

THE CRISIS OF FAITH
by
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When we speak of a 'crisis of faith', we mean something different from the crisis in morals, for example in reliability and loyalty, or in political ideology and respect for the laws; indeed we mean something other than a crisis in religion. For in all these instances the crisis is one of human attitude and human character, and is concerned with the problem of a particular age or generation - that is, with a sociological phenomenon. Although faith is connected with morality and religion, and is always at the same time a human attitude, it is nevertheless differentiated from them by its being a particular faith, faith in an up-againstness, in something beyond mankind. Faith is not religiosity, not a disposition of the soul to devotion, gratitude, reverence and awe of the world and of life as a whole. On the contrary, it understands the world and life in the light of a reality lying beyond them, of a power lying beyond them, which is their origin and their Lord - i.e., God. A crisis of faith therefore arises when their supramundane reality has been called in question.

The situation is exactly the same as in relation of man to man, to which indeed also we apply the term 'faith' - for the friend or the lover has faith in the other person. Faith here does not mean an attitude of love - for that can persist even when faith wavers or collapses. Nor does it mean an attribute of character, for that can also exist before and after love. But it is faith in the particular of the other person, who is recognized as such in just this faith - giving love. Such faith undergoes a crisis when it is established that the other person is not what faith in him made him appear to be.

To speak, therefore, of a crisis of faith in the sphere of religion does not mean that we are referring at all to a crisis in religion or religiosity, as, for example, in regard to their being shaken by events in the history of the world or of the mind - or to their awakening under the influence of these factors. Nor does it mean that we are referring to indifference in regard to religion, but rather to the crisis of a particular faith. For us there is point only in speaking about the crisis of our own Christian faith.

I

What then is this Christian faith, the crisis of which is our concern? What is that supramundane reality which is the object of Christian faith? What is God in the Christian sense?

God in the Christian sense is nothing other than what he is to every faith in which the idea of God is treated at all seriously. What, then, is conveyed by the idea of God?

Every human being knows or can know about its finiteness, for, consciously or unconsciously it is driven this way and that by this finiteness, as long as it exists. It is no more its own master than it is its own creator. It is never perfect, but is driven this way and that by care, which reminds it of its finitude and of its imperfection:

"If no ear would harken to me,
In the heart 'twould echo surely;
Changed in form before your eyes,
Gruesome power I exercise.
Vexing ever as you follow
On the pathway, on the billow;
Ever found and never sought,
Cursed when not with flattery bought...
He whom once I make my own
Might as well the world disown
Fortune, failure stands revealed
As whims - he famishes though filled,
Joy or torment equally
Postponing to another day
And as everything he leaves
For the future - nought achieves."

In the first place it is everyday care for the morrow. Man is taken up with the provision, procuring and preparation of the means of living. Yet fundamentally he knows that he cannot make life sure with the means of living. Everyone understands the story of the husbandman who thought to fill his barns with the rich harvest and then to say to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But God said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Everyone sees that the husbandman was a fool.

This mysterious power - the power which limits man and is master of him even when he thinks he is his own master - is God, the controller of man's future.

Or again, no matter how little life can free itself from this care for the things of every day or for the morrow, it refuses to see in this care what gives life its significance, but goes beyond it. Life is driven this way and that by the longing for the true and the beautiful, or even just by that indefinite longing which awakes in the 'deep of the night' and in which it becomes clear that:

"Every pleasure seeks to be
embedded in eternity."

And yet even in all of its lofty moments human life is not granted this eternity of pleasure or this pleasure of eternity. Does it indeed know any hours in which it could say to the moment - "But tarry, for thou art so fair"? And even if it does - then the moment just does not tarry! Man has no power over the temporal and the eternal. The power which controls them is God.

Or again, life is driven this way and that by the desire for love, and by the feeling that there is truth in what in Karl Spitteler's "Olympian Springtime" Apollo says to Hera, who is haunted by the fear of death and would like to escape from death:

"In Ananke's cruel domain
In vale or mountain flourishes no solace to remain,
Save the solace of the eyes - twin stars in friendship blest,
And the syllables of love, by grateful lips expressed."

Some lives are poor in friendship and in love, and some rich, but even the rich life is aware of a final solitude into which it is forced:

"Can e'er man as he'd wish belong
On earth, to his fellow?
In the long night I thought of it and could but answer No!"

