

THE LAOS HOUSE  
of  
THE AUSTIN EXPERIMENT

christian faith-and-life community

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THE LAIC THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

COMMUNITY STUDIES I-B: HUMAN EXISTENCE AS FAITH-UNFAITH

Wherever it is recognized that the power of death has been broken, wherever the world of death is illumined by the miracle of the resurrection and of the new life, there, no eternities are demanded of life but one takes of life what it offers, not all or nothing but good and evil, the important and the unimportant, joy and sorrow; one neither clings convulsively to life nor casts it frivolously away. One is content with the allotted span and one does not invest earthly things with the title of eternity; one allows to death the limited rights which it still possesses. It is from beyond death that one expects the coming of the new man and of the new world, from the power by which death has been vanquished.

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This leads us away from any kind of abstract ethic and towards an ethic which is entirely concrete. What can and must be said is not what is good once and for all, but the way in which Christ takes form among us here and now. The attempt to define that which is good once and for all has, in the nature of the case, always ended in failure. Either the proposition was asserted in such general and formal terms that it retained no significance as regards its contents, or else one tried to include in it and elaborate the whole immense range of conceivable contents, and thus to say in advance what would be good in every single conceivable case; this led to a casuistic system so unmanageable that it could satisfy the demands neither of general validity nor of concreteness. The concretely Christian ethic is beyond formalism and casuistry. Formalism and casuistry set out from the conflict between the good and the real, but the Christian ethic can take for its point of departure the reconciliations, already accomplished, of the world with God and the man Jesus Christ and the acceptance of the real man by God.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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ORIENTATION - The Indicative and Imperative of Faith

This session will take the form of a discussion which will serve the purpose of a review of the first pre-requisite: CS-I - The Meaning of Human Existence.



LECTURE ONE - Life is Openness or The Faith to Affirm the World

seminar one - Existence as Affirmation

Assigned Reading

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich: Christ the Church and the World (CR)

Read all. Study paragraphs 1-8.

Supplementary Reading

Articles from CR

From the Book of Genesis: It Is Very Good

Niebuhr, H. R.: Evangelical and Protestant Ethics

Books

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich: Prisoner for God, New York:  
Macmillan Company, 1954

Fromm, Erich: The Art of Loving, New York:  
Harper & Brothers, 1956

Shute, Nevil: On the Beach, New York: Signet Book, D1562

LECTURE TWO - Life is Decision or The Faith to Be Creative

seminar two - Existence as Ambiguity

Assigned Reading

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich: Freedom (CR)

Read all. Study paragraphs 1-10.

Supplementary Reading

Articles from CR

From the Book of Luke: Ah, Wilderness!

Michaelson, Carl: Christian Faith and Existential Freedom

Books

Kierkegaard, Soren: Fear and Trembling, New York:  
Doubleday Anchor Book, A30

DeBeauvoir, Simone: The Ethics of Ambiguity, New York:  
Philosophical Library, 1948

Dostoevsky, Fyodor: The Idiot, Baltimore: Penguin Books, L54



LECTURE THREE - The Unfaith of Weakness or Escape in Illusion

seminar three - The Way of Flight

Assigned Reading

Kierkegaard, Soren: Sickness unto Death

Read pp. 162; 175-194. Study pp. 182-194\*

Supplementary Reading

Articles from CR

From the Book of Genesis: The Birthright

Niebuhr, H. R.: Man the Sinner

Books

Niebuhr, Reinhold: An Interpretation of Christian Ethics,  
New York: Meridian, LA1.

Jung, C. G.: Modern Man in Search of a Soul, New York:  
Harvest, HB 2

Williams, Tennessee: Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, New York:  
Signet Book, S1590

LECTURE FOUR - The Unfaith of Strength on Escape in Defiance

seminar four - The Way of Contempt

Assigned Reading

Kierkegaard, Soren: Sickness unto Death

Read pp. 194-207. Study pp. 194-200\*

Supplementary Reading

Articles from CR

From the Book of Kings: Thou Art the Man

Dostoevsky, Fyodor: The Grand Inquisitor

Books

Kierkegaard, S. K.: The Concept of Dread, New Jersey:  
Princeton, 1944

Jaspers, Karl: Man in the Modern Age, New York:  
Doubleday Anchor Books, A 101

Camus, Albert: The Fall, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957

\* Page numbers are from the book by Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling and Sickness unto Death, New York: Anchor Book, A 30.



## CHRIST, THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

by

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

### The Concept of Reality

Whoever wishes to take up the problem of a Christian ethic must be confronted at once with a demand which is quite without parallel. He must from the outset discard as irrelevant the two questions which alone impel him to concern himself with the problem of ethics, "How can I be good?" and "How can I do good?", and instead of these he must ask the utterly and totally different question "What is the will of God?" This requirement is so immensely far-reaching because it presupposes a decision with regard to the ultimate reality; it presupposes a decision of faith. If the ethical problem presents itself essentially in the form of enquiries about one's own being good and doing good, this means that it has already been decided that it is the self and the world which are the ultimate reality. The aim of all ethical reflection is, then, that I myself shall be good and that the world shall become good through my action. But the problem of ethics at once assumes a new aspect if it becomes apparent that these realities, myself and the world, themselves lie embedded in a quite different ultimate reality, namely, the reality of God, the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer. What is of ultimate importance is now no longer that I should become good, or that the condition of the world should be made better by my action, but that the reality of God should show itself everywhere to be the ultimate reality. Where there is faith in God as the ultimate reality, all concern with ethics will have as its starting-point that God shows Himself to be good, even if this involves the risk that I myself and the world are not good but thoroughly bad. All things appear distorted if they are not seen and recognized in God. All so-called duty, all laws and standards, are mere abstractions so long as there is no belief in God as the ultimate reality. But when we say that God is the ultimate reality, this is not an idea, through which the world as we have it is to be sublimated. It is not the religious rounding-off of a profane conception of the universe. It is the acceptance in faith of God's showing forth of Himself, the acceptance of His revelation. If God were merely a religious idea there would be nothing to prevent us from discerning, behind this allegedly "ultimate" reality, a still more final reality, the twilight of the gods and the death of the gods. The claim of this ultimate reality is satisfied only insofar as it is revelation, that is to say, the self-witness of the living God. When this is so, the relation to this reality determines the whole of life. The apprehension of this reality is not merely a gradual advance towards the discovery of ever more profound realities; it is the crucial turning-point in the apprehension of reality as a whole. The ultimate reality now shows itself to be at the same time the initial reality, the first and last, alpha and omega. Any perception or apprehension of things or laws without Him is now abstraction, detachment from the origin and goal. Any enquiry about one's own goodness, or the goodness of the world, is now impossible unless enquiry has first been made about the goodness of God. For without God what meaning could there be in a goodness of man and a goodness of the world? But God as the ultimate reality is no other than He who shows forth, manifests and reveals Himself, that is to say, God in Jesus Christ, and from this it follows that the question of good can find its answer only in Christ.



The point of departure for Christian ethics is not the reality of one's own self, or the reality of the world; nor is it the reality of standards and values. It is the reality of God as He reveals Himself in Jesus Christ. It is fair to begin by demanding assent to this proposition of anyone who wishes to concern himself with the problem of a Christian ethic. It poses the ultimate and crucial question of the reality which we mean to reckon with in our lives, whether it is to be the reality of the revelational word of God or earthly imperfections, whether it is to be resurrection or death. No man can decide this question by himself, by his own choice, without deciding it wrongly, for it presupposes the answer given, namely that, whatever our decision may be, God has already spoken His word of revelation, and even in the false reality we cannot live otherwise than through the true reality of the word of God. Thus when we ask about the ultimate reality we are thereby at once inescapably bound by the answer to our question. For the question conveys us into the midst of its origin, the reality of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

3 The problem of Christian ethics is the realization among God's creatures of the revelational reality of God in Christ, just as the problem of dogmatics is the truth of the revelational reality of God in Christ. The place which in all other ethics is occupied by the antithesis of "should be" and "is", idea and accomplishment, motive and performance, is occupied in Christian ethics by the relation of reality and realization, past and present, history and event (faith), or, to replace the equivocal concept with the unambiguous name, the relation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The question of good becomes the question of participation in the divine reality which is revealed in Christ. Good is now no longer a valuation of what is, a valuation, for example, of my own being, my outlook or my actions, or of some condition or state in the world. It is no longer a predicate that is assigned to something which is in itself in being. Good is the real itself. It is not the real in the abstract, the real which is detached from the reality of God, but the real which is detached from the reality of God, but the real which possesses reality only in God. There is no good without the real, for the good is not a general formula, and the real is impossible without the good. The wish to be good consists solely in the longing for what is real in God. A desire to be good for its own sake, as an end in itself, so to speak, or as a vocation in life, falls victim to the irony of unreality. The genuine striving for good now becomes the self-assertiveness of the prig. Good is not in itself an independent theme for life; if it were so it would be the craziest kind of quixotry. Only if we share in reality can we share in good.

4 It is a fundamentally mistaken formulation of the question that gives rise to the old dispute about whether it is only the will, the mental act or the person that can be good, or whether goodness may also be predicated of performance, achievement or success, and, if so, which of these two precedes the other and which is more important. This dispute has found its way even into theology, and there, as elsewhere, it has been the source of serious errors. It tears asunder what by its origin and essence forms a unity, namely, the good and the real, man and his work. To object that Christ, too, had this distinction between person and work in view in His saying about the good tree that brings forth good fruit (Matt. 7:17) is to distort the meaning of this saying of Jesus into its exact opposite. What is meant by this saying is not that first the person and then the work is good, but that only the two together are good or bad, in other words that the two together are to be understood as a single unit. The same holds true of the distinction which has been drawn by Reinhold Niebuhr, the American philosopher of religion, in his use of the two concepts "moral man" and "immoral society". The distinction which is intended here



between individual and society is a purely abstract one, just as is that between the person and work. In such a case one is tearing asunder things which are inseparable and examining separately parts which in isolation from each other, are dead. The consequence is that complete ethical aporia which nowadays goes by the name of "social ethics".

Naturally, if good is supposed to lie in the conformity of something that is with something that should be, then the relatively more massive resistance which is offered by society to that which should be must necessarily lead to an ethical favouring of the individual at the expense of society. (And conversely it is precisely this circumstance which suggests that this concept of the ethical has its sociological origin in the age of individualism.)

The question of good must not be reduced to an examination of the motives or consequences of actions by applying to them some ready-made ethical yardstick. An ethic of motives or of mental attitudes is as superficial as an ethic of practical consequences. For what right have we to stop short at the immediate motive and to regard this as the ultimate ethical phenomenon, refusing to take into account the fact that a "good" motive may spring from a very dark background of human consciousness and unconsciousness and that a "good attitude" may often be the source of the worst of actions? And just as the question of its consequences finally disappear from view in the mists of the future. On both sides there are no fixed frontiers and nothing justifies us in calling a halt at some point which we ourselves have arbitrarily determined so that we may at last form a definitive judgment. Whether one pursues the line of the ethic of motives or that of the ethic of consequences, it is a matter of sheer expediency, dependent on the conjunctures of the times, that in practice one always ends with some such arbitrary setting of limits. In principle neither of these has anything to commend it in preference to the other, for in both of them the question of good is posed in abstract terms and in isolation from reality. Good is not the correspondence between a criterion which is placed at our disposal by nature or grace and whatever entity I may designate as reality. Good is reality itself, reality seen and recognized in God. The question of good embraces man with his motives and purposes, with his fellow-men and with the entire creation around him; it embraces reality as a whole, as it is held in being by God. The divine words "Behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31) refer to the whole of creation. The good demands the whole, not only the whole of a man's outlook but his whole work, the whole man, together with the fellow-men who are given to him. When sense would it have if only a part were to be called good, a motive perhaps, while the action is bad, or if the reverse were the case? Man is an indivisible whole, not only as an individual in his person and work but also as a member of the community of men and creatures in which he stands. This indivisible whole, this reality which is founded on God and apprehended in Him, is what the question of good has in view. With respect to its origin this indivisible whole is called "creation". With respect to its goal it is called the "kingdom of God". Both of these are equally remote from us and equally close to us, for God's creation and God's kingdom are present with us solely in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

5 Participation in the indivisible whole of the divine reality - this is the sense and the purpose of the Christian enquiry concerning good. For the sake of avoiding a misunderstanding, there is need at this point of some further clarification of what is meant here by reality.

6 There is a way of basing ethics upon the concept of reality which differs entirely from the Christian way. This is the positive and empirical approach, which aims at the entire elimination from ethics of the concept of norms and standards because it regards this concept as being merely the idealization of factual and practically expedient attitudes.



Fundamentally, according to this view, the good is no more than what is expedient, useful and advantageous to reality. From this it follows that there is no universal good but only an infinitely varying good which is determined in each case of the basis of "reality". This conception is undoubtedly superior to the idealist conception in that it is "closer to reality". Good does not consist here in an impossible "realization" of what is unreal, the realization of ethical ideas. It is reality itself that teaches what is good. The only question is whether the reality that is intended here is capable of satisfying this demand. It now transpires that the concept of reality which underlies the positivistic ethic is the meretricious concept of the empirically verifiable, which implies denial of the origin of this reality in the ultimate reality, in God. Reality, understood in this inadequate sense, cannot be the source of good, because all it demands is complete surrender to the contingent, the casual, the adventitious and the momentarily expedient, because it fails to recognize the ultimate reality and because in this way it destroys and abandons the unity of good.

7 The Christian ethic speaks in a quite different sense of the reality which is the origin of good, for it speaks of the reality of God as the ultimate reality without and within everything that is. It speaks of the reality of the world as it is, which possesses reality solely through the reality of God. Christian belief deduces that the reality of God is not in itself merely an idea from the fact that this reality of God has manifested and revealed itself in the midst of the real world. In Jesus Christ the reality of God entered into the reality of this world. The place where the answer is given, both to the question concerning the reality of God and to the question concerning the reality of the world, is designated solely and alone by the name Jesus Christ. God and the world are comprised in this name. In Him all things consist (Col. 1:17). Henceforward one can speak neither of God nor of the world without speaking of Jesus Christ. All concepts of reality which ~~do not take account~~ of Him are abstractions. When good has become reality in Jesus Christ, there is no more force in any discussion of good which plays off what should be against what is and what is against what should be. Jesus Christ cannot be identified either with an ideal or standard or with things as they are. The hostility of the ideal towards things as they are, the fanatical putting into effect of an idea in the face of resisting actuality, may be as remote from good as is the sacrifice of what should be to what is expedient. Both what should be and what is expedient acquire in Christ an entirely new meaning. The irreconcilable conflict between what is and what should be is reconciled in Christ, that is to say, in the ultimate reality. Participation in this reality is the true sense and purpose of the enquiry concerning good.

