In verses 23-29 the faith of Moses is shown as enduring in the presence of him who is invisible. From verse 30 through 38, further illustrations of faith are called to mind. Finally, in verses 39-40, the author states that, while the earlier faith was valid, it is only in the faith in Christ that the final faith is secured: for in that faith the heavenly reality is revealed in its full glory in Christ.

The force of these examples of faith show, then, that faith is a vision of the realities and values of the unseen, and that this vision is a power to shape one's life and conduct in the service of the Good.

But what is this faith, which is so beautifully illustrated in the golden halls of remembrance? That is, now, the question that we need to consider in some detail.

Hebrews 1:1 employs two key words in characterizing faith. These terms are "substance" and "evidence." "Substance" is specifically associated with "things hoped for," while "evidence" is thus associated with "things not seen."

Now, the term "substance" is a term that figures importantly in philosophical thought. It is found, first of all, in the philosophy of the Greeks, and carried forth in modern philosophy with varying interpretations and emphases.

The term "substance" is, in the Greek, hupostasis. It is a compound of the preposition hupo, "under," and the verb histemi, "stand." It literally means, then, "standing under." Substance is the basic support that stands under, underlies, other things.

The early Greek philosophers sought to discover the world principle, the arch•, the underlying cause of the things of space and time. This they termed "substance," the permanent and causative reality, which exists more really than the temporal. Later, Plato called the Ideas, as beauty, justice, and goodness, the "hypostases," or substances, the eternal and immutable realities that are the causes of all other things. Thus substance, conceived as a metaphysical principle, is the eternal, permanent reality. In other words, this use of the term "substance" connotes that which is stable within the world of change, the abiding reality.

As the abiding reality that underlies the things of sense, substance cannot be an object of sense, cannot be disclosed at the level of perception. Rather, substance is, and must be, wholly an object of thought. Thus, even in its strictly philosophical import it is the invisible reality. It may be noted, parenthetically, that it is precisely this rational nature of substance that, under the onslaught of empiricism, has occasioned the modern criticism, and in some cases rejection, of the substance idea. However, the empiricist critique of substance is elaborated from certain assumptions that themselves are problematical, and do not therefore signify that the idea of substance is an invalid idea. On the contrary, the nature of our experience, as the unity of self-awareness in the midst of the various episodes of experience, witnesses to the validity of substance as a unifying and real principle of experience. Ultimately, too, the world of nature must be read, in some fashion, in terms of the germinal import of the category of substance.

The idea of substance also figures in religious literature. In the Old Testament the term "substance" is hayil, which means "strength, power, wealth." The ideas of strength and power, too, have metaphysical import as connoting the abiding reality, strength and power to be. The term is also used of material possessions. In numerous places in the Old Testament the term is a translation of the Hebrew rekhush, which means "that which is gathered together." It is used, for example, in Genesis 12:5, where it is said of Abraham that he "took . . . all their substance that they had gathered . . . ."

In the New Testament the term "substance" is used in a strictly metaphysical sense as signifying the divine nature, which in its unitary essence transcends, but includes, the personal distinctions within Deity. Of the Christ the writer of Hebrews says that He is "the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:3). The term "person" is hupostaseos, or "substance." The passage is literally translated, then, as "the exact expression of his substance." Christ is the disclosure of the eternal nature of God, of Him who abides forever in everlasting reality.

The second key term in the text, "evidence," is also a philosophical term. The term is elegchos. It is an old Greek legal term, meaning the "basis for testing," "putting to the test," or "proof." It was used in debates and cross-examinations, as a means of disclosing the truth. The English term is derived from the Latin, evidentia, from e-videre, "seeing." Evidence thus means clearness or apparentness.

In Aristotelian and the later Scholastic philosophy, the givenness of the perceptual datum is evidence of the reality of the external object. Here substance, called by Aristotle primary substance, is the individual thing. The individual thing has in it its formal meaning, its essential nature, the "universal," which is an intelligible and not a sensible reality. And this, the essential meaning of substance, may be apprehended at the end of a process of inductive reasoning. And, finally, the "first things," as Aristotle terms them, may be apprehended intuitively. In all of this, the evidence is evidence of being, i.e., evidence is the clearness or apparentness of the existing real.