The power which drives man into this final solitude is God.

Or again, life is motivated by the thirst for knowledge and one is led to admit, "I see that we can nothing know." Or perhaps it is the impulse to action and to work. That in fact is the way in which Faust finally sought to reach that moment to which he could say, "But tarry, for thou art so fair!" Yet behind Want and Guilt and Care, for whom access to him & mastery over him is forbidden, comes our 'brother, Death'. And when the blind Faust takes delight in the clanking of spades they are not the spades which are getting busy on his work and bringing it to completion, but those which are digging his grave; and it is the foretaste of sublime happiness which is the highest and final moment. The power which sets a terminus to knowing and doing is God.

Or, finally, human existence is dominated by the idea of duty, by knowledge of the principle that "You can, for you ought". But it is well aware that life in accordance with the "You ought" is a struggle, in which it is a question of mastering oneself. It knows the voice of conscience which summons to duty and recalls from thoughtlessness and aberration to everyday things, and pronounces the verdict "Guilty" on wasted time and lost opportunity, impure thoughts and mean actions. The summons of the "you ought", divesting man of his self-determination, and the dictates of conscience showing man how small, incomplete and wretched he is - these are God.

It is God who makes man finite, and who makes a comedy of man's care, who allows his longing to miscarry, who casts him into solitude, who sets a terminus to his knowing and doing, who calls him to duty, and who gives the guilty over to torment. And yet at the same time it is God who forces man into life and drives him into care; who puts longing and the desire to love in his heart; who gives him thoughts and strength for his work, and who places him in the eternal struggle between self-assertion and duty. God is the enigmatic power beyond time, yet master of the temporal: beyond being, yet working in it.

II

But what we have just said is not adequate as a description of the Christian idea of God, or indeed of God at all. For why do we call this mysterious power 'God'? Why give the enigma, the mystery which drives us this way and that and hedges us in, any other name than simply the enigma, or fate? Or, if there must be a name, why not equally well that of the devil? Does not this power play a cruel game with us, destroying and annihilating? Is not unfulfillment the distinguishing mark of every life? Is not death and nothingness the end?

"It's over, then -- what moral have we won?
It's just as if life never had begun.
Though going full circle just as if it had,
Give me eternal nothingness instead ..."

Thus, the devil, Mephistopheles, speaks. And is this true? Or, in view of this enigma and this finiteness of ours, does a diabolical temptation perhaps lie in this approach? And is it not to the point, in the face of the enigma and the darkness, to insist on the meaning of life with a cry of "Nevertheless"?

However that may be, this 'Nevertheless' is in any event the meaning of faith in God. It is the courage to designate that dark enigma, that sovereign power as God, as my God. It is the courage to assert that in the knowledge of this power every being acquires its meaning, that in knowing this power I also realize I belong to it, and that the limit which fences my being about is inwardly removed. This will, of course, happen when I give up my claim to make my own way - when I submit to this power as that which brought me into existence - when I can say 'Yes' to it. Faith in God' is the courage which gives utterance to this 'Nevertheless' - "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand".

For one of such faith, harassing care loses its dread; for in all his cares he attains to a peculiar detachment from dread. Then are "they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not", yet without ceasing to weep or rejoice. Then, whatever one has it will be as if one did not in fact have it. For one with this faith, longing loses its torture, for in the very longing, man frees himself from the illusion that the here and now ever bring fulfillment, and longing is seen to go beyond time and into eternity. For one of such faith, the light of joy flashes out of the dark places of solitude:

"Cannot I be as I would be
With God in full community?
What's to prevent my being so today?"

For one of such faith the question is not one of making an end of knowing and doing; but he is grateful for the power to experiment and to act; and for him the 'You ought', the voice of conscience is what brings him to himself by limiting and judging him. And one of such faith just does not cry in the face of death "It's over, then!" and "It's just as if life never had begun!"