8 In Christ we are offered the possibility of partaking in the reality of God and in the reality of the world, but not in the one without the other. The reality of God discloses itself only by setting me entirely in the reality of the world, and when I encounter the reality of the world it is always already sustained, accepted and reconciled in the reality of God. This is the inner meaning of the revelation of God in the man Jesus Christ. Christian ethics enquires about the realization in our world of this divine and cosmic reality which is given in Christ. This does not mean that "our world" is something outside the divine and cosmic reality which is in Christ, or that it is not already part of the world which is sustained, accepted and reconciled in Him. It does not mean that one must still begin by applying some kind of "principle" to our situation and our time. The enquiry is directed rather towards the way in which the reality in Christ, which for a long time already has comprised us and our world within itself, is taking effect as something now present, and towards the way in which life may be conducted in this reality. Its purpose



is, therefore, participation in the reality of God and of the world in Jesus Christ today, and this participation must be such that I never experience the reality of God without the reality of the world or the reality of the world without the reality of God.

### Thinking in Terms of Two Spheres

As soon as we try to advance along this path, our way is blocked by the colossal obstacle of a large part of traditional Christian ethical thought. Since the beginnings of Christian ethics after the times of the New Testament the main underlying conception in ethical thought, and the one which consciously or unconsciously has determined its whole course, has been the conception of a juxtaposition and conflict of two spheres, the one divine, holy, supernatural and Christian, and the other worldly, profane, natural and un-Christian. This view becomes dominant for the first time in the Middle Ages, and for the second time in the pseudo-Protestant thought of the period after the Reformation. Reality as a whole now falls into two parts, and the concern of ethics is with the proper relation of these two parts to each other. In the scholastic scheme of things the realm of the natural is made subordinate to the realm of grace; in the pseudo-Lutheran scheme the autonomy of the orders of this world is proclaimed in opposition to the law of Christ, and in the scheme of the Enthusiasts the congregation of the Elect takes up the struggle with a hostile world for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. In all these schemes the cause of Christ becomes a partial and provincial matter within the limits of reality. It is assumed that there are realities which lie outside the reality that is in Christ. It follows that these realities are accessible by some way of their own, and otherwise than through Christ. However great the importance which is attached to the reality in Christ, it still always remains a partial reality amid other realities. The division of the total reality into a sacred and a profane sphere, a Christian and a secular sphere, creates the possibility of existence in a single one of these spheres, a spiritual existence which has no part in secular existence, and a secular existence which can claim autonomy for itself and can exercise this right of autonomy in its dealings with the spiritual sphere. The monk and the nineteenth-century Protestant secularist typify these two possibilities. The whole of medieval history is centred upon the theme of the predominance of the spiritual sphere over the secular sphere, the predominance of the regnum gratiae over the regnum naturae; and the modern age is characterized by an ever increasing independence of the secular in its relations with the spiritual. So long as Christ and the world are conceived as two opposing and mutually repellent spheres, man will be left in the following dilemma: he abandons reality as a whole, and places himself in one or other of the two spheres. He seeks Christ without the world, or he seeks the world without Christ. In either case he is deceiving himself. Or else he tries to stand in both spaces at once and thereby becomes the man of eternal conflict, the kind of man who emerged in the period after the Reformation and who has repeatedly set himself up as representing the only form of Christian existence which is in accord with reality.

10 It may be difficult to break the spell of this thinking in terms of two spheres, but it is nevertheless quite certain that it is in profound contradiction to the thought of the Bible and to the thought of the Reformation, and that consequently it aims wide of reality. There are not two realities, but only one reality, and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world. Sharing in Christ we stand at once in both the reality of God and the reality of the world. The reality of Christ comprises the reality of the world within itself. The world has no reality of its own, independently of the revelation of God in Christ. One is denying the revelation of God in



Jesus Christ if one tries to be "Christian" without seeing and recognizing the world in Christ. There are, therefore, not two spheres, but only the one sphere of the realization of Christ, in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united. Thus the theme of the two spheres, which has repeatedly become the dominant factor in the history of the Church, is foreign to the New Testament. The New Testament is concerned solely with the manner in which the reality of Christ assumes reality in the present world, which it has already encompassed, seized and possessed. There are not two spheres, standing side by side, competing with each other and attacking each other's frontiers. If that were so, this frontier dispute would always be the decisive problem of history. But the whole reality of the world is already drawn in into Christ and bound together in Him, and the movement of history consists solely in divergence and convergence in relation to this centre.

Thought which is conducted in terms of two spheres regards such pairs of concepts as secular and Christian, natural and supernatural, profane and sacred, and rational and revelational, as though they were ultimate static antitheses, serving to designate certain mutually exclusive entities. It fails to recognize the original unity of these opposites in the reality of Christ, and in the place of this true unity it sets the forced unity of some sacred or profane system in which these contradictory concepts are combined. In such a system the static antagonism persists. But these things assume quite a different form with the recognition of the divine and cosmic reality in Christ. The world, the natural, the profane and reason are now all taken up into God from the outset. They do not exist "in themselves" and "on their own account". They have their reality nowhere save in the reality of God, in Christ. It is now essential to the real concept of the secular that it shall always be seen in the movement of being accepted and becoming accepted by God in Christ. Just as in Christ the reality of God entered into the reality of the world, so, too, is that which is Christian to be found only in that which is of the world, the "supernatural" only in the natural, the holy only in the profane, and the revelational only in the rational. The unity of the reality of God and of the world, which has been accomplished in Christ, is repeated, or, more exactly, is realized, ever afresh in the life of men. And yet what is Christian is not identical with what is of the world. [The natural is not identical with the supernatural or the revelational with the rational.] But between the two there is in each case a unity which derives solely from the reality of Christ, that is to say solely from faith in this ultimate reality. This unity is seen in the way in which the secular and the Christian elements prevent one another from assuming any kind of static independence in their mutual relations. They adopt a polemical attitude towards each other and bear witness precisely in this to their shared reality and to their unity in the reality which is in Christ. Just as Luther engaged in polemics on behalf of the secular authority against the extension of ecclesiastical power by the Roman Church, so, too, must there be a Christian or "spiritual" polemic reply to the secular element when there is a danger that this element may make itself independent, as was the case soon after the Reformation and especially in nineteenth-century German secularist Protestantism. In both of these polemical protests the process is the same: men's attention is called to the divine and cosmic reality - Jesus Christ. Luther was protesting against Christianity which was striving for independence and detaching itself from the reality in Christ. He protested with the help of the secular and in the name of a better Christianity. So, too, today, when Christianity is employed as a polemical weapon against the secular, this must be done in the name of a better secularity, and above all it must not lead back to a static predominance of the spiritual sphere as an end in itself. It is only in this sense, as a polemical unity, that Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms is to be accepted, and it was no doubt in this sense that it was originally intended.



To think in terms of spheres is to think statically and is therefore, theologically speaking, to think in terms of laws. That is easy to demonstrate. If the secular becomes an independent realm by itself, then the fact of the world having been taken up into Christ is denied. It is denied that the reality of the world has its basis in the reality of the revelation, and this in turn implies denial of the gospel which is addressed to the whole world. The world is not apprehended as being reconciled by God in Christ, but rather it is seen either as a region which is still entirely subject to the claims of the Christian sector or else as one which opposes the law of Christ with a law of its own. If the Christian sector presents itself as an independent entity, then the world is denied that fellowship into which God entered with the world in Jesus Christ. A Christian law is established which condemns the law of the world and is maintained in an irreconcilable struggle against the world which God has reconciled with Himself. Law always engenders lawlessness; nomism leads to antinomism; perfectionism to libertinism. The present case is no exception. A world which stands by itself, in isolation from the law of Christ, falls victim to licence and self-will. A Christianity which withdraws from the world falls victim to the unnatural and the irrational, to presumption and self-will.

12 Ethical thinking in terms of spheres, then, is invalidated by faith in the revelation of the ultimate reality in Jesus Christ, and this means that there is no real possibility of being a Christian outside the reality of the world and that there is no real worldly existence outside the reality of Jesus Christ. There is no place to which the Christian can withdraw from the world, whether it be outwardly or in the sphere of the inner life. Any attempt to escape from the world must sooner or later be paid for with a sinful surrender to the world. It is after all a matter of experience that when the gross sins of sex have been overcome they are succeeded by covetousness and avarice, which are equally gross sins even though the world may treat them less severely. The cultivation of a Christian inner life, untouched by the world, will generally present a somewhat tragicomical appearance to the worldly observer. For the sharp-sighted world recognizes itself most distinctly at the very point where the Christian inner life deceives itself in the belief that the world is most remote. Whoever professes to believe in the reality of Jesus Christ, as the revelation of God, must in the same breath profess his faith in both the reality of God and the reality of the world; for in Christ he finds God and the world reconciled. And for just this reason the Christian is no longer the man of eternal conflict, but, just as the reality in Christ is one, so he, too, since he shares in this reality in Christ, is himself an undivided whole. His worldliness does not divide him from Christ, and his Christianity does not divide him from the world. Belonging wholly to Christ, he stands at the same time wholly in the world.

13 Even when we have appealed to the reality in Christ in order to overcome this thinking in terms of spheres, we are still confronted with another important question. Are there really no ultimate static contraries, no spaces which are separated from one another once and for all? Is not the Church of Jesus Christ such a space, a space which is cut off from the space of the world? And, finally, is not the kingdom of the devil a space of this kind, and one which will never enter into the kingdom of Christ?

14 Undoubtedly the New Testament contains statements about the Church which fit in with the conception of a space. One may think, for example, of the representation of the Church as a temple, a building, a house, and even as a body. And one may conclude from this that, when it is a question of describing the Church as the visible congregation of God on earth, it is impossible to avoid the notion of space. The Church does indeed occupy



a definite space in the world, a space which is delimited by her public worship, her organizations and her parish life, and it is this fact that has given rise to the whole of the thinking in terms of spheres. It would be very dangerous to overlook this, to deny the visible nature of the Church, and to reduce her to the status of a purely spiritual force. For this would be to render ineffective the fact of the revelation of God in the world, and to transform Christ Himself into a spirit. It is essential to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ that it occupies space within the world. But, of course, it would be entirely wrong to interpret this space in a purely empirical sense. If God in Jesus Christ claims space in the world, even though it be only a stable "because there was no room in the inn" (Luke 2:7), then in this narrow space He comprises together the whole reality of the world at once and reveals the ultimate basis of this reality. And so, too, the Church of Jesus Christ is the place, in other words the space in the world, at which the reign of Jesus Christ over the whole world is evidenced and proclaimed. This space of the Church, then, is not something which exists on its own account. It is from the outset something which reaches out far beyond itself, for indeed it is not the space of some kind of cultural association such as would have to fight for its own survival in the world, but it is the place where testimony is given to the foundation of all reality in Jesus Christ. The Church is the place where testimony and serious thought are given to God's reconciliation of the world with Himself in Christ, to His having so loved the world that He gave His Son for its sake. The space of the Church is not there in order to try to deprive the world of a piece of its territory, but precisely in order to prove to the world that it is still the world, the world which is loved by God and reconciled with Him. The Church has neither the wish nor the obligation to extend her space than she needs for the purpose of serving the world by bearing witness to Jesus Christ and to the reconciliation of the world with God through Him. The only way in which the Church can defend her own territory is by fighting not for it but for the salvation of the world. Otherwise the Church becomes a "religious society" which fights in its own interest and thereby ceases at once to be the Church of God and of the world. And so the first demand which is made of those who belong to God's Church is not that they should be something in themselves, not that they should, for example, set up some religious organization or that they should lead lives of piety, but that they shall be witnesses to Jesus Christ before the world. It is for this task that the Holy Spirit equips those to whom He gives Himself. It is, of course, to be assumed that this testimony before the world can be delivered in the right way only if it springs from a hallowed life in the congregation of God. But a genuine hallowed life in the congregation of God differs from any pious imitation of it in that it at the same time impels a man to testify before the world. If this testimony ceases to be given, that is a sign of the inner corruption of the congregation, just as the absence of fruit is the sign of the decay of the tree.

<sup>15</sup> If one wishes to speak, then, of the space or sphere of the Church, one must bear in mind that the confines of this space are at every moment being overrun and broken down by the testimony of the Church to Jesus Christ. And this means that all mistaken thinking in terms of spheres must be excluded, since it is deleterious to the proper understanding of the Church.

<sup>16</sup> So far we have been speaking of the world only in the sense of the world which is reconciled with God in Christ. We have spoken of reality always in the sense of the reality which is taken up, maintained and reconciled in God. And it is in this sense that we have had to reject all thinking that is conducted in terms of two spheres. But this still leaves open the question whether the "world", if by this we understand the "disordered" world



which has fallen under the power of the devil, and whether sinful reality ought perhaps to be conceived as a space or realm which is established in opposition to the Church or to the kingdom of Christ. Is perhaps the final static antinomy which justifies this thinking in terms of two spheres the antinomy of the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the devil? At first sight this question appears to demand an affirmative answer, yet when it is examined more closely it is in itself by no means conclusive. Christ and His adversary, the devil, are mutually exclusive contraries; yet the devil must serve Christ even against his will; he desires evil, but over and over again he is compelled to do good; so that the realm or space of the devil is always only beneath the feet of Jesus Christ. But if the kingdom of the devil is taken to mean that world which "lies in disorder", the world which has fallen under the devil's authority, then here, especially, there is a limit to the possibility of thinking in terms of spheres. For it is precisely this "disordered" world that in Christ is reconciled with God and that now possesses its final and true reality not in the devil but in Christ. The world is not divided between Christ and the devil, but, whether it recognizes it or not, it is solely and entirely the world of Christ. The world is to be called to this, its reality in Christ, and in this way the false reality will be destroyed which it believes that it possesses in itself as in the devil. The dark and evil world must not be abandoned to the devil. It must be claimed for Him who has won it by His incarnation, His death and His resurrection. Christ gives up nothing of what He has won. He holds it fast in His hands. It is Christ, therefore, who renders inadmissible the dichotomy of a bedevilled and a Christian world. Any static delimitation of a region which belongs to the devil and a region which belongs to Christ is a denial of the reality of God's having reconciled the whole world with Himself in Christ.