In modern times the notion of evidence was cut off from the real and restricted to the evidence of ideas entertained in the mind. It was not claimed that what is given clearly and distinctly in the mind is itself reality transcending the mental experience. But, nevertheless, the clearness and distinctness with which contents appear in the mind were regarded as evidence for the proper meaning of those ideas as mental structures.

The term "evidence" appears in the Old Testament. Jer. 32:10 reads: "And I took the evidence, and sealed it and took witnesses . . . ." This account records Jeremiah's purchase, while in prison, of a portion of land in Anathoth. By this act Jeremiah registered his faith in the future recovery of the captive land of Judah. The term in this passage is sepher, which means literally "book." The meaning is title-deed. Evidence here means the title-deed, or the evidence of a possession.

The word "evidence" is also found in Job 6:28, where Job says: "Now therefore be content, look upon me, for it is evident unto you if I lie." The term is al panim, which means "on the face." Thus in this passage evidence is the transparency and openness of countenance that unmistakably discloses the life and character of the person. That is, again, evidence is clarity.

Paul writes in Gal. 3:11: "For no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." Here "evident" is delos, "clear," or "manifest." The writer of Hebrews employs the term, delos, with appropriate prepositions, to emphasize the certainty of Jesus' descent from the tribe of Judah rather than that of Aaron, so as to emphasize the superiority of Jesus' priesthood as a Melchizedec priest who institutes a priesthood superior to the Aaronic (Heb. 7:14-15). Thus in the New Testament, as in the Old, evidence is a clarity, a manifestness, which provides certainty.

Now, it is striking that, in Hebrews 11:1, the terms "substance" and "evidence" are associated with that which on the surface appears to be antithetical to the import of those terms. In our normal experience the notion of substance signifies something that has being and is therefore in some significant sense a present reality or fact. And as a form-quality of experience, substance is a present realization of a conscious subject-activity living out its essential self-identity.

But, paradoxically, Hebrews 11:1 displaces the idea of substance from its situation in present reality--the reality of fact and of experience--and asserts that, in faith, substance is not present, but rather is that which is absent as a longed-for hope. Substance now is the substance of a yet unrealized future rather than that of a realized present. The substance of faith is "the substance of things hoped for."[52]

The situation is comparable with respect to the term "evidence." In this regard, it is also true that our normal experience holds evidence, insofar as it is evidence of the real, to that which is disclosable in perception. There is a sense of evidence, to be sure, which relates to logical pattern, but in this context evidence is only an arrangement of meanings that do not assert or disclose real things. The entire thrust of modern empirical science is one that holds evidence to the sense-experienceable world and therefore defines the real world in terms of the data and objects of sense observation. If the principle of empiricism is strictly and absolutely held, there is no reality save the world given in sense experience.

But now comes again the paradox of faith. For Hebrews 11:1 also asserts that there is an evidence, an evidential experience, that brings to view unseen, invisible, realities. The text dares to assert that there is a form of evidence that goes beyond, is not limited to, the visible world of perception, but that rather touches upon those realities, even more real than the things of ordinary experience, which are nevertheless invisible to the eye of natural sight.

Now what can this paradox mean: the substance of the unrealized, the evidence of the unseen? What goes on here in this violent distortion of ordinary human experience? Here, in these questions, is found the center-point of Christian faith.

Now, there is a close association of substance and evidence. The "things not seen," for which faith is evidence, are precisely the "things hoped for," which are substantiated in the spirit as the inheritance of the believer. It is proper, then, to carry out our further discussion in terms of

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52 Italics mine.

this close association of substance and evidence. For, in the language of faith, both substance and evidence are, in their close association, elevated to a new and transcendent dimension.

The audacious power of the language of faith, as it is penned indelibly in this text, consists in the fact that the language is employed with a dual import. It takes the words of purely human discourse and accepts their usual and normal meaning, but at the same time wrests them from the context of the normal, then distorts them, so as to present those possibilities of experience that are beyond even the imaginations of ordinary human understanding. It is thus necessary to pursue this duality of reference, in order to come to an understanding of the reality of faith.