If the faith which says "Nevertheless!" is faith in God, then we must clearly distinguish genuine faith in God from what is usually termed a Weltanschauung. Knowledge about that power which

creates and limits our being is not theoretical knowledge but is the knowledge which breaks in on us in critical moments of our being itself. We never have it as a lasting possession or a permanent insight - on the contrary, it is to keep on making its way in the face of all temptations which continually arise out of man's being, giving him the illusion that he is captain of his soul and master of his fate -- even if by virtue of that very insight. Faith in God is continually being stifled by the cares of each day that lay hold of one or by which and plans, and by the crazes that drive one to pleasure - and from pleasure to pleasure; or by living together, which is always in danger of losing its real character as a community of free and isolated persons and of deteriorating into a clamor of voices weakening us and deceiving us about our solitariness - a clamour which we are distracted and get lost and even join in. Action and work continually make men their prisoner - a man becomes an 'expert', a slave to his work; but the pauses in this are for him not the achievement of composure, but distraction. Consciousness of doing one's duty gives a false security and an arrogance in which man blinds himself to his own significance.

Real "faith" in God always grows out of the realization of the questionableness of existence, which cannot be learned and retained in the form of a proposition, but of which one is always becoming conscious in the moment of living. Real faith in God is not a proposition which one can have ready to hand in order to evade the challenge of the moment. On the contrary, it must actually be grasped and confirmed in the moment, since it is always then that one gains a proper detachment from things, and that submission, that 'yes' is fulfilled: "Not what I will, but what thou wilt"

Real faith in God, therefore, is not a general truth at my disposal which I perceive and apply, on the contrary, it is what it is only as something continually perceived afresh and developing a fresh. God is not a natural law for the world, not a providence or a general cosmic purpose that will enable me, once I have recognized this law or meaning, to explain and understand the individual phenomena in my own life, and in all that happens; or at least, if not that, to be persuaded on general grounds as to their meaning. A Weltanschauung is a theory about the world and life, and about the unity of the world, its origin, purpose or worth - or again, about its worthlessness about the meaning of it all - or again, about its meaninglessness. What we call atheistic or Christian Weltanschauung makes God a principle in understanding the world - an idea. To faith, God is the incomprehensible, enigmatic power that surges through my concrete life and sets limits to it --- a power which I can come to know only in and for itself. In a Weltanschauung I simply escape from the reality of my own existence, which is actually real only in the moment, in the questions involved in the moment and in the decisions called for in the moment. We can see in the longing for a Weltanschauung an escape from the enigma and from the decisive question of the moment. It is man's escape from himself; it is the effort to find security in generalizations, whereas insecurity is what characterizes the real nature of human existence. A Weltanschauung is an attempt to relieve man of a decision when consciousness of his insecurity breaks in on him Out of the situation of the moment. In the case of a moral conflict it is, perhaps, through an ethical theory, or, in the case of death, through a psychological or cosmological theory. Thus a Weltanschauung stands in sharpest contrast to faith in God. This saying 'yes' - this 'Nevertheless' does not mean elucidation of the enigma by the insight which comes from observation, but is born only of the moment, that is, from surrender to the claims of the moment - from the sacrifice of the ego. This is how Luther described it: "This is the supreme article of the creed of which we are speaking - I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, - and whoever believes that truly is helped already, and is brought back so that he comes to the point from which Adam fell. But those people are few, who come so far as to fully believe that he is the God who makes and creates all things. For such a man must acknowledge in his heart that he can do nothing in his own strength." Such a faith can never be a well conceived and carefully planned and established Weltanschauung, nor one that can be permanently retained and applied. On the contrary, it has to be constantly re-won in the struggle with man's self-will.

Faith in God is no more a mysticism rising superior to the world and imagining it will find God in

timelessness, than it is a Weltanschauung, interpreting everything in the world on the basis of one principle. God is the mysterious, the enigmatic power that meets us in the world and in time. His transcendence is that of one always having power over the temporal and the eternal; it is the transcendence of the power which creates and sets limits to our lives - not that of a substance or a void with which the soul unites and into which it is swallowed up as it soars above the world in devotion, abstraction and ecstasy. Faith implies an awareness that the human soul is not a special something in which man can free himself from involvement in the affairs of the world in order to fling himself into the arms of eternity. It implies that in all such attempts the man who wishes to escape from himself is only flung back on himself, and that in all the joys and delights of mysticism he is simply man and nothing more. It implies that what man has done and does - his decisions - constitute him in his true nature, that he is essentially a temporal being, and that wishing to escape from the temporal simply means wishing to escape from his own reality, and therefore from God, who is to be found by him nowhere else but in this temporal reality. Mysticism seeks to achieve that detachment that 'having as though one did not have', by ignoring the 'having' implied by its negation of the world and time. Faith in God does not speak of soul-sparks and soul-rudiments, but of the whole man, who exists in the world and in time, in the community and as a responsible being, who is always to hear in the voice of the moment the voice of God, and is always to implement his obedience to God in decision and action. In such obedience he is to gain his freedom from the world -- from being tied to the world in dread, thoughtlessness, self-deception and vanity -- but not like the mystic -- by escaping from practical thought, decision and action. Real faith lies in the preservation of detachment in the actual concrete situations in life - a detachment which makes decision and action of real import, because in it man thinks and acts as a free agent.