17 That God loved the world and reconciled it with Himself in Christ is the central message proclaimed in the New Testament. It is assumed there that the world stands in need of reconciliation with God but that it is not capable of achieving it by itself. The acceptance of the world by God is a miracle of the divine compassion. For this reason the relation of the Church to the world is determined entirely by the relation of God to the world. There is a love for the world which is enmity towards God (Jas. 4:4) because it springs from the nature of the world as such and not from the love of God for the world. The world "as such" is the world as it understands itself, the world which resists and even rejects the reality of the love of God which is bestowed upon it in Jesus Christ. This world has fallen under the sentence which God passes on all enmity to Christ. It is engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the Church. And yet it is the task and the essential character of the Church that she shall impart to precisely this world its reconciliation with God and that she shall open its eyes to the reality of the love of God, against which it is blindly raging. In this way it is also, and indeed especially, the lost and sentenced world that is incessantly drawn in into the event of Christ.

18 It is hard to abandon a picture which one has grown accustomed to using for the ordering of one's ideas and concepts. And yet we must leave behind us the picture of the two spheres, and the question now is whether we can replace it with another picture which is equally simple and obvious.

19 We shall need above all to direct our gaze to the picture of the body of Christ Himself, who became man, was crucified and rose again. In the body of Jesus Christ God is united with humanity, the whole of humanity is accepted by God, and the world is reconciled with God. In the body of Jesus Christ God took upon himself the sin of the whole world and bore it. There is no part of the world, be it never so forlorn and never so



godless, which is not accepted by God and reconciled with God in Jesus Christ. Whoever sets eyes on the body of Jesus Christ in faith can never again speak of the world as though it were lost, as though it were separated from Christ; he can never again with clerical arrogance set himself apart from the world. The world belongs to Christ, and it is only in Christ and the world is what it is. It has need, therefore, of nothing less than Christ Himself. Everything would be ruined if one were to try to reserve Christ for the Church and to allow the world only some kind of law, even if it were a Christian law. Christ died for the world, and it is only in the midst of the world that Christ is Christ. Only unbelief can wish to give the world something less than Christ. Certainly it may have well-intentioned pedagogical motives for this course, but these motives always have a certain flavour of clerical exclusiveness. Such a course implies failure to take seriously the incarnation, the crucifixion and the bodily resurrection. It is a denial of the body of Christ.

<sup>20</sup> If we now follow the New Testament in applying to the Church the concept of the body of Christ, this is not by any means intended primarily as representing the separation of the Church from the world. On the contrary, it is implicit in the New Testament statement concerning the incarnation of God in Christ that all men are taken up, enclosed and borne within the body of Christ and that this is just what the congregation of the faithful are to make known to the world by their words and by their lives. What is intended here is not separation from the world but the summoning of the world into the fellowship of this body of Christ, to which in truth it already belongs. This testimony of the Church is foreign to the world; the Church herself, in bearing this testimony, finds herself to be foreign to the world. Yet even this is always only an ever-renewed consequence of that fellowship with the world which is given in the body of Christ. The Church is divided from the world solely by the fact that she affirms in faith the reality of God's acceptance of man, a reality which is the property of the whole world. By allowing this reality to take effect within herself, she testifies that it is effectual for the whole world.

<sup>21</sup> The body of Jesus Christ, especially as it appears to us on the cross, shows to the eyes of faith the world in its sin, and how it is loved by God, no less than it shows the Church, as the congregation of those who acknowledge their sin and submit to the love of God.

<sup>22</sup> God and the world are thus at one in Christ in a way which means that although the Church and the world are different from each other, yet there cannot be a static, spatial borderline between them. The question now is how one is to conceive this distinction between Church and world without relapsing into spatial terms. Here one must go to the Bible itself for advice, and the Bible has its answer ready.



FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS: IT IS VERY GOOD

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was a desolate waste, with darkness covering the abyss and a tempestuous wind raging over the surface of the waters.

Then God said, "Let there be light!"

And there was light; and God saw that the light was good. God then separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness night. Evening came, and morning, the first day.

Then God said,

"Let there be a firmament in the middle of the waters to divide the waters in two!"

And so it was. God made the firmament, dividing the waters that were below the firmament from those that were above it; and God called the firmament sky. Evening came, and morning, the second day.

Then God said,

"Let the waters below the sky be gathered into one place so that the dry land may appear!"

And so it was. God called the dry land earth, and the gathered waters seas. God saw that it was good.

Then God said,

"Let the earth produce vegetation, seed-bearing plants and the various kinds of fruit-trees that bear fruit containing their seed!"

And so it was. The earth brought forth vegetation, the various kinds of seed-bearing plants and the various kinds of trees that bear fruit containing their seed. God saw that it was good. Evening came, and morning, the third day.

Then God said,

"Let there be luminaries in the firmament of the sky to separate day from night; let them serve for signs, for fixed times, and for days and years; and let them serve as luminaries in the firmament of the sky to shed light on the earth!"

And so it was. God made the two great luminaries, the greater luminary to rule the day and the smaller one to rule the night - and the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the sky to shed light on the earth, to rule by day and by night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good. Evening came, and morning, the fourth day.

Then God said,

"Let the waters teem with shoals of living creatures, and let birds fly over the earth across the firmament of the sky!"

And so it was. God created the great sea-monsters and all the various kinds of living, gliding creatures with which the waters teem, and all the various kinds of winged birds. God saw that it was good, and God blessed them, saying,

"Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters in the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth!"

Evening came, and morning, the fifth day.

Then God said,

"Let the earth bring forth the various kinds of living creatures, the various kinds of domestic animals, reptiles, and wild beasts of the earth!"

And so it was. God made the various kinds of wild beasts of the earth, the various kinds of domestic animals, and all the various kinds of land reptiles; and God saw that it was good.

Then God said,

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the domestic animals, the wild beasts, and all the land reptiles!"

So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; he created both male and female. Then God blessed them, and God said to them,

"Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the domestic animals, and all the living things that crawl on the earth!"

Further, God said,

"See, I give you all the seed-bearing plants that are found all over the earth, and all the trees which have seed-bearing fruit; it shall be yours to eat. To all the wild beasts of the earth, to all the birds of the air, and to all the land reptiles, in which there is a living spirit, I give all the green plants for food."

And so it was. God saw that all that he had made was very good. Evening came, and morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their host. On the seventh day God brought his work to an end on which he had been engaged, desisting on the seventh day from all his work in which he had been engaged. So God blessed the seventh day, and consecrated it, because on it he had desisted from all his work, in doing which God had brought about creation.



## EVANGELICAL AND PROTESTANT ETHIC

by H. Richard Niebuhr

A strangely duality manifests itself in every human movement. Perhaps it is the inner contradiction in man which comes to appearance in the double-minded character of political, scientific, cultural, and religious revolutions and revivals. Monarchies and tyrannies arise in protests against the rule of the strong but also as assertions of such rule. Democratic revolutions contend for the right of the people to govern themselves but also for the right of a special group -- church members or property holders or industrial workers -- to direct them. Natural science enters upon its great career under the double motto of obedience to the laws of nature and of power over its forces. Nations and cultures come into existence as representatives of a universal cause and as exponents of particular interests; communism and Russianism, democracy and Gallicanism or Americanism, the sovereignty of law and Roman imperialism, rationalism and Hellenism accompany each other like non-identical and competitive twins. In religious history this duality and internal contradiction are also manifest. Hebraic universalism and particularism are contradictory and inseparable. Rejecting the proposition that a particular people has been chosen by the God of heaven and earth, the church asserts the same statement in a new form. Catholicism and Romanism or Catholicism and Anglicanism go hand in hand; pietism, stressing the primary importance of heart religion, concentrates attention on external behavior; theological idealism asserts the absolute dependence of man on God and the primacy of the religious consciousness.

Protestantism which from the beginning has been keenly aware of this aspect of man's misery is itself subject to the law it has discerned. Some of the ways in which this internal contradiction appears in their own history have been called to the attention of modern Protestants. Historical inquiry has illuminated the antitheses and cooperations of church and sect principles, of Capitalism and Calvinism, of nationalism and the Reformation, of stateism and Lutheranism, of bibliolatry and dependence on the Word of God, of individualism and the idea of the priesthood of all believers, of legalism and liberty. Yet the illusion easily arises that while other men and organizations are beset by internal contradiction, we, in our own theological movement or denomination, are happily delivered from the body of this death. The Calvinist can discern the ambiguity in Lutheranism; the Lutheran sees the mote in Geneva's eye; the sectarian understands what is wrong with the churchman; the Barthian analyzes inerrantly the fallacies in Brunner; the double-mindedness of Kultur-Protestantismus is as plain as a pike-staff to the church-theologian, etc., etc. The great fact remains that we cannot see the beams in our own eyes, and that we can only be thankful that the Lord has constituted the church a society for the mutual extraction of motes and beams.

Yet what cannot be seen in particular may be understood in general. Though each individual Christian man or group in Protestantism may be unable to discern the contradiction in himself or itself, it is possible, within limits, to understand something of the contradiction which exists in modern Protestantism as a whole. The antitheses are discernible in theology, polity and worship; but they are most evident in Protestant and Evangelical ethics.

These two terms, Protestant and Evangelical, may be used to designate the two tendencies. On the one hand we note in our answers to the question, "What shall I do?" a defensive temper which regards Protestantism as a way of life, once and for all established, which must be maintained and defended against internal and external enemies. These defensive answers in their organization we shall call the Protestant ethics. On the other hand the question may be and is answered by the simple statement, so rich in implications, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This answer with all those implications we shall name the Evangelical ethics.

### Protestant Ethics

The defensive or Protestant ethics has as many forms as Protestantism itself, yet all of them show a family resemblance. In each of them Protestant men express their pride in and their concern for the conservation of those achievements which are credited to the Reformers, however variously the nature and relative value of these achievements are defined. In each Protestants express their antagonism to destructive forces which seem to threaten those achievements and the Protestant way of life. In each there is expressed high awareness of one or the other of the negative principles of the Reformation: the doctrine of radical evil in man, the rejection of the authoritarian church, of tradition, the suspicion of reason and natural law. In each the positive content of the ethics is derived from tradition, though now from Protestant rather than medieval tradition.

One form of the defensive Protestant ethics is that which has been dubbed Kultur-Protestantismus. It is the social religion of a large part of Western civilization and is intimately connected with national, political, and economic ways of thought and behavior. Sometimes it is very conservative as in the case of fundamentalist groups where Protestant ethics is often identified with the prevailing mores of a static culture and with defense against all experimental types of behavior, whether in the realm of amusements, or of property-holding and union-organization, or of ecclesiastical organization. Protestant ethics here appears as strict obedience to the traditions established in sectarian and revivalistic days on the one hand, in the days of agrarian capitalism and early democracy on the other. Dominantly an ethics of prohibitions, it seems to be founded on a deep suspicion of sinful man, especially of sinful youth and of the sinful outside "world." Its representatives live in fear of the destructive effects on the established folkways of communism, Catholicism and liberalism, of science and literary criticism; avowedly biblicistic, this ethic is actually based much more on the traditions of the elders than on scriptures, as the prominence of prohibitions against drinking, dancing, and card-playing and interest in the maintenance of rather unbiblical economic and political institutions indicate.

The extreme antithesis of this ethics seems to appear there where Protestantism is identified with socialism and even, occasionally, with communism. Here the culture with which Protestantism is allied consists of a new set of economic institutions and practices. Yet a certain identification between Protestantism and the new culture is regarded as justified by the antagonism of both to Roman Catholicism and of defensive Romanism to both.



The most prevalent kind of culture Protestantism, however, is to be found in neither of these extremes but in the great middle where the institutions of liberal, democratic, industrial, scientific culture are closely associated with the achievements of the Reformation and where the defense of such institutions with the aid of religion is the central concern. This kind of Protestantism may show more or less willingness to modify the institutions and also the religion in order that the "democratic, liberal, and Protestant way of life" may be conserved. But one thing stands out in its ethics: the utilitarian interest in promoting a faith for the sake of saving from external attack and internal decay the habits of life that have been sanctioned by tradition. That it is a pleasant tradition, that the mode of life which it enjoins is satisfying to those who follow it, that its rules serve many human values, that it enables people of different faiths to get along with each other in non-religious matters, that it provides for desirable reforms -- all this may be quite evident. But it is also clear that this great median cultural ethics of defensive Protestantism is less interested in the transformation of life by grace than in the conservation of a kind of life once radically changed by grace or by the proclamation of a doctrine of grace.

It is remarkable how much of the current revival of interest in religion expresses itself through defensive Roman Catholicism. But Protestantism is also a beneficiary of the movement. A new interest in Puritanism is manifested by men who realize that democracy would not have arisen without the convictions of Puritanism and that without something like them it cannot be maintained. A new interest in the doctrine of God may appear in the form of concern for the foundations of modern science. Oswald Spengler called attention to the tendency in dying civilizations (we might better say in civilizations which believe that they are threatened with death) to revive the religion of the culture's creative period. Cultural Protestantism in our time seems to illustrate his thesis. Churchmen and non-churchmen now often turn to religion -- what man does not? -- with the idea that once upon a time this world was in a much happier state than it is now, that a fall from joy and order has taken place, that this fall was connected with the abandonment of the religion of the fathers, and that if the religion can only be re-established all may yet be well. There may be some truth in this widespread cultural myth, though theology will point out the fallacies of equating the time of man's innocency with a cultural era; such as that of the thirteenth, or of the sixteenth, or of the eighteenth century, and of identifying the fall from grace with such an historic event as the coming of the Reformation, or the Renaissance, or the Enlightenment, or the Industrial Revolution. In any case, the ethics of liberal culture Protestantism is the ethics of modern culture, restored, improved, revised. Its principles are those of anti-authoritarianism, or individual religious, intellectual, and political liberty, or of the sacredness of personality. It is a Protestantism which justifies itself by calling attention to its social works and expects to be justified in the historical judgment by its continued production of socially valued effects.