If, then, the ideas of substance and evidence mean anything in the context of faith, something of the ordinary meaning of the terms must be retained even in that context. If this were not so, there would be no key, or indication, of the transformed meaning of the terms, and thus no route available to us in our coming to grips with the substance and evidence of faith. What this means, then, is that in the experience of faith the "things hoped for," which are the "things unseen," are in some significant sense substantially realized and evidenced in present experience. Herein lies the first meaning of faith as substance and evidence.

There are the unseen things, then, not yet experienced, which nevertheless become manifestly real to us by faith. What are those things? They are lifted up before us in the remaining portion of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

There is first of all, as the ultimate prius, God Himself as eternally real. Yet, John writes, "No man hath seen God at any time . . ." (John 1:18). In the restrictive context of natural sight and understanding, God is unreal. God, if real in Himself, is for us in our purely natural life unreal, unsubstantiated in the human spirit. There is no laying within our inmost self of a foundation of divine presence. Even as we think of God, we must think of him as "wholly other," the unconditioned absolute beyond the reaches of the natural intellect. It is for this reason that Hebrews insists that we come to God, not by vision or thought, but rather by the evidential light of faith: "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Faith is the avenue to God, the act that brings reward. What is that reward? It is that the God of transcendence becomes the God of immanence, the God who now is substantiated in life as indwelling presence and power. For the believer, God is no longer remote; he is now "God with us."

> For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones (Isa. 57:15).

Faith is the "also" that makes God real in the experience of the believer. It is the condition of being grounded in God as a life-power, enabling the believer to endure, "as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27).

There also comes, as a reality to faith, "a better country, that is, an heavenly," a homeland, and "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:15, 10). The country that is this present earth, the city that is this present habitation, often appear solid and substantial, as giving an unfailing support of human kind. And yet, how often the ground upon

which our lives are built is shaken by the fortuitous events of an unforeseen and unbidden destiny. Then are the earthly substances upon which our lives are built, around which they are so inordinately centered, seen to be frail and even unsubstantial, swept away in the currents of time's inexorable ravages. When these events of devastation work their ruin, the natural man is then left without hope. The rock-bed support of this life now turns into the quicksand of tremulous illusion.

> **How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?**
>
> **They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish forever without any regarding it (Job 4:19-20).**

In secular poetry, too, the plight of man without faith is eloquently set forth:

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.[53]

Beyond the wastelands of man's illusions, the "naked shingles of the world," there travels the sojourner of faith, who sees, albeit from afar, the heavenly country, the city of God with foundations strong and secure as eternity itself. To those who dwell in the shadowlands it is an unseen, a darkness that has no light. But to the eye of faith it is radiant in sunlit glory, its gates open awaiting the time when the weary pilgrim shall find rest in its sacred enclosure. That city is not yet his possession, but he holds close to his heart the evidence: he has the title-deed, and it is as secure as God's eternal word of promise.

> **In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, . . . in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,**
>
> **Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:11-14).**

Thus it is that faith is a present substance and a present evidence. Yet, as we have just observed, the substance is, in respect to its full reality, an unrealized, an expectation of the future, and the evidence is of that which we do not yet see in its effulgent radiance. There is, then, in faith something profoundly antithetical to the substance and evidence which that faith purports to sustain. Whatever substance and evidence faith provides, in this life it yet does not overcome man's incompleteness. It is,

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53 Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach."

to be sure, the earnest of his inheritance, but it must yet wait for fulfillment in God's better day.

It would, indeed, be tragic if the substance of the unrealized, the evidence of the unseen, were the final legacy of faith. Then it would be that the substance forever dissolves and the evidence forever fades. And that is, as we have also seen, the antinomy that, if there were nothing beyond it, would sound the very destruction of faith itself.

All of this means, then, that the ordinary significance of the terms "substance" and "evidence," which is thus far contained in the term "faith," must undergo, through the process of distortion, a transformation that confers upon faith its reality and illumination. And this process is carried out by virtually redefining substance and evidence, that is, by associating them, respectively, with the unrealized and the unseen. And that is an audacity of which no human thought could ever conceive; rather, it is the result of a divine intervention in the affairs of humanity; it is God's doing. In this association, substance and evidence now are lifted out of the context of thought and placed in an entirely new context, the context of faith. And in that context they function differently than they do as categories of reason. As rational categories, substance and evidence hold on to the presently given and the visually seen. But as categories of faith, substance holds on to hope unrealized; and evidence, to realities unseen.