III

Thus we can characterize Christian faith in God; but so also any faith in God at all can be characterized. What is specifically Christian faith in God? This question has still to be answered, but it finds its answer when we face the other pertinent question that is urgently raised by the character of faith. How far is such a faith, faith in God? Is it not simply faith in men? Are we not using the word God here to gloss over a fatal self-deception? Is this 'Nevertheless!' not simply the Nevertheless of defiance, of the courage bred by despair? In fact, faith as it has been described need not be anything but faith in men - that is, fundamentally not a faith in an up-againstness, but a human attitude, a disposition of the soul, which in overcoming despair and resignation, stupidity and thoughtlessness, takes stock of the reality in which it exists, saying "Yes" to it in awe and gratitude, in pride and humility at one and the same time -- refusing to be discomfited, but, on the contrary, going its way composedly and courageously. It is the attitude of the stoic or of Faust:

"In that direction all is lost to view;
A fool is he who turns there dazzled eyes,
To see his like above the cloudy skies.
Let him stand firm and look around on earth -
This world's not mute to him who is of worth.
Why need he roam into eternity?
For he can have what he can plainly see.
Thus let him wander on through all earth's day,
Though spirits haunt, still let him go his way:
Advancing let him find both pain and joy,
He whom, each 'moment', nought can satisfy".

Goethe in his honesty sought to avoid the name 'God' for the reality to which man bows in the knowledge that he is yoked to it:

"Feeling's the thing;
Its name? - but sound and smoke
Enshrouding heavenly flame".

This faith does not take God to be the real up-againstness: God is not a 'thou' to it, and no prayer to him is possible, not even:

"Send, Lord, what pleaseth thee -
Something of joy, of pain.
That from thy hands the twain
Should flow, sufficeth me."

Such faith doubtless speaks of God, and indeed to God.

But so far as it is concerned, God is the 'undefined' or 'fate' - in any event not the God of Christian faith. Yet in speaking of and to God that faith, nevertheless, knows what God is and has the desire to speak to him. May it?

Christian faith has its peculiar character in speaking of an event that gives it this right, in saying that it hears a Word which demands that it should recognize God as an up-againstness. For Christianity faith in God is not faith and trust in God in general, but faith in a definite Word proclaimed to the believer. The event is Jesus Christ, in whom, as the New Testament itself calls 'the Word'. That is, in what happened in and through Christ God has decisively manifested himself to man, and on this event a message is based and authenticated which confronts man as God's Word, not teaching him a new concept of God, but giving him the right to have faith in the God in whom he would like to have faith.

It is precisely for this that the Word was needed. "If the Word and sign of God are not there and are not recognized, then it is of no avail even if God himself were there". "For outside Christianity, even if people have faith in and worship only a true God, yet they do not know what his intentions are towards them, and they cannot look to him for any love or good, as they remain under eternal wrath and damnation". (Luther)

It is this, then, that is peculiar to Christian faith and is also its stumbling-block! And we must not make it inoffensive and harmless by developing the content of its conception of God alone, and abandoning the stumbling block. This lies in the very assertion that faith in God simply cannot and must not arise as a general human attitude, but only as a response to God's Word and that it is this one Word; this Word which is passed on by the preaching of the Church and which keeps reassuring the hearer that God is, that God is his God!

In order to understand this, however, we need to reflect further on how this Word tells man that he can have faith in God. It tells him by its promise of the forgiveness of his sin; and in saying so, it is also telling him that that submission to the power which calls us into life and makes us finite, and that saving "yes" is only real and radical, and what it would be, when it is at once a confession of sin and a plea for mercy. In all this we are not to think of sin as immorality, but as the claim of man to seek to exist in his own right, to be his own master, and to take his life into his own hands - superbia, in other words, or wishing to be like God. The implementation of this claim has indeed driven man up against his limitations and has made him conscious of them. But if in recognizing them he submits, then are not the limitations overcome inwardly, as we said? Has man not then found God?