The second species of Protestant ethics is made up of many families of ecclesiastical defensive moralities. In them the moral question to which answers are sought is not, "What must we do to save our culture?" but rather, "What must we do to save our church and its way of life?" It is assumed that part of the church was reformed by the Reformers and that Christianity now consists of ordered and disordered parts. Right polity, right teaching, right belief have been established, it is believed, in Protestantism or in the particular variety of Protestantism in

question. Sex life and the family, at least in principle, have been rightly ordered since the aberrations of medieval monasticism have been eliminated; a Christian doctrine of vocation has been substituted for a false one; right relations of church and state have been established. Such defensive morality may be more liberal, seeking some changes in the traditional Protestant ways of life or more conservative, resisting all changes. But in either case the emphasis is on the maintenance of tradition, though the tradition which the Reformers rejected is also rejected and the one that began with them is affirmed. So it is a characteristic of contemporary Protestant scholarship that it seeks in the writings of its Fathers -- of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Edwards--sanctions for the ethical decisions it needs to make in social life with the same avidity and inventiveness that Roman Catholic scholars employ in the exegesis of Thomas Aquinas or Jewish rabbis in the analysis of the Torah.

Defensive Protestantism, of course, appears not only in these social forms but also in highly individualized fashion. It has often been pointed out that the revolt against legalism which characterized the Reformation issued in a new kind of legalism, that is, in a new manifestation of the old spirit of rigorous obedience to laws, accompanied by the fears of punishment and the hopes of reward which mark such morality. Where this spirit obtains, whether in Judaism or in Christianity, whether in Roman Catholicism or in Protestantism, morality has a defensive character. Man seeks to justify himself by his works; he wrestles with the problem of making God friendly toward him; he lives in fear of the divine righteousness; his activities are accompanied neither by confidence in God nor by thankfulness but by distrust of the divine good will and by the feeling that the Lord is a hard taskmaster. Men who have been nurtured in Protestantism find it hard to deny that such an attitude is widely prevalent in it or that it is not nurtured by the very manner in which Protestant doctrine is transmitted from generation to generation. The narrow and fearsome spirit which characterized the second generation of Puritans in America and was represented by a Cotton Mather manifests itself in one way or another in every group. In one case, indeed, it may appear as a meticulous concern for correct religious belief, in another case as fearsome respect for taboos in eating and drinking--especially drinking, in still a third as a careful suppression of every angry or self-regarding thought. But whether it is more concerned with spiritual or with carnal sin, with perfection in conduct or perfection in belief, it is always the same spirit of negative and self-conscious morality. It is not wholly an accident or a mistake that in popular literature Protestants are more frequently chosen than Catholics to exemplify this narrow, self-defensive and uncreative morality. It is doubtless fallacious to seek for the sources of this perversion of the gospel in the Protestant formulations of the Christian creed or the Reformed doctrine of the Christian life, since moral decision and personal, religious relations are not based on conceptual propositions, whatever the service these may render the life of practical reason. Sin is not correlated with doctrines about sin; it does not abound more nor is it diminished where doctrines of sin abound. It is only remarkable that Protestantism itself illustrates that prevalence of that human moral orientation which it tends to associate in peculiar fashion with Roman Catholic doctrine and polity; and that it makes evident in its own history and actions man's unconquerable desire to defend and justify himself by his good works as well as to identify his social or personal culture with God's revelation of his will.



Evangelical Ethics

If only defensive and self-justifying morality had appeared in the Reformation that event would have little Christian significance, whatever political or cultural meaning it might have. If only defensiveness in ethics characterized its historic successors, Christian faith today would turn away from their churches and rites to find its wellsprings elsewhere as once it turned away from defensive medieval religion. Of course, the Reformation contained negative and defensive elements. Its exponents were sometimes more aware of human sin than of divine grace, more conscious of the pope's errors in granting indulgence than of the truth in Christ's forgiveness, more afraid of earthly enemies than confident of heavenly friendship. But it was also and perhaps dominantly the expression of an affirmative and joyful, a positive and creative Christian life. However much the motives of a life according to man were mixed up in it with the motives of citizenship in the City of God, the latter were gloriously present. These gave the sixteenth century movement elan and power and whenever in later days the spirit rather than the letter of the Reformation has been manifest among its "children after the flesh" these motives have again been evident, however mixed with defensiveness and fearful self-justification. We have called the positive movement and orientation of the Christian life Evangelical ethics, using a term which the Reformers themselves preferred to such words as Protestant or Reformed. The name, of course, is a matter of relative indifference so long as the thing itself is adequately located and described.

Evangelical ethics cannot be located, as a self-justifying temper always seeks to do, by looking for it in the self and one's own community, or in any isolated person or group. We cannot fix it by looking for it in Luther rather than in Calvin or in Calvin rather than in Luther, in sectarian rather than in ecclesiastical Protestantism or vice versa. To be sure we are more aware of its presence when we read Isaiah than when we study Leviticus, when we identify ourselves with Paul than when we do so with the author of II Peter, and when we look at God and ourselves with the aid of Calvin than when we do so under the guidance of Cotton Mather. But the spirit of Evangelical ethics is not discernible in men; it exists only in the relations of men to God and of God to men. It is as erroneous to look for it in men or churches as it is fallacious to look for manifestations of magnetism in steel filings in the absence of a magnet.

The chief descriptive statement which can be made about this Evangelical ethics is that it is the mode of life which issues out of a positive relation to God, as that relation is established by, through, and with Jesus Christ. It is theocentric ethics. It is the ethics which accompanies a dominant orientation of the self and the community toward the action of God. This is the grand idea which pervades the utterances of a Luther and a Calvin and which is symbolized by such phrases as "The Sovereignty of God" and "Justification by Faith", which is set forth in many variations in the Sermon on Good Works and in the Institutes. As the prophets call upon Israelites to drop their preoccupation with the maneuvers of their mundane enemies and with their own religious activities to turn their eyes to the workings of the living God, so the Reformers out of their own experience of the mighty deeds of God proclaim, "We are not our own; therefore let us as far as possible forget ourselves and all things that are ours; we are God's; to him therefore let us live and die."

The distinction of this dynamically theocentric spirit in ethics from some of its specious surrogates will help make its character more evident. Because God is not known in his might and favor without the aid of a fallible authority it is easy to substitute pedagogical authority for the reality to which it directs attention. In Roman Catholicism that temptation had resulted in concentration on the church so that Roman Catholic ethics tended to become the morality of those who were always oriented toward the church, listening to its commandments in the first place, and watching its deeds as the most important in the world. The Reformers were assured that the authority of the Bible was a corrective to this tendency and that the Bible could always be counted on to point away from itself to the God-in-Christ and Christ-in-God to whom it bore witness. Yet sometimes they themselves and more frequently their successors looked away from the living God to whom the Bible pointed and oriented themselves toward the Bible itself. The consequence was then a new legalism in which the question was no longer, "What doth the Lord require of thee?" but, "What does the Bible demand?" A god-centered ethics, however, looks with the Bible through the Bible to the Lord of the Scriptures. Similar reflections about the Spirit who leads men to God-in-Christ and Christ-in-God apply to the spiritualistic and subjectivistic perversion of Evangelical ethics, to the confusions of the authority of religious experience and of conscience with the God to whom they bear witness. Evangelical ethics, however, is not oriented toward the inner spirit or conscience but toward the transcendent God revealing himself in mighty acts--above all in the mighty act of Jesus Christ.

God-centered ethics is partly definable also by noting its differences from those orientations of life in which the center of attention is occupied by the negative counterparts of theo-centrism. The acknowledgment that God saves us by his grace has as its negative counterpart the conviction that we do not save ourselves from moral and spiritual death by our works. An ethics, however, which takes the latter conviction as its starting point will differ widely and radically from one which begins with the former. It will be an ethics of despair rather than of hope, a negatively humanistic rather than a positively theistic ethics. And it cannot but fall into a new defensiveness, though what will now be defended will not be man's righteousness but perhaps physical life or wealth or a recognizedly temporal and sinful culture. Again, the negative counterpart of the realization that God is holy is the realization that men are all profane and that they fall short of his glory in everything they do. But an ethics which starts with the realization of human ingloriousness, profaneness and sinfulness and in which men keep their eyes centered on the sin which stains all human acts will be profoundly different from the ethics of the glory of God. Evangelical ethics is God-centered, not sin-centered. When our fundamental orientation in life is that of persons who live vis a vis our own sinful selves rather than vis a vis God, the spirit of Evangelical ethics takes flight no less surely than when we live in the contemplation of our own righteousness.

It is, secondly, characteristic of Evangelical ethics that it is the mode of life which issues out of faith in God. Faith and God, as Luther often pointed out, belong together. In Evangelical ethics faith is not a virtue which can be added to other moral excellencies. It is rather the root and ground of all man's free actions. The direction of man's loyalty and trust gives direction to every act he performs, so that if he speaks with the tongues of men and of angels and sells all his goods to feed the poor but has not faith in God, these acts not only profit him nothing but are destructive of self and of others. The conduct of life issues out of the central faith,



not as conclusions are drawn from premises but as fruit derives from trees. Men are so created that they cannot and do not live without faith. They must trust in a god, such as their own reason, or civilization, or one of the many other idols to which they look for salvation from meaningless existence. Hence the great ethical question is always the question of faith, "In what does man trust?" Moral reasoning always builds on the explicit or implicit answer given to this prior question. A mode of life that is not founded on faith in God is necessarily founded on some other faith. There is no faithless ethics. Moreover, it is clear to us in the Evangelical situation that God, the Lord of heaven and earth, the One we deal with in all our dealings, is never absent from us as we make our choices and guide our conduct in the directions given by our loyalties to idols. We can take no neutral attitude toward God. In our very acts of trust in idols we affirm our distrust of God; in our choices of good under the guidance of our loyalty to the self we reject the divine claim to our loyalty. There is no atheistic morality; it is either theistic or anti-theistic. If we do not trust God we distrust Him, however much we may seek to hide this fact from ourselves by pretending to ignore Him.

The recognition of this deep connection between conduct and faith is mated then with the understanding that the reformation of faith is the reformation of life and that the great work of Christ for moral beings is his work as the renewer and transformer of faith. He redeems us by reconciling us to God, by winning us out of our distrust and fear of the Holy One, by drawing us away from our despairing trust in idols and in self. Faith in God is the gift of God through Jesus Christ and with that faith all things are given, including the transformation of human conduct.

Evangelical ethics is not, of course, the result of these insights but the result of "faith" itself. When statements about faith are substituted for faith in God, only perverted forms of Evangelical ethics can result, for then belief is substituted for trust and loyalty. When that takes place, as has often occurred and will often occur, our real trust is directed not toward God but toward a system of truths on which we depend for salvation from sin and death. A new idol has then taken the place of the old and a new legalism supplanted the old system of demands. A related perversion of Evangelical ethics issues in anti-nomianism rather than in legalism. This seems to happen when faith is separated from its divine object and when the subjective condition of confidence is made the object of trust. Then we say to ourselves that we are saved by faith rather than that God alone saves us and allow ourselves to do whatever we can do with confidence rather than those things which we can do with trust in God, the Father of Jesus Christ, and in loyalty to Christ. We are sometimes encouraged in this perversion of faith-ethics by our habit of reducing our fundamental principles to a kind of shorthand. For the statement that God saves us by faith we substitute the proposition that we are saved by faith and with the aid of this device theocentric ethics may become fido-centric ethics. So also for the commandment that we ought to love God and our neighbor we often substitute the statement that love is the law of life and so both indicate and encourage the substitution of a love-centered morality for a God-centered one. But Evangelical ethics is not an ethics of faith; it is the ethics of that faith in God which is given by, in, and through Jesus Christ.

Such God-centered, faith-founded ethics is, in the third place, an ethics of freedom. Freedom is not a third and accidental attribute but belongs with God and faith as faith and God belong together. Where faith in God is present the self is

free from concern for itself. It has not achieved freedom from self-concern, but has been set free by God through the gift of faith in him. It is able to accept itself as the forgiven self and as one which will continually be forgiven by God, not as though He did not take the self's sin seriously but as though He were determined to make it good and right, to redeem it from every physical and spiritual disease by whatever mild or harsh medicines and surgery are necessary. In the contemplation of Christ the mind moved by the spirit of repentance discovers at one and the same time how bound the moral self is to itself and how great was the freedom of Jesus Christ in this respect. Then with the repentance and faith given through him, the divine possibility appears, that men can and will be free from self-concern as Christ was free.

With freedom from slavery to the self goes freedom from bondage to the physical and cultural values without which we think that we cannot live. How strict that bondage is, how heavily its chains lie on every thought and aspiration of men the whole history of our common and personal moral life indicates. Because the Jews had to cling to their culture with its values as the only reality that gave significance to their own existence they rejected Jesus Christ; and for the same reasons we who call ourselves Christians reject him over and over again. We cannot believe that if we will seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness all other things necessary to us will be given in free abundance. Do we know what is necessary and do we not know that these things do not come to us without anxious thought? Hence we compromise the ethics of the gospel with the ethics of culture in many and devious ways. But with the gift of faith in God the possibility of freedom from this bondage arises into view as a promise that will be redeemed and is being redeemed. It does happen, not merely in visions of an eschatological future but in moments when eternity breaks into time that by faith God enables men to say, "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill; God's truth abideth still; His Kingdom is forever." It is in such moments that the Evangelical ethics appears as a mode of life in freedom which, though impossible to man, is being made possible by God.

Another aspect of this freedom is release from bondage to the law. So long as the direct relation to God called faith does not exist or so long as the direct relation to him is one of distrust, we are necessarily under the authority of moral traditions, of churches, and states. They require us to do those things which, in their more or less fallible recognition of the nature of reality, are known to be necessary if we are to survive as men in communities. They must prohibit those deeds which arise out of our deep distrust of that reality and of one another. The direct encounter with God, the recognition that on our own part of His omnipotence and goodness changes the bondage to men and their laws into a bondage to God. With that change there comes a great conversion of the power, spirit and content of the law. The law which is known to be God's not one ascribed to him by men, has a force that compels obedience. Known, moreover, as the demand of the One who is wholly good toward us, it takes on the character of counsel while bondage turns into the freedom of sonship. And again the content of the law known as law of God undergoes a metamorphosis; what was important becomes unimportant, what was insignificant becomes great. How these things can be, Paul and the Reformers have described over and over again. But the truth of what they have said only becomes apparent to us when we find ourselves in the Evangelical situation, while everything they have said is twisted into something different when we are defensive and self-justifying.