How, then, does faith function in this new and changed manner? In the midst of the unrealized and the unseen, faith is, notwithstanding the contrary, the present substantiation of hope and the present clarity of insight that brings victory in the present world. But it is not yet the final triumph; it is, in man's incompleteness, the power of life to preserve, to hold fast the confidence, in the fulfillment of God's better day.

In this life, faith never receives the promises. That is the enigma of faith, that even in faith our human life is tragically incomplete. So much of the great eleventh chapter of Hebrews is given to this human tragedy of incompleteness. Abraham, "by faith called" (as it literally reads), went out not knowing his destination. He was a stranger in his own land. He descried the city of light, built by God upon the sure foundations, yet he actually lived in tents. He saw the promises from afar off, embraced them, yet died without having received those promises. Moses' faith made it possible for him to see in the slaves of Egypt the "people of God." Yet he was but the leader of a dispossessed people. And then, there is the list of those who

> . . . had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:
> They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;
> (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and dens and caves of the earth.
> And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: (Heb. 11:36-39).

"And these all . . . received not the promise." So closes this litany of the heroes of faith. But now what happens to faith--that faith so bright with promise, yet so devoid of fulfillment? How, in the light of this dark climax, can it be said that faith is the evident substantiation of unseen realities in the life of humanity?

The writer of the Hebrews provides the answer, in the closing verse of the chapter:

> **God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (Heb. 11:40).**

The dark climax with which the litany of faith had closed in the previous verse, they "received not the promise," is now suffused with the light of glory: the glory of a "a better thing" that is able to bring the promise of faith to its fulfillment. Faith provides a divine answer to the incompleteness of humanity. In the power of this "better thing" the saints of the ages are "made perfect."

The "better thing" is the perfecting of the people of God by full communion with Him: mediated by the perfect revelation, "in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:2); mediated by the perfect covenant, "For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar" (Heb. 7:13); and mediated by the better sacrifice, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb. 9:23).

And yet this perfect revelation, this perfect covenant, this better sacrifice, cannot bring consummate fulfillment in this life. The promise of faith, albeit held in its earnest, is that of "entering into his rest" (Heb. 1:4). And that rest, which is the consummation of human history beyond the sphere of human relations, can be entered only when God's perfect day shall, at the end of history, be ushered in. This promise is God's promise. Faith sees this fulfillment and greets it from afar. This, the vision of fulfillment, is, finally, the power of faith: the substantiation of hope, the evidentness of unseen reality.

The substance of faith, even now, is the condition of being grounded in God. It is the realized inward presence of God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Ps. 42:1). But there is still an incompleteness in this life. God is, to be sure, the great companion and fellow sufferer. Yet there are times when we long for a more intimate nearness to the heart of God. We sense that, in His unapproachable holiness, He is at too great a distance from us. O, that He were inwritten, with all of His purity and glory, in the fleshly tablets of our hearts, that He were finally and ultimately "God with us," that He were without qualification our God who is "all in all." These, and infinitely more, are the spiritual realities for which we hope. They are seen, beyond the farther shore, by the eye of faith: the faith that longs for their fulfillment. And faith holds on to these far-distant realties. For it rests assured that when God's day comes, as it surely will, we shall then behold his face in righteousness, we shall be satisfied when we awake with his likeness (Ps. 17:15). And "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). In the ecstasy of inspired vision, the Revelator saw the ultimate presence of God, whose glory filled that city which hath foundations:

> **And I . . . saw the holy city . . . coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband.**
>
> **And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:2-3).**

That God shall be with us, and be our God: this is the hope and promise of faith. All this may seem fragile, unsubstantial, but we know that we now carry within our hearts the inward evidence. We now have the title-deed. This is now manifest, and we are thus able to catch glimpse of that heavenly country, that city of light. To be sure, we now "see through a glass, darkly," but yet we know that in the tomorrow of God's eternal day of fulfillment we shall then see, in clarified vision, "face to face." Hope fulfilled! "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15).