Yes, he has if this submission is impossible without the confession of sin and forgiveness. By confession of sin, then, more is understood than the acknowledgment of man's finitude, and subjection to this means more than a confession that the claim was a false one. What we actually should understand by it is that in the self-will that has so far ruled my life I have become guilty - that

I cannot dispose of what lies behind me by becoming aware of my finitude and acknowledging it; that, if it is in earnest, this very acknowledgment of finitude is, rather, inevitably the confession of guilt before the power that makes me finite; and that guilt can only be wiped out by a Word of forgiveness.

At the same time the Christian message says even more plainly what sin is, and how far I have become guilty through my superbia. That striving to implement one's own claims, that running up against the limits of one's being, is therefore in reality the guilt which gives man his character, because in this way the individual man has become guilty in relation to his fellowman. The neighbor, the 'thou' with whom he is associated, is given to him as the real limit of his ego. This desire to be oneself, this superbia, is lovelessness. And the Christian conception of sin is characterized by taking the command to love as the command which dominates life, and as the claim of God, which is continually expressed in the moment. This surrender to the claims of the moment is not to be thought of simply as the abstract, negative recognition of human finiteness; on the contrary, it involves the positive recognition of the claims of the 'thou' as the criterion of my finiteness, and their fulfillment that is to say, love. Neither is it to be thought of simply as the negative acknowledgment that I am not master of my own fate; but it involves at the same time the positive recognition that I exist for the other person.

Just for this reason man's past gives him his character a past in which this self-will has driven him one way and another, because he did not hear the claims of the 'thou', and was caught up in a life of lovelessness and hate. He is guilty and impure because so much callousness and ingratitude, falsehood and meanness, thoughtless spoiling of the joys of others, and selfish neglect of the other person so much coolness towards others and insistence on his own rights -- all lie behind him. Or rather they do not lie behind him but cling to him unforgiven and make him impure.

The significance of this may strike a man who is wooing for another's love. He knows very well that what lies behind is actually not in the past, but that it is he who was thus and acted thus, and that not he, but only goodness and purity of the other person, can free him from it.

That his guilt - and in God's eyes, his sin is forgiven is what the Word of the Christian message tells him, and only to the person who accepts this forgiveness, submitting to judgment and taking upon himself the demands of love, does the message accord the right to speak of and to God.

IV

If then, that is the meaning of the Christian faith in God the faith in God as the enigmatic power which calls me into being and limits me; in the God who, by the Word established in the world through Christ, judges me as a sinner and forgives me my sin; in the God who directs my attention to the 'thou' and commands me to hear the claims of the moment in love - what is the position in regard to the crisis of faith? Must it still be discussed in detail, or has it not become intelligible already in our characterization of faith?

If Christian faith in God, like any faith in God at all, is the silent and reverently submission to the power calling me into life and limiting me -- if faith is the will to implement continually this submission in the moment, and in the recognition of the moment, then the crisis of faith is a constant one, for this will must always be implemented in a struggle with the self-will which refuses to recognize man's limitations. The summons must always be heard afresh. Faith in God, indeed, is never a possession, but rather always decision. One cannot therefore speak of a crisis of faith as one can of that in a scientific theory, which perhaps has guided research for a generation, and the fundamentals of which have to be put to the test so that the crisis will lead to new fundamentals and new theories. Nor can one speak of a crisis of faith as if it were in one's view of the world or one's conception of the state; nor again, as if it were the crisis of institutions or organizations, whether it's

the Church, the constitution, economics or the law that we have in mind. Such crises are phenomena and are the problems of any generation or age, their significance being to lay down new foundations for generations or ages. They come into being because a possession has become insecure, and because a new possession has to be created. Faith is never simply the concern of a generation or age -- it is always my concern - never a possession, but always a decision, and its crisis is the constant struggle of self-will against the claim of the moment.