The freedom of the Evangelical mode of life is not only a freedom from but also a freedom to. How it is a freedom to love the neighbor Luther has wonderfully described. How it sets men free to deal creatively with the social and personal situations that confront them and to respond with inventiveness and artistry to the challenges they meet needs to be set forth more fully than has yet been done in either Catholic or Reformed theologies. In the thought of the Eastern church, as partly represented by Berdyaev, something of this dimension of Evangelical morality has been suggested though in connection with a dubious metaphysics of freedom. The free creativity of a faith-in-God morality can be illustrated by the works of a Paul and of many a lesser Christian, but its analysis in theology remains incomplete. Creative morality is not bound by rule, though it knows all the rules. It does not meet the changing situations of life with the repetition of acts found good in the past, but with deeds that fit the immediate situation, recognized as a situation in the kingdom of God. Taught by faith in the creating God, it discerns beauty and glory where these had been hidden to the distrustful eye and in the Master's workshop produces moral works of art. The tragic element is doubtless always in them since they are the works of forgiven sinners in a world of sin and forgiveness. Nevertheless they are creative and new.

Finally, the Evangelical mode of life may be described as momentary in character. It is not a life that plans far ahead to insure the future, whether in heaven or on earth. It knows that God ties the present and the future together and that no provision for the morrow is necessary to the life which He redeems. Because the future is in the hands of Love therefore man is free to do the right thing now, that is, to love his neighbor. Because God is Lord of the present no less than of the future therefore the temporally insignificant deed may have more eternity in it than the one designed to outlast the years. Evangelical ethics does not underscore the melancholy wisdom of the world that all our pomp is to be reduced to ashes or that "the best-laid plans of mice and men gang aft a-gley." It sets this wisdom in the positive context of the affirmation that what has been done to the least of the brothers has been done unto Him and that one day in the Lord's sight may be a thousand years. This "momentariness" which gets its meaning only from the presence of the eternal God who is Lord of both present and future is always offensive to our calculating human reason. Yet its apparent recklessness is deeply wise in the context of faith-knowledge.

Karl Barth has remarked that Luther wrote beautifully about Christian liberty--far too beautifully. It is easy to write too enthusiastically about the Evangelical ethics, as though the divine possibility for man had become a human possibility through the Incarnation and even through the Reformation. But it is also easy to write too sceptically about it, as though divine possibility were only a future event and as though God were not redeeming his promises and realizing his possibilities in this present world. The faith of the disciples remains smaller than a mustard seed and they remove no mountains; but it is not non-existent and sometimes they cast out demons by the power of God. The freedom to which Christ sets them free is used as the occasion for new bondage; but cribbed and confined as they are in themselves, sometimes they do free deeds and perform acts of liberation. The rule of God does not appear in their works so that men say, "Lo, here it is." But sometimes it appears in lightning flashes that illuminate the dark scene of self-justifying, defensive human life and give evidence of the energy waiting to be received and pressing into human existence.



The ethics of the Reformation with its duality of works-righteousness and faith-righteousness, of self-righteousness and righteousness in God, of life in the world of sin and life in the world of forgiveness is a testimony to the fact that the Christian lives between the times and between the worlds. But it is only the Evangelical element in that ethics that makes it Christian. Take that away and all that is left is an ethics of North European civilization, or of capitalism, or of democracy, or, perhaps, of socialism, or of that amorphous social religion called Protestantism.



## FREEDOM\*

We must therefore conclude our analysis of the structure of responsible action by speaking of freedom.

Responsibility and freedom are corresponding concepts. Factually, though ~~not~~ chronologically, responsibility presupposes freedom and freedom can consist only in responsibility. Responsibility is the freedom of men which is given only in the obligation to God and to our neighbour.

The responsible man acts in the freedom of his own self, without the support of men, circumstances or principles, ~~but~~ with a due consideration for the given human and general conditions and ~~for~~ the relevant questions of principle. The proof of his freedom is the fact that nothing can answer for him, nothing can exonerate him, except his own deed and his own self. It is he himself who must observe, judge, ~~weigh up, decide and~~ act. It is man himself who must examine the motives, the prospects, the value and the purpose of his action. But neither the purity of the motivation, nor the opportune circumstances, nor the value, nor the significant purpose of an intended undertaking can become the governing law of his action, a law to which he can withdraw, to which he can appeal as an authority, and by which he can be exculpated and acquitted. For in that case he would indeed no longer be truly free. The action of the responsible man is performed in the obligation which alone gives freedom and which gives entire freedom, the obligation to God and to our neighbour as they confront us in Jesus Christ. At the same time it is performed wholly within the domain of relativity, wholly in the twilight which the historical situation spreads over good and evil; it is performed in the midst of the innumerable perspectives in which every given phenomenon appears. It has not to decide simply between right and wrong and between good and evil, but between right and right and between wrong and wrong. As Aeschylus said, 'right strives with right'. Precisely in this respect responsible action is a free venture; it is not justified by any law; it is performed without any claim to a valid self-justification, and therefore also without any claim to an ultimate valid knowledge of good and evil. Good, as what is responsible, is performed in ignorance of good and in the surrender to God of the deed which has become necessary and which is nevertheless, or for that very reason, free; for it is God who sees the heart, who weighs up the deed, and who directs the course of history.

With this there is disclosed to us a deep secret of history in general. The man who acts in the freedom of his own most personal responsibility is precisely the man who sees his action finally committed to the guidance of God. The free deed knows itself in the end as the deed of God; the decision knows itself as guidance; the free venture knows itself as divine necessity. It is in the free abandonment of knowledge of his own good that a man performs the good of God. It is only from this last point of view that one can speak of good in historical action. We shall have to take up these considerations again later at the point at which we have left off.

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\* Ethics - Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Before that we still have to give some space to a crucial question which makes an essential contribution to the clarification of our problem. What is the relationship between free responsibility and obedience? It must seem at first sight as though everything we have said about free responsibility is applicable in practice only when a man finds himself in what we call a 'responsible position' in life, in other words when he has to take independent decisions on the very largest scale. What connexion can there be between responsibility and the monotonous daily work of the labourer, the factory worker, the clerk, the private soldier, the apprentice or the schoolboy? It is a different matter already with the owner-farmer, the industrial contractor, the politician or statesman, the general, the master craftsman, the teacher and the judge. But in their lives, too, how much there is of technique and duty and how little of really free decision! And so it seems that everything that we have said about responsibility can in the end apply only to a very small group of men, and even to these only in a few moments of their lives; and consequently it seems as though for the great majority of men one must speak not of responsibility but of obedience and duty. This implies one ethic for the great and the strong, for the rulers, and another for the small and the weak the subordinates; on the one hand responsibility and on the other obedience, on the one hand freedom and on the other subservience. And indeed there can be no doubt that in our modern social order, and especially in the German one, the life of the individual is so exactly defined and regulated, and is at the same time assured of such complete security, that it is granted to only very few men to breathe the free air of the wide open spaces of great decisions and to experience the hazard of responsible action which is entirely their own. In consequence of the compulsory regulation of life in accordance with a definite course of training and vocational activity, our lives have come to be relatively free from ethical dangers; the individual who from his childhood on has had to take his assigned place in accordance with this principle is ethically emasculated; he has been robbed of the creative moral power, freedom. In this we see a deep-seated fault in the essential development of our modern social order, a fault which can be countered only with a clear exposition of the fundamental concept of responsibility. As things stand, the large-scale experiential material for the problem of responsibility must be sought for among the great political leaders, industrialists and generals; for indeed those few others who venture to act on their own free responsibility in the midst of the pressure of everyday life are crushed by the machinery of the social order, by the general routine.

Yet it would be an error if we were to continue to look at the problem from this point of view. There is, in fact, no single life which cannot experience the situation of responsibility; every life can experience this situation in its most characteristic form, that is to say, in the encounter with other people. Even when free responsibility is more or less excluded from a man's vocational and public life, he nevertheless always stands in a responsible relation to other men; these relations extend from his family to his workmates. The fulfilment of genuine responsibility at this point affords the only sound possibility of extending the sphere of responsibility once more into vocational and public life. Where man meets man--and this includes the encounters of professional life--there arises genuine responsibility, and these responsible relationships cannot be supplanted by any general regulation or routine. That holds true, then, not only for the relation between married people, or for parents and children, but also for the master and the apprentice, the teacher and his pupil, the judge and the accused.



But we can go one step further than this. Responsibility does not only stand side by side with relationships of obedience; it has its place also within these relationships. The apprentice has a duty of obedience towards his master, but at the same time he has also a free responsibility for his work, for his achievement and, therefore, also for his master. It is the same with the schoolboy and the student, and indeed also with the employee in any kind of industrial undertaking and with the soldier in war. Obedience and responsibility are interlinked in such a way that one cannot say that responsibility begins only where obedience leaves off, but rather that obedience is rendered in responsibility. There will always be a relation of obedience and dependence; all that matters is that these should not, as they already largely do today, leave no room for responsibilities. To know himself to be responsible is more difficult for the man who is socially dependent than for the man who is socially free, but a relationship of dependence does not in any case in itself exclude free responsibility. The master and the servant, while preserving the relationship of obedience, can and should answer for each other in free responsibility.

The ultimate reason for this lies in that relation of men to God which is realized in Jesus Christ. Jesus stands before God as the one who is both obedient and free. As the obedient one He does His Father's will in blind compliance with the law which is commanded Him, and as the free one He acquiesces in God's will out of His own most personal knowledge, with open eyes and a joyous heart; He recreates this will, as it were, out of Himself. Obedience without freedom is slavery; freedom without obedience is arbitrary self-will. Obedience restrains freedom; and freedom ennobles obedience. Obedience binds the creature to the Creator, and freedom enables the creature to stand before the Creator as one who is made in His image. Obedience shows man that he must allow himself to be told what is good and what God requires of him (Micah 6.8); and liberty enables him to do good himself. Obedience knows what is good and does it, and freedom dares to act, and abandons to God the judgement of good and evil. Obedience follows blindly and freedom has open eyes. Obedience acts without questioning and freedom asks what is the purpose. Obedience has its hands tied and freedom is creative. In obedience man adheres to the decalogue and in freedom man creates new decalogues (Luther).

In responsibility both obedience and freedom are realized. Responsibility implies tension between obedience and freedom. There would be no more responsibility if either were made independent of the other. Responsible action is subject to obligation, and yet it is creative. To make obedience independent of freedom leads only to the Kantian ethic of duty, and to make freedom independent of obedience leads only to the ethic of irresponsible genius. Both the man of duty and the genius carry their justification within themselves. The man of responsibility stands between obligation and freedom; he must dare to act under obligation and in freedom; yet he finds his justification neither in his obligation nor in his freedom but solely in Him who has put him in this (humanly impossible) situation and who requires this deed of him. The responsible man delivers up himself and his deed to God.

We have tried to define the structure of responsible life in terms of deputyship, correspondence with reality, acceptance of guilt, and freedom. Now the demand for a more concrete formulation brings us to the question whether it is



possible to advance a more exact definition of the place, the locus, at which responsible life is realized. Does responsibility set me in an unlimited field of activity? Or does it confine me strictly within the limits which are implied in my daily concrete tasks? What must I know myself to be responsible for? And what does not lie within the scope of my responsibility? Is there any purpose in regarding myself as responsible for everything that takes place in the world? Or can I stand by and watch these great events as an unconcerned spectator so long as my own tiny domain is in order? Am I to wear myself out in impotent zeal against all the wrong and all the misery that is in the world? Or am I entitled, in self-satisfied security, to let the wicked world run its course, so long as I cannot myself do anything to change it and so long as I have done my own work? What is the place and what are the limits of my responsibility?

### VOCATION

In having recourse to this concept which has come to be of almost unique significance for the history of ethics, namely, the concept of the calling, we must from the outset bear clearly in mind the following four points. First of all we are not thinking here of the secularized concept of the calling which Max Weber defines as a 'limited field of accomplishments'. Secondly, we are not thinking of that pseudo-Lutheran view for which the concept of vocation simply provides the justification and sanctification of secular institutions. Thirdly, even Luther's own conception of vocation cannot unreservedly be identified with the New Testament conception, just as in his translation of Rom. 3:28 he very boldly ascribes to the New Testament concept (I Cor. 7:20) a fulness of meaning which is indeed essentially justified but which goes beyond the normal linguistic usage. We shall therefore base ourselves on the biblical text as we find it. Fourthly, even though the terms 'vocation' and 'responsibility' in our current language are not identical with the New Testament concepts, they nevertheless correspond so remarkably happily that there is especially good reason for employing them.

In the encounter with Jesus Christ man hears the call of God and in it the calling to life in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. Divine grace comes upon man and lays claim to him. It is not man who seeks out grace in its own place--God dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto (I Tim. 6:16), but it is grace which seeks and finds man in his place--the Word was made flesh (John 1:14)--and which precisely in this place lays claim to him. This is a place which in every instance and in every respect is laden with sin and guilt, no matter whether it be a royal throne, the parlour of a respectable citizen or a miserable hovel. It is a place which is of this world. This visitation of man by grace occurred in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and it occurs in the word of Jesus Christ which is brought by the Holy Ghost. The call comes to man as a Gentile or as a Jew, free man or slave, man or woman, married or single. At the precise place where he is he is to hear the call and to allow it to lay claim to him. This does not mean that servitude or marriage or celibacy in itself is thereby justified; but the man who has been called can in any of these places belong to God. It is only through the call which I have heard in Christ, the call of the grace which lays claim to me, that, as a slave or as a free man, married or celibate, I can live justified before God. From the standpoint of Christ this life is now my calling; from my own standpoint it is my responsibility.

This will have excluded two disastrous misunderstandings, the secular



Protestant one and the monastic one. It is not in the loyal discharge of the earthly obligations of his calling as a citizen, a worker and a father that a man fulfils the responsibility which is imposed on him, but it is in hearing the call of Jesus Christ. This call does indeed summon him to earthly duties, but that is never the whole of the call, for it lies always beyond these duties, before them and behind them. The calling, in the New Testament sense, is never a sanctioning of worldly institutions as such; its 'yes' to them always includes at the same time an extremely emphatic 'no', an extremely sharp protest against the world. Luther's return from the monastery to the world, to the 'calling', is, in the true New Testament sense, the fiercest attack and assault to be launched against the world since primitive Christianity. Now a man takes up his position against the world in the world; the calling is the place at which the call of Christ is answered, the place at which a man lives responsibly. Thus the task which is appointed for me in my calling is a limited one, but at the same time the responsibility to the call of Jesus Christ breaks through all limits.