If in the Christian faith in God we understand of the moment as the claim of the 'thou' and as the demand to love, then it is clear that its crisis is in the constant struggle of hate, against love, and that this crisis is becomes acute in every encounter with the 'thou', which thoughtlessly or selfishly we would fain disregard, maintaining our own rights and our own interests, in contempt or in undisguised hate. For this reason Christianity speaks of original sin. By this it means that we come into our present situation as people seeking to make our own way, that we have a history and exist in a world which was and is governed by this understanding of community, and that this understanding governs us from the outset: each seeks his own, and nobody pays serious heed to his neighbor. It is a world of lovelessness. And again and again man rises in revolt against this admission and this judgment even if only by blinding himself to reality with illusions and by busying himself in seeming love for mankind. For Christian love is not something that can be presented by programs, and implemented in organizations. It is rather something which always belongs to the moment -- to my particular moment. It is quite true that in regard to particular ills and sufferings of the present, just such a love may demand a program of aid and an organization. Yet love is not consummated and assured in them. On the contrary, programs, organizations and institutions can become just a cloak for lovelessness, and can blind me to the real demand of the moment, and to the concrete 'thou' which confronts me. Lovelessness and pride -- that is, struggling against the judgment on sin -- constitute the constant crisis of faith.

Moreover, if the stumbling-block of Christianity lies in the proclamation of forgiveness in this single Word of Christ, and nowhere else, then faith stands in the constant crisis which arises out of this stumbling-block: what right has this message to be regarded as the only authentic one? What right has an ordinary man whom I do not know, and who does not know me, to accord to me in the name of God the forgiveness of my sin, merely because he happens to be appointed to the preaching office of the Church? But does this view not simply mean that man is actually striving against the concrete, actual judgment that has been pronounced, pronounced against him? Does it not mean that he may be willing to accept it as a general judgment, and to tell himself that he will recognize forgiveness in this general way, whereas it is something which can only be accorded as something concrete, to him, who is himself a concrete being? And does that mean anything other than that he will perhaps recognize the idea of sin, the idea of forgiveness, and the idea of God -- but not God himself. That is what Christianity means by God's becoming man: the reality of God is not that of the idea but of the concrete happening; and the reality of his forgiveness is met with only in the concrete Word authenticated by him.

But are there not crises of faith which belong specifically to a generation or an age and which are induced by the transformation of science or by political revolutions? The answer would seem to be yes.

The crisis or apparent crisis in which faith was placed by modern natural science has today almost played itself out - at least in the eyes of those whom we call cultured people. The question naturally presents itself, rightly or wrongly, whether this crisis has been overcome because of insight into the true nature of faith, or merely through the latest transformation in science and the so-called Weltanschauung. Basically the crisis consists in man's being confronted by natural science with the question whether he wishes to understand his existence in the light of the reality laying open to scientific observation and research -- the reality of the object perceived by the senses, systematic

integration of which is perceptible to the thinking mind, just as its unity can be pictured by it; or whether he wishes to see it in the light of the reality of the moment. I might even say, whether he seeks to trace the origin of the moment in the natural happening that lies behind it, in such a way as to see it as necessarily derivative from this; or whether he is willing to acknowledge the underivedness of the moment, its openness for the future - its demand, its character as calling for decision; whether he is willing to acknowledge that the moment has a richer content than what can be established by observation, by measurement and calculation since it is rich in possibilities for joy and gratitude, pain and repentance, duty and love - rich in possibilities demanding decision in the present, a decision from which no science can detract, a decision in which man loses or gains his real existence. The question is, therefore, whether he acknowledges the responsibility of the present or does not; and, if the demand of the present is the call to love, whether the voice of a science concerned with the observation of the object, or the call to love, concerns him more strongly. It is not any particular results of natural science that induce a crisis of faith, but scientific observation as such. Faith never has to struggle against the findings of natural science, but solely against its possible claim, as a *Weltanschauung*, to understand the meaning of existence.

But in that case the crisis of faith which is induced by natural science is only one form of the crisis in which faith as such always stands, although certainly one characteristic of a particular age. In the claim of natural science is actually concealed man's claim to exist by himself and to understand and form his life in the light of what he can control - what in thought and by application he can master, or thinks he can master. Faith in God - and not just its Christian variety - demands the abandonment of this claim and the acknowledgment of the enigmatic forces which in reality give life its form - the acknowledgment of the moment with its responsibility. Christian faith in God declares that claim of natural science as a *Weltanschauung* to be a cloak for lovelessness, which pays no heed to the call of the moment for love.

Have we still something to say about the crisis in which faith is placed by the science of history -- in that this science deals critically with the New Testament, and makes doubtful our knowledge of the historical Jesus - and, further, places the Christian religion in the context of the history of religion as a whole, thus making it one relative phenomenon among others?