The misunderstanding on the part of medieval monasticism does not lie in its recognition of the fact that the call of Jesus Christ involves man in a struggle against the world but in its attempt to find a place which is not the world and at which this call can, therefore, be answered more fitly. In this vain endeavour to escape from the world no serious consideration is given either to the 'no' of God, which is addressed to the whole world, including the monastery, or to God's 'yes' in which He reconciles the world with Himself. Consequently, even in its 'no' to the world, God's call is taken less seriously in the monastic undertaking than in the secular calling as Luther (though not indeed pseudo-Lutheranism) understood it. It is entirely in line with Luther if we say that in a certain concrete instance the answer to the call of Jesus Christ may even consist in leaving a particular earthly calling in which one can no longer live responsibly. This thought is unacceptable only to pseudo-Lutheranism, with its belief in the sanctity of vocational duties and of earthly institutions as such, and with its belief that the world is everywhere good. Monasticism is right in so far as it is a protest against the misrepresentation of the New Testament idea of vocation. Luther, in his return to the world, was concerned solely for the total responsibility to the call of Christ. In this respect the monastic solution is doubly wrong. It restricts the compass of ultimately responsible life to the walls of the monastery, and it can only interpret as worthless compromise the life in which a man endeavours to unite in concrete responsibility to the call of Jesus Christ the 'yes' and the 'no' to life in the world which are implicit in that call. In answer to this failure to appreciate the responsibility of men, Luther invested this responsibility with a significance which is limited and yet at the same time has its foundations in the limitless. While doing this he rewarded the fulfilment of the earthly calling in responsibility to the call of Jesus Christ with the free and joyful conscience which springs from fellowship with Jesus Christ. The good and free conscience, therefore, does not come from the fulfilment of earthly vocational duty as such, for here conscience continues to be wounded by the unresolved conflict between a plurality of duties, so that the best that can be hoped for is the compromise of a divided conscience. It is only when the concrete vocation is fulfilled in responsibility towards the call of Jesus Christ, it is only upon the foundation of the knowledge of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, that conscience can be free in concrete action. The call of Christ alone, when it is responsibly obeyed in the calling, prevails over the compromise and over the conscience which this compromise has rendered insecure.



It follows from this that on the one side the centre of my responsibility is determined by the call of Jesus Christ which is addressed to me.

Our enquiry as to the place and the limit of responsibility has led us to the concept of the calling. This answer is properly applicable only when the calling is understood simultaneously in all its dimensions. The calling is the call of Jesus Christ to belong wholly to Him; it is the laying claim to me by Christ at the place at which this call has found me; it embraces work with things and relations with persons; it demands a 'limited field of accomplishments', yet never as a value in itself, but in responsibility towards Jesus Christ. Through this relation to Christ the 'limited field of accomplishments' is freed from its isolation. Its boundary is broken through not only from above, that is to say by Christ, but also in an outward direction. If, for example, I am a physician, then in the concrete instance I serve not only my patients but also medical science and with it science and the knowledge of truth in general. Although in practice I perform this service at my concrete position, for example at the bedside of a patient, yet I am continuously aware of my responsibility for the whole, and it is only in this that I fulfil my calling. Furthermore, it may happen that I, as a physician, am obliged to recognize and fulfil my concrete responsibility no longer by the sick-bed but, for example, in taking public action against some measure which constitutes a threat to medical science or to human life or to science as such. Vocation is responsibility and responsibility is a total response of the whole man to the whole of reality; for this very reason there can be no petty and pedantic restricting of one's interests to one's professional duties in the narrowest sense. Any such restriction would be irresponsibility. The essential character of free responsibility makes it impossible to establish laws defining when and to what extent such a departure from the 'limited field of accomplishments' forms part of a man's calling and of his responsibility towards men. Such a departure can be undertaken only after a serious weighing up of the vocational duty which is directly given, of the dangers of interference in the responsibility of others, and finally of the totality of the question which is involved; when this is done I shall be guided in the one direction or the other by a free responsibility towards the call of Jesus Christ. Responsibility in one's calling obeys only the call of Christ. There is a wrong and a right restriction and there is a wrong and a right extension of responsibility; there is an enthusiastic breaking-down of all limits, and there is a legalistic setting-up of limits. It is difficult, or even impossible, to judge from outside whether in a particular concrete instance an action is responsible or whether it is enthusiastic or legalistic; there are, however, criteria for self-examination, though even these cannot afford complete certainty about one's own ego. The following are among such criteria. Neither the limitation nor the extension of my responsibility must be based on a principle; the only possible basis for them is the concrete call of Jesus. If I know myself to be by character inclined towards reforming zeal, towards knowing better and towards fanaticism and unrestraint, then I shall be in danger of extending my responsibility in an arbitrary fashion and confusing my natural impulses with the call of Jesus. If I know myself to be prudent, cautious, diffident and law-abiding, then I shall have to guard against representing the restriction of my responsibility to a narrow field as the call of Jesus Christ. And, finally, it is never in thinking of myself, but it is always in thinking of the call of Christ, that I shall be set free for genuine responsibility.

Nietzsche, without knowing it, was speaking in the spirit of the New



Testament when he attacked the legalistic and philistine misinterpretation of the commandment which bids us love our neighbour. He wrote: 'You are assiduous in your attentions to your neighbour and you find beautiful words to describe your assiduity. But I tell you that your love for your neighbour is a worthless love for yourselves. You go to your neighbour to seek refuge from yourselves and then you try to make a virtue of it; but I see through your "unselfishness"... Do I advise you to love your neighbour? I advise you rather to shun your neighbour and to love whoever is furthest from you!' Beyond the neighbour who is committed to us by the call of Jesus there stands also for Jesus the one who is furthest from us, namely, Jesus Christ Himself, God Himself. If beyond his neighbour a man does not know this one who is furthest from him, and if he does not know this one who is furthest from him as this neighbour, then he does not serve his neighbour but **himself**; he takes refuge from the free open space of responsibility in the comforting confinement of the fulfilment of duty. This means that the commandment of love for our neighbour also does not imply a law which restricts our responsibility solely to our neighbour in terms of space, to the man whom I encounter socially, professionally or in my family. My neighbour may well be one who is extremely remote from me, and one who is extremely remote from me may well be my neighbour. By a terrible miscarriage of justice in the United States in 1831 nine young negroes, whose guilt could not be proved, were sentenced to death for the rape of a white girl of doubtful reputation. There arose a storm of indignation which found expression in open letters from some of the most authoritative public figures in Europe. A Christian who was perturbed by this affair asked a prominent cleric in Germany whether he, too, ought not to raise his voice in the matter, and on the grounds of the "Lutheran" idea of vocation, that is to say, on the grounds of the limitation of his responsibility, the clergyman refused. In the event the protests which came in from all parts of the world led to a revision of the judgement. Here perhaps it is from the point of view of the call of Jesus Christ that we may understand the saying of Nietzsche: 'My brothers, I do not counsel you to love your neighbour; I counsel you to love him who is furthest from you.' We do not say this in order to pass judgement in the particular case in which we have just referred. We say it in order to keep open the boundary.

No one can fail to hear the Bible's admonitions to do what is waiting to be done (Eccl. 9:10), to be exact in small matters (Luke 16:10 and 19:17), to discharge one's domestic obligations before undertaking greater duties (I Tim. 3:5), and to refrain from interfering in the functions of others (I Pet. 4:15). Yet all these admonitions are contingent on the call of Christ and they do not, therefore, imply any law which sets limits to the free responsibility towards this call. In the course of the struggle of the churches in Germany it happened often enough that a minister refused to intervene publicly and responsibly in cases of distress and persecution of various kinds precisely because his own flock were not yet themselves affected; he did not do this from cowardice or from lack of enterprise but solely because he considered such an intervention to be an unlawful overstepping of the calling which had been given to him, namely, his vocation to assist his flock in their distress and in their temptations. If subsequently his own flock came to be involved, then there often ensued an act of thoroughly authoritative and free responsibility. This again is not said in order to anticipate judgment but in order to preserve the openness of the commandment of brotherly love in the face of any false limitation and in order to safeguard the concept of vocation in the liberty with which the gospel invests it.



But is not all responsible action in one's calling confined within inviolable limits by the law of God as it is revealed in the ten commandments as well as by the divine mandates of marriage, labour and government? Would not any overstepping of these limits constitute an infringement of the manifest will of God? Here there arises once again in its most acute form the problem of law and liberty. This problem now threatens to implant a contradiction in the will of God itself. Certainly there can be no responsible action which does not devote extremely serious consideration to the limit which is given through God's law, and yet it is precisely responsible action which will not separate this law from its Giver. It is only as the Redeemer in Jesus Christ that responsible action will be able to recognize the God who holds the world in order by His law; it will recognize Jesus Christ as the ultimate reality towards which it is responsible, and it is precisely by Him that it will be set free from the law for the responsible deed. For the sake of God and of our neighbour, and that means for the sake of Christ, there is a freedom from the keeping holy of the Sabbath, from the honouring of our parents, and indeed from the whole of the divine law, a freedom which breaks this law, but only in order to give effect to it anew. The suspension of the law can only serve the true fulfilment of it. In war, for example, there is killing, lying and expropriation solely in order that the authority of life, and truth and property may be restored. A breach of the law must be recognized in all its gravity. 'Blessed art thou if thou knowest what thou doest; but if thou knowest it not, then art thou accursed and a transgressor of the law' (Luke 6:4 in Codex D). Whether an action arises from responsibility or from cynicism is shown only by whether or not the objective guilt of the violation of the law is recognized and acknowledged, and by whether or not, precisely in this violation, the law is hallowed. It is in this way that the will of God is hallowed in the deed which arises from freedom. But since this is a deed which arises from freedom, man is not torn asunder in deadly conflict, but in certainty and in unity with himself he can dare to hallow the law truly even by breaking it.



FROM THE GOSPEL OF LUKE: AH WILDERNESS

Jesus returned from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit and he was led by the Spirit to spend forty days in the desert, where he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during that time and afterward he felt very hungry.

"If you really are the Son of God," the devil said to him, "tell this stone to turn into a loaf."

Jesus answered:

"The scripture says, MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE."

Then the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of mankind in a sudden vision, and said to him:

"I will give you all this power and magnificence, for it belongs to me and I can give it to anyone I please. It shall all be yours if you will fall down and worship me."

To this Jesus replied:

"It is written, THOU SHALT WORSHIP THE LORD THY GOD AND HIM ONLY SHALT THOU SERVE."

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem and set him on the highest ledge of the Temple.

"If you really are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here, for the scripture says, 'He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee,' and 'On their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.'"

To which Jesus replied:

"It is also said, THOU SHALT NOT TEMPT THE LORD THY GOD."

And when the devil had exhausted every kind of temptation, he withdrew until his next opportunity.

## CHRISTIAN FAITH AND EXISTENTIAL FREEDOM\*

Carl Michalson

Christian thought about the nature and destiny of man owes more to the word "freedom" than to any other word. Yet no word from the lips of philosophers and theologians is more productive of what the Frenchman, Parain, has called "the giddy sensation of the inexactitude of speech." Theology's ambiguous exposition of freedom can largely be attributed to the ill-fitting instruments of definition it has had at hand. Now, theologians have generally turned to philosophy for the tools of definition. The liability in this alliance has been that philosophy designs its words to fit its own concerns. Because philosophy's concerns have not always been theology's concerns, its definitions have not always been theologically ample. It is an intellectual event of major importance that theology is now turning for its definition of freedom to existentialism, for there philosophical and theological concerns have come together in a way unprecedented in Western thought.

In the Greek tradition, for instance, philosophy defined man's problem as deliverance from the realm of necessity called nature. Plato outlined a solution in a philosophy which built a case for man's independence from nature and called this independence freedom. This freedom was achieved by man's rational affiliation with an abstract realm of essences which were themselves beyond and independent of nature. Only the human body was considered a victim of nature's necessity. The human reason, transcendent of the body, was free from nature.

The reason, however, was not in itself free. To be rational was instinctively to know the essences--the true and the good. Nor was the will free, for it was the necessity of the will automatically to do what the reason knew. That is why in the realm of morals "to prefer evil to good is not in human nature" (Protagoras 758 C). Man does no evil voluntarily. Sin stems from an ignorance for which one is not culpable. The body, a foreign agent, subverts the reason. Knowledge is virtue (Gorgias 468, Timaeus 86, Laws V, 731). Greek philosophy, while it understood that man was free from "doing what comes naturally," nevertheless delivered human nature into another kind of necessity, the necessity for doing what comes rationally. Escape from the causes of nature was achieved by subjection to the necessitarian logic of essences.

To be just to the lively sense of freedom in experience, the Greeks devised a concept of "free choice." In the last analysis, however, "free choice" meant simply the sense for alternative ways of doing what it is finally necessary to do. Free choice, the prisoner of reason, "mimics freedom by pacing round and round in his cell" (Helmut Kuhn).

In the German tradition man's problem was not so much the problem of escape from nature as it was the problem of justifying moral responsibility. Motivated by this shift in the problem, Immanuel Kant took it upon himself to by-pass the thousand year-old philosophical anachronism which defined freedom as rational determinism. The will is free, Kant said. It is possible for a man to say either "yes" or "no" to what he knows to be the good, the right, and the true, for reason is shot through with will. Descartes had hinted at this. When man acted in his ignorance, Descartes

did not blame the body, as Plato did, for disfiguring the reason; he blamed the will for acting in the absence of a clear idea. This was the only basis on which it seemed possible, according to Kant, to keep morality alive. Unless one is free to choose either good or evil, he is not responsible, and no merit or guilt attaches to his choice. Freedom makes man accountable and makes either merit or guilt imputable.

Further to enhance this responsible moral freedom, Kant transplanted the heaven of ethical ideals, with its hierarchical dominion over man, into the human reason. Man, then, could be his own law-giver. Thus in the eighteenth century autonomy became a synonym of freedom. Autonomy did not mean antinomianism or anarchy, for the law within is as universal and irrevocable as if it were the law above. Autonomy simply avoided the causal and necessitarian implications in an alliance with either nature or a realm of essences. The law is not the cause, of which moral living is the inescapable effect. It is possible for man to obey or disobey it. One ought to note, however, that the law of good, before which the will decides, is as rational for Kant as it is for Plato. The good is the rational. To that extent Plato survives in Kant. The major difference is that for Kant the will, obliged by the rational, is not compelled by it. Freedom of the will, a voluntaristic indeterminism, thereby supplanted philosophy's long-standing definition of freedom as rational determinism.

The Kantian philosophy of freedom is the confluence of two intellectual streams. Greek philosophy's concern for the superiority of the rational over the natural merges with medieval Europe's Latin-Germanic concern for moral responsibility. The Christian freedomists, whose major theological concerns were merit and guilt--Pelagius, Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, and the seventeenth-century Jesuits--are in Kant's philosophical family tree as truly as are Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, whose philosophical concern was the rational. The twin requirements of the Kantian moral philosophy were rational insight into moral truth and the deliberate decision of the will. These were the very materials in the making in Western thought since the birth of the Christian movement.

There is another intellectual stream, however, which is represented by Augustine, the voluntarists of the fourteenth century, the Reformers, and the Jansenists. No matter how dependent this stream may have been upon Greco-Roman thinking, when it came to problems involving freedom it found this line too slack to hold the Christian faith. How talk of rational insight into human destiny when the Sovereign of history is the hidden God who reveals himself at will? How talk of moral responsibility in a man whose entire life is under the fate of sin and whose Christian hope is a destiny that lies beyond history, a destiny whose operation is so free that it is unconditioned by the acts of man? The predestinarian categories of the Augustinian tradition clash with both the rationalistic and the moralistic categories of the Greek and Roman traditions. The fact that contemporary theology is built upon this uneven tripod of traditions surely helps to account for "the giddy sensation" in the contemporary use of the word "freedom."

# I

Meanwhile, a species of philosophy has developed that is rapidly breaking up these unsteady historical alternatives and retooling the instruments for defining freedom. It is a cluster of vitalisms, pragmatisms, and existentialisms.



Despite important differences among these new philosophies, they agree on two points: first, that "existence precedes essence"; and second, that this precedence is the rudiment of freedom. Living is given priority over thinking; the whole of one's life, which is existence, is given priority over that partial function of life which is reason. Rational reflection is a delayed reaction to the perpetual forward motion of one's entire life. "Existence precedes essence," and that is basic freedom. As Sartre has said, "The essence of the human being is in suspense in his freedom."<sup>1</sup>

A list of the recent pioneers in the concept of freedom would include Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Dostoevsky; Marx, Freud, and Dewey; Bergson and (in a limited way) Whitehead; and a growing list of contemporary existentialists--the so-called atheistic Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, and Simone de Beauvoir; the theistic Jaspers; and the very theological existentialists--Jewish Buber, Roman Catholic Marcel, and Orthodox Berdyaev. All of these philosophers seem agreed at the two points which place them beyond Plato and Kant, beyond rationalism and moralism.

In the first place, these recent philosophers do not fear, as the Greeks did, that nature will thwart freedom. An almost biblical anthropology animates their thought. The human body is believed to be organic with the total self rather than hostile toward it. Moreover, a kind of biological evolutionism is affirmed which sees in nature a continuous process of agile adaptation more suggestive of freedom than of necessity.

The real enemy of freedom, it is believed, is not nature but reason. Reason is an excellent instrument for insight into past necessities, but it falters in which John Dewey calls "foresight into possibility" or what Whitehead calls "advance into novelty." "Transcendence of mere clarity and order is necessary for dealing with the unforeseen, for progress, for excitement."<sup>2</sup> When "existence precedes essence" a new kind of history comes into being in which "the past loses its unique precedence" (Heidegger),<sup>3</sup> and future possibilities overshadow accomplished facts.

Reason, moreover, is an indispensable agent in the analysis of life, but it is the misfortune of reason that when it analyzes it must "stop and think" and thereby miss the many-splendored moving scene. Cocteau once complained in a letter to Maritain that he was so busy writing The Parade he never got to see one. Van Gogh deplored having to kill the butterfly he wished to paint. One cannot sketch life from death. But it is inseparable from the operations of the reason, so these vitalists believe, to take "a snapshot of the mobility of the inner life" (Bergson). "The letter killeth," and the reason deals in letters. How, then, shall reason live with the spirited mobilities of art, of love, of religion? "We are free," said Bergson, "when our acts spring from the whole personality."<sup>4</sup>

1 Sartre, J.P., L'etre et le neant, Paris, 1948, p.61

2 Whitehead, A.N., Modes of Thought, The Macmillan Company, 1938, p.108

3 Heidegger, M., Sein und Zeit, Halle, Germany, 1927, p.391.

4 Bergson, H., Time and Free Will, tr. F. L. Pogson. Allen & Unwin, 1910, p.172

In the second place, these contemporary philosophers are not, as Kant was, enamored of moral responsibility. That is, they have no taste for what Romano-Germanic culture calls responsibility, accountability, and the imputability of moral guilt. Irresponsibility in the newer sense is not a moral or a legal notion, it is a personal notion. It does not denote a fault to be imputed; it is a default of responsibility. One ought not ask, therefore, "Was his act conscious and deliberate?" One ought to ask, "Was his act whole?" Wholeness is an attribute neither of consciousness nor of rational deliberation, but of the hidden unity and destiny of the personality. Irresponsibility, then, is a sickness and responsibility is its opposite: personal wholeness and health and responsiveness to one's vocation.

For a fact, the sickness of the personality is often incurred by its very conscious and deliberate effort to conform to the rational and the moral. Nietzsche and Freud contribute stunning evidence of this. The bad conscience, they say, is a disease the personality contracts. It is a "reaction-formation" (Freud) that follows when its instinct for freedom is "forced back, trodden back, imprisoned within itself and finally only able to find vent and relief within itself" (Nietzsche). The bad conscience is the sense of oppressiveness in a life whose proper vitality is stifled by codes that have no necessary relation to the emerging needs of the human spirit but which, for the proprieties and emotional loyalties that surround them, compel the spirit to hypocritical submission. "The soul whose will is cloven in two within itself" says to itself, "I am sick of myself." "The sick, then are the great danger of man," said Nietzsche, "not the evil."

Whatever freedom is, then, it is believed there are aspirations associated with man's freedom toward which the reason is unsympathetic. The intellect, as Karl Heim once said, is "an archive director." But man is a history-making, not simply a history-recording animal. Life and desire and the quest for authenticity, better known to religious tradition as faith or salvation--these supersede the restrictions of mere correctness.

You see, gentlemen, reason is an excellent thing, there's no disputing that, but reason is nothing but reason, and satisfies only the rational side of man's nature, while will is a manifestation of the whole life, that is, of the whole human life including reason and all the impulses.... Reason only knows what it has succeeded in learning, ..and human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously or unconsciously, and even if it goes wrong, it lives.

So Dostoievsky writes in his Notes From the Underground.<sup>5</sup> Ordinarily one's choices will conform to what commends itself to consciousness as rational. But there is a point at which one may even will to be stupid, "in order," as Dostoievsky says, "not to be bound by an obligation to desire only what is sensible."

This Russian wildness is reminiscent of Tertullian's credo quia absurdum. The famous phrase is apocryphal, but Tertullian has said what amounts to the same. Certum est, quia impossibile est.<sup>6</sup> These words are generally translated

5 Dostoievsky, F., Short Novels, Dial Press, 1945, p. 147

6 On the Flesh of Christ. 5.

to read, "The fact is certain because it is impossible." Actually, certum means just the opposite of certain. In Roman law--and Tertullian was a lawyer in the Roman tradition--certum means "resolved." It pertains not to a certainty but to the kind of action one must take in the absence of certainty. Certum is a rhetorical parallel for credible in this very passage. When one does not know "for certain" and the issue is crucial, one must resolve. The faithful man is not the rational man but the resolute man, and resolution takes place in freedom. That which is impossible to reason is possible to freedom.

What, then, shall one say of moral responsibility, should one decide to enter into an affiliation in the absence of rational certainty and transparency? Descartes and Kant would answer, "Immoral, the antithesis of freedom." Tertullian gave an answer in his Prescription against Heretics: "There is impunity in erring if there is no delinquency." Tertullian knew what the skeptics of the Middle Academy at Athens knew: significant action ought not to wait upon rational clarity, if in fact the things that matter most cannot be rationally penetrated. The so-called modern Tertullian, Kierkegaard, speaks similarly.

If only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true.... The truth is precisely a venture which chooses an objective uncertainty.... If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe.<sup>7</sup>

Moral responsibility which presupposes the consciousness of clear and distinct ideas is utterly appropriate to matters involving the true and the false, the good and the evil, the right and the wrong. How does it fare, however, where one's whole life is involved, his loves and hates, his loyalties and lies, his humility and his pride, his life and his death? When one's whole existence is at stake, "there is impunity in erring if there is no delinquency." In the spirited resoluteness of freedom there is a talent that ranges beyond the level of conscious and deliberate choice. "The free act is," as Sartre says, "absurd, beyond all reason."<sup>8</sup> "Existence precedes essence" as resolution precedes reflection and love precedes calculation.

## II

What is this "freedom" which these recent philosophies set up against previous philosophical definitions? Five elements in the existential view can be singled out.

1. Freedom IS the human existence. Man is not a "something" with the attribute of freedom. Man is his freedom. There is no attribute or function of man that can be equated with man's very being. It may be said that man thinks, wills, and feels; but it ought not to be said that man IS thought, will, or feeling. As Jaspers has stated it, "In the resolve I experience the freedom in which I decide not merely about something but about myself.... I myself am the freedom of this choice. Pure choice appears only as a choice between objectivities; but freedom is as the choice of myself."<sup>9</sup> Or, as Kierkegaard has said, when one does not choose, one withers away in consumption.

7 Kierkegaard, S., Concluding Unscientific Postscript, tr. D. F. Swenson, Walter Lowrie, Princeton, 1944, pp. 178 and 182

8 Ob.cit., p. 559

9 Jaspers, K., Philosophie. Berlin, 1932, Vol. II. p. 182



2. But, according to existentialism, freedom is nothing. One experiences a "vast and pointless sense of freedom" (Sartre) when contemplating the world about him. Pascal knew the sensation when he contemplated the infinity and absurdity of the universe which seventeenth-century science had uncovered. The seventeenth-century preacher John Donne knew it when he exclaimed of the universe, "'Tis all in peeces; all cohaerence gone." Wordsworth knew it when he referred to this same universe as a nothing in which one is "forlorn" but for some creed. In the words of Pascal, <sup>10</sup>

"When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and after, the little space which I fill, and even can see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces which I am ignorant, and which know me not, I am frightened, and am astonished at being here rather than there; for there is no reason why here rather than there, why now rather than then."

Sartre described the sensation in his first novel, *Nausea*. A young man sitting on a park bench contemplates the root of a tree. It blurs, fades, and otherwise illustrates evanescence, and the young man becomes sick. The clue to his sickness is his discovery that existence is radically contingent, that is, that there is no reason for existence. There is nothing in existence that explains it. A fundamental difference between the ancient and the modern views of the world is thereby marked. The ancient was alternately annoyed by cosmic necessity and edified by cosmic orderliness. The modern is sickened by cosmic contingency. The more comforting cosmology of antiquity is thus replaced in modern times by an intense life-feeling which Wilhelm Dilthey has characterized as a "feeling incapable of being solved by demonstration," an "insoluble metaphysical void at the bottom of every consciousness."<sup>11</sup> This void, this nothing is man's freedom. As Sartre puts it in his novel, *The Reprieve*, "Inside, nothing, not even a puff of smoke, there is no inside, there is nothing. Myself: nothing. I am free, he said to himself, and his mouth was dry."

3. Yet, it is believed that freedom is possibility. The "nothing" of freedom is a "lack" (Sartre), but a "lack" is a possibility. To classical philosophy, "possible" meant "noncontradictory." To contemporary existentialism "possible" means a lack to be filled. "Nothing" is a possibility in existence, which accounts for the striving, desiring, and seeking by which human life is constantly attempting to fulfill itself. The complement of the sickening sensation of being tied to nothing, of swimming over 70,000 fathoms (Kierkegaard), is the fascinating possibility of going somewhere and being something. Freedom is "a vibrating needle" (Buber), a "viscosity" (Sartre), an urge toward unforeseen possibilities, an indefinable sense of being "for the sake of" something (Heidegger).

4. Hence, freedom is a burden. Man feels "condemned forever to be free" (Sartre). As freedom, the human existence is the one point in all reality where being is most apt to fail. Man can choose himself as nothing or as in relation to some possibility beyond himself. He can reach beyond himself to some relationship which may confer a meaning that is not intrinsic to his existence. "Freedom is not an indifferent will but the possibility of being free for something."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Pascal, B., *Pensees*, No. 205

<sup>11</sup> Dilthey, W., *Gesammelte Schriften*. Leipzig, 1914, Volume I, "Eingleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften," p. 364.

<sup>12</sup> Cp. cit., p. 144.

The risk of freedom, however, is that it is possible for one to relate himself to that which itself participates in the nothingness, contingency, and absurdity of existence. Religion calls this idolatry, and philosophy calls it nihilism. Neither atheistic nor theistic existentialism knows of an ultimately secure relationship, though both know that man is haunted by a desire for a fulfillment he is never able to achieve. Atheistic existentialism sometimes leaves the possibility open and remains wistful (as in Heidegger): sometimes rejects the possibility and becomes Stoical (as in Sartre). That one must make this choice is the burden of one's freedom. That he must do it without the certain knowledge that there is any actual basis for his choice makes the burden poignant.

But such a choice is equally burdensome to the theistic existentialist, for when he chooses a relation to the transcendent, noncontingent reality he calls God, he chooses what he does not know but simply believes or hopes. This is his freedom. As Jaspers says, "I am free because I do not know," or as Marcel says, freedom is to "decide...without any appeal."

5. Freedom is, then, a terrifying burden, a burden of a desperately serious lack, a burden so terrifying it has become the source of an endemic human sickness recognized in life today as anxiety. As freedom, man may choose either to be what he ~~is~~ to affiliate with sources of authenticity beyond himself. This freedom is not simply the ability to choose but the inability not to choose (Simone de Beauvoir). The choice is between contingency and loyalty, between a dying independence and a living dependence, between hopelessness without obligation and hope with obligation. One desires existence on his own terms but fears that if he "bows down to nothing he cannot bear the burden of himself" (Dostoevsky). One fears to pledge himself, yet desires the authenticity which right relationship confers. The anxiety, the rubbing together of nothingness and possibility. Anxiety is a condition that paralyzes action and obscures whatever transparency man has at the very moment he needs it the most--the moment in which his destiny, his very being, his life and death is being determined. The predicament of man is a predicament born of freedom, a sickness, what Balzac called "a tetanus of the soul."