In the Christian message, however, there is absolutely no question of man's being given an historical account of a section of the past, which he might put to the test, or critically confirm or reject. He is told, on the contrary, that in what happened then, whatever the circumstances, God has acted, and that through this action of God the Word of divine judgment and of forgiveness which now confronts him is authenticated, that this action of God is nothing other than the actual establishment of this Word, as the proclamation of this Word itself. No science of history can verify this assertion - either to confirm or to reject it; for it is beyond the sphere of historical observation to say that in this Word and its proclamation God has acted.

The science of history becomes a crisis for faith only by virtue of this stumbling-block - that the word of the Christian message asserts that it is the authentic Word of God; because man would like to verify the unverifiable assertion, and demands to have criteria, where in the very nature of the matter there can be none.

The same stumbling-block, however, is also at the root of the crisis that comes from a consideration of the history of religion in general. It is quite true that, in the eyes of history, Christianity is one relative phenomenon among others. But the offensive Christian assertion is, in fact, just this: that a relative, historical phenomenon - namely, this particular message - is God's Word. And this crisis is a constant one.

The crises induced in faith by natural and historical science are only to be welcomed. They bring the constant and for the most part latent crisis of faith into the open; they compel reflection on the real nature of faith, throwing into relief the question of decision for or against faith -- the question

of decision which is never a question of knowledge gained by research and preservable as a possession, but is always a question of the will, of openness for the moment, which cannot therefore be decided by any science. Further, and above all, faith enters upon such a crisis when it is confused with something else when it is neither combatted nor questioned, but is given up even while one thinks one is holding fast to it and deepening it. The usual confession of faith is its confusion with a Weltanschauung, or with mystical religiosity. How far this implies a crisis for faith need not be discussed after our earlier description of its nature. Both certainly imply flight from the moment, from its enigma, from its claim, from decision, from love. It is precisely by means of them that man, in fleeing from surrender to the moment, tries to hold fast to himself, and to make himself secure and to be master of himself. In a Weltanschauung and in mysticism, most fundamentally of all it is man's faith in himself that holds sway - and therefore it is the opposite of faith in God. And man's faith in himself always means a crisis for faith in God. If faith in God understands paying heed to the call of the moment as the claim of the 'thou' which confronts me, as the call to love, then the crisis of Christian faith in God is always at the same time the crisis of love.

What is the relevance of a lecture on the crisis of faith in the framework of a lecture in citizenship? In citizenship we may be concerned with gaining knowledge that is to lead to action, or with achieving a frame of mind that is to govern our action. To the question "What am I to do?" however, Christian faith has but a single answer: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!"

This command to love is not a program, not an ethical theory, nor a principle, from which isolated moral demands can be evolved in such a way as to be generally applicable. On the contrary, such an understanding would only confuse the issue. The Christian command to love keeps telling me in my particular moment what I have to do, so that in this moment, as one who loves, I hear the claim of the 'Thou' which confronts me, and discover what I have to do in that capacity. If the rule is still found necessary, it is very simply given by allusion to the Ten Commandments. For all that they say is, according to the word of Paul (Romans 13:9), summed up in the one word, - "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". And he who expects something more or greater may be reminded of that dialogue between the father and son in Dostoyevsky's *A Raw Youth*. In the face of the terrifying prophetic picture of a world catastrophe the son asks:

"Yes, but what are we to do?"

"For heaven's sake, don't rush things so. This won't happen as soon as all that. But generally, to do nothing is best of all. At least then you have your easy conscience and can say you haven't gotten involved in anything."

"Come off it; keep to the subject. I want to know what I should actually do, and how I should live."

"What you should do, my dear chap? Be honest, don't tell lies, don't covet your neighbor's house - in a word, read the Ten Commandments. It is all written down there once and for all."

"Hold it, hold it. That's all so ancient, and what's more, these are mere words. What we want is some action!"

"Oh, well, if boredom's getting you down too much for you to stand, then try to gain the love of somebody or something, or, simply, put your heart into something."

"You are only jolly well mocking me! And then, how am I to begin just with the Ten Commandments alone?"

"If you'll only fulfill them despite all your questions and doubts, then you will be a great man."

-from *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, SCM Press, London, 1955