The widespread practice of deploring any reference to sickness as a symptom of pessimism is on the wane. Circles that deal in the therapy of the mind know that nothing so obstructs the therapeutic process as a fictitious sense of health. "Anxiety is the ground of hope" (Jaspers). The human ground, to be sure, and of a hope that is by no means determinative: one can learn, as Byron said, "to love despair," for "in despair there are the most intense enjoyments" (Dostoevsky)

Nonetheless, it remains true as Kierkegaard understood it that the possibility of this sickness is "man's advantage over the beast." "It is the greatest misfortune not to have had it,"<sup>14</sup> for it is the initial impulse toward recovering health and authenticity. Nietzsche understood it this way when he compared the sickness of the spirit to a pregnancy. You can get over it and have something to show for it beside. John Calvin seems to have understood it this way when he says in the opening lines of the last edition of his Institutes, "Our poverty conduces to a clearer display of the infinite fullness of God.... Nor can we really aspire toward him till we have begun to be displeased with ourselves."



## III

The implications of the existential notion of freedom have already begun to effect a ferment in theology. A few of the strategic areas must suffice as illustrations.

The image of God has generally been believed to be some fundamental likeness man has to God, some such resemblance as one would expect to see between a father and his son. This resemblance has usually been located in man's rationality. But theology has been embarrassed to find the sense of the likeness between God and man inspiring self-satisfaction rather than filial loyalty and responsibility. Moreover, there has been a restlessness in theology respecting the way in which affirmations of man's likeness to God disregard the irreversible structure in a relation that exists between Creator and creature.

In protest against this genetic definition of "likeness" the theologian has urged that the image of God is to be found in one man only, in God's Son. What, then, of the image of God in other men than Christ? The image of God in man is the human possibility for man's relationship to God. That possibility is freedom, and freedom is responsibility, or the ability to be at God's disposal. Not freedom then, as Aristotle defined it when he said "a man is free...who exists for his own sake and not for another's." Not even freedom as, for instance, Philo defined it when he regarded freedom in man as a quality that most resembles God, the power of interrupting the laws of nature. Curs is a freedom which is not at all like God's because it is a freedom for dependence, a burdensome and restless freedom, a freedom which fulfills itself only in dependence upon God. "Existence precedes essence." The doctrine of the image of God in man means that the desire to relate oneself to God precedes even the knowledge that there is a God. He hath made us out of the nothing of freedom, and our souls are restless until they choose themselves in him.

2. The doctrine of original sin has been retained in contemporary theology as a mythological key to the gravity of human life. It is difficult, however, in doctrines of original sin for theologians to satisfy the demands both of morality and of personal realism. Generally, whatever the original sin is, no one is expected to assume personal responsibility for it, inasmuch as it was precipitated without one's own conscious, deliberate choice. It is a Kantian requirement that an accountable act be voluntary and conscious, but this requirement suggests two problems.

The first problem is that our destiny-determining acts are so profound that we cannot subject them to analysis. We can only presuppose them. As Balzac has said of our wounds, "we cannot examine them, they hurt too much." Or, as Sartre has said, "Conscious deliberation is always faked....When I deliberate the die is already cast....The decision has already been taken."<sup>15</sup> Original sin is the spiritual tension at the root of our lives that vitiates all our acts--rational and voluntary--without either our knowledge or our choice. This is what Luther and Augustine meant by the bondage of the will. It does not mean we are not free. Man is freedom. It does mean our freedom is sick, an anxious freedom. Ever since the Apostle Paul it has been known by the Christian tradition that the problem of freedom is not the problem of choice but of ability, not legislation but execution, not ends but energy.

<sup>15</sup> Cp. cit., p. 527.

The second problem in a moral definition of original sin is that guilt is denied to original sin because such an original act was not freely, that is, consciously and deliberately committed. Hence, responsibility for the declivity in one's life is also abrogated. What if guilt, however, were not something legally imputable, as if the person were a criminal whose aberrations could be traced to specific acts of offense: What if guilt were a condition of being, a condition of deep, personal irresponsibility, a default of vocation? Formally, guilt is the disproportion between what one is and what one ought to be. Actually, what if guilt were not simply the failure to achieve recognized moral ends, but the condition of being at odds with one's spiritual destiny? That, not a doing wrong at all, but a being wrong?

"Being guilty," said Heidegger, "does not result originally from a fault; faults originally become possible on the basis of an original guilt."<sup>16</sup> "Guilt" is no more legal or moral a concept than is "righteousness." "Being guilty" is a sickness of freedom; not a fault to be condemned but a sickness to be cured. There is a responsibility in sickness, but not a legal or moral one. One is not blamed for being sick, but he is expected to assume responsibility for it as the first step to a cure. For a long time now the story of Adam has dawned on men with the abruptness and lucidity that comes when one "suddenly remembers where he left his glasses" (T. S. Eliot).

3. The grace of God in Christ is a therapy. It is not the effect of a transaction, legal, moral, or commercial. "Satisfaction" for sins was an expression Luther associated with moral philosophers, jurists, papists, and hangmen. There is no more effective therapy for the sickness of freedom, however, than love. Love casts out anxiety. Love does not blame, it heals; love does not exact, it confers. Love is not weighed, it is received. Love is not subject to bargaining, it is subject only to gratitude. Love has no reason, it can only be trusted. God chooses to love us in Christ, and "we can only choose our being chosen" (Barth). "Libertas sine gratia nihil est" (Augustine). Freedom without grace is nothing. But grace is the medicine of salvation; it heals the sickness of freedom. The story of God's faithfulness in Christ is good news for the spiritually sick which makes them whole again, and this wholeness is "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

To say that the predicament of man is the sickness of his freedom is not to infer that this sickness is a weakness. It is rather an imbalance of one's powers, more often inordinate than weak. Spiritual anxiety expresses itself with a violence which the Christian tradition has long associated with rebellion and pride. In the words of Byron:

There is a very life in our despair,  
Vitality of poison, --a quick root  
Which feeds these deadly branches...

Augustine called it the libido dominandi. Luther called it Anfechtung, or temptation, by which he meant not the kind of appeal which petty vices have for the morally weak, but the dreadful sense of infinite possibility one gets in the presence of holy things. So deep-seated an illness of the spirit will not yield to just any religious homeopathy. Christian doctrines of the atonement, while they can stand being



stripped of their mythological trappings, conserve one persistent element. It is the sense of an almost violent aggressiveness in the love of God, which, in collision with man's own violent freedom is productive of a therapy as though by shock.

4. Christian ethics, Then, becomes the articulation in action of the spiritual health in one's life. That is to say, Christian ethics is subordinated to no law but the law of liberty. The Christian existence precedes moral essences. As Dostoevsky believed, "the possibility of being able to place the question of right after the meaning of one's existence is the greatest and most ultimate freedom of man." <sup>17</sup> Theologically, this means man's freedom is a freedom primarily to choose himself in relation to God, and only secondarily to choose between good and evil. The Christian's ethical responsibility is to evolve the morality consistent with this theological destiny. Sartre's phrase, "You are free: choose!" If given Christian baptism would read, "Love God and do as you please." The irresponsible man is the man who evades the responsibility of determining God's will by retreating into some preestablished moral structure. To do so is, both in existentialism and in psychoanalysis, to adopt an infantile morality. But "how can we know what is God's word, and what is right or wrong?.... You must determine this matter for yourself," said Luther, "for your very life depends upon it."

5. Theism suffers most at the hands of the maxim, "existence precedes essence," though it probably deserves to suffer. Christian philosophers have expanded the seed of the Christian faith into trees of wisdom in which a man may lodge without existing. Theisms create a world view out of what requires a decision, a science out of a faith.

There is really a quantitative paucity of truth in the Christian gospel. It is, as the Westminster Confession rightly says, sufficient "for salvation," but it is scarcely sufficient for cosmology and metaphysics. The Christian truth is the Christ, to know whom is to be free. There is a life-and-death difference between possessing truths about Christianity and being true in Christ. The one is a technological achievement and the other is a condition of personal freedom.

17 Lauth, Reinhard, Die philosophie Dostojewskis, Munic, 1950, p.146



These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he took to wife Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddanaram, the sister of Laban the Aramean. And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is thus, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her,

"Two nations are in your womb,  
and two peoples, born of you, shall be divided;  
the one shall be stronger than the other,  
the elder shall serve the younger."

When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came forth red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came forth, and his hand had taken hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

When the boys grew up, Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Once when Jacob was boiling pottage, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red pottage, for I am famished!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.



## MAN THE SINNER

By H. Richard Niebuhr

A moving passage in Waldo Frank's "Death and Birth of David Markand" describes the death of a Polish immigrant who, having dreamed the "American dream," awakened to the reality of American life when he became the victim of his friends as well as of his foes in the industrial conflict. Holding his wife's hand, caressing his daughter, he whispers over and over, "Man is bad," and so dies. A Christian theologian might have said to this Pole, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God," for the conviction that man is bad is one of the fundamental principles of the Christian interpretation of life. That it is not the only basic dogma need not be said; that it is of essential importance and that its abandonment involves the perversion of the remainder of Christian theology and faith needs to be emphasized.

### I

The importance of the doctrine of human sinfulness is evident from the consequences which flow from its acceptance. The Christian strategy of life depends as much on this principle as Marxian strategy depends on the doctrine of the class struggle. It means that in our dealing with ourselves and with our neighbors, with our societies and our neighbor societies, we deal not with morally and rationally healthy beings who may be called upon to develop ideal personalities and to build ideal commonwealths but rather with diseased beings, who can do little or nothing that is worth while until they have recovered health and who, if they persist in acting as though they were healthy, succeed only in spreading abroad the infection of their own lives. The distinct character of the strategy which the acceptance of this conviction entails may be better understood if it is contrasted with the programs of conduct which follow from other views of evil. The common belief that evil is concentrated in certain individuals or classes -- who have made bad choices or have been subjected to bad influences -- leads to the restraint and the elimination of the bad by those who can regard themselves as good, and to the pursuit of ideal ends by the latter. The romantic belief that men are good and that evil resides in institutions calls for the elimination of bad institutions and the exercise of unrestrained activity by politically, economically, and ecclesiastically emancipated men. The evolutionary definition of evil, which identifies it with imperfection, with cultural lag, and the ignorance of immaturity, requires simply nurture and education as the proper treatment of the bad. But if the conviction that all men are sinners is maintained these strategies of life must be rejected; a wholly different approach will be necessary.

It may be worth while to note that though apparently the doctrine of human sinfulness is more pessimistic than the rival theories are, it is fundamentally more optimistic. The doctrine of creation is the presupposition of the doctrine of sin. The latter doctrine implies that man's fundamental nature, obscured and corrupted though it is, is perfect. His perfection as a creature, or his health, is not a far-off achievement, a more or less remote possibility which future generations may realize after infinite effort; it is rather the underlying datum of life. Well-being, joy, peace, effective activity are as near as health is to the sick man, not as remote as man is from the ape or the completed building from the blue print.

## II

To say that man is a sinner is not equivalent to the statement that he is morally bad. Modern moralism has subordinated all other value categories to those of the morally good and the morally bad. It has regarded these as somehow final and not in need of further definition, while it has reduced the value categories of truth, beauty, and holiness, of intellectual, aesthetic, and religious evil to their moral "essence." Science and art have more or less successfully resisted the tyranny of moralism but religion has accepted the yoke willingly and allowed its concept of God to be identified with "moral perfection." It cannot be maintained that there is not an intimate relationship between the positive value categories on the one hand, the negative or disvalue categories on the other hand, but whatever that relation may be, it is evident that moral value is entitled to no pre-eminence. To make moral evil the essence of sin is to make as arbitrary a choice as when moral worth is made the essence of truth, or moral badness the essence of ugliness. The moralist forgets that he occupies a standpoint, that his evaluations are relative to that standpoint, and that the standpoint itself is of no greater finality than the standpoints of religion, science, and art.

More specifically it is to be urged against the moralistic interpretation of sin that moral judgments are relative judgments (not psychologically relative, necessarily) and that, second, the religious category of sin is not a composite term made up of a moral core and secondary accretions but a true concept which must be understood from the religious and not some other point of view. As to the first point, much may be said of the ambiguity of terms "good" and "bad" as used in morality, and as evident in their application now to the object of moral choice, now to the character or conduct of the choosing agent. Nor can it be maintained that they are used in the "strictly ethical sense" only in the latter instance. In both cases, however (whether the judgment be the judge "guilty" or "not guilty," or the agent's "right" or "wrong"), reference to a standard is implied, whether that standard be a code of laws or a table of values. This standard may be called moral, but properly it is the standard of morality, presupposed by morality. If it was adopted as the result of a moral choice, that was possible only because there had previously been present in the mind of the chooser a standard by reference to which he could adopt it morally. Ultimately morality is always driven back to the acceptance of a standard which is given to it, without which morality would be impossible, but which is itself prior to all morality. The source of that standard is always religion, not morality. It depends upon what man finds to be wholly worshipful, intrinsically valuable -- in other words, upon the nature of his god or gods. The "chief good" of man is not the object but the presupposition of his moral choices, and his possession of a chief god is the presupposition of all moral judgments which he or another passes upon him. To define sin in terms of morality is to ignore this fact, that morality without presuppositions is impossible, that it lacks the finality which is claimed for it. I do not mean to say that sin does not involve moral guilt; that is not the point. I do mean that the definition of sin in terms of moral guilt implies a mistaken conviction about the finality of morality.

In the second place, the concept of sin as a concept of the religious reason is not reducible to moral terms. Sometimes it is regarded as meaning moral guilt plus emotional overtones due to the religious feelings. Otto's and Marrett's



brilliant psychological analysis of the sense of the holy and the negative creature-feeling or sense of impurity have indicated that even when the approach is made from the feelings, it is not an emotional-plus element with which we are dealing in religious experience, but rather a psychological state qualitatively different from the moral state. Apart, however, from the consideration of experience, it is evident that the religious reason has employed its concept of sin to connote not merely and not always moral evil, but also physical evil. It is only by eliminating from consideration all the phenomena of demon-possession that Jesus' attitude toward sin can be interpreted as a wholly moral attitude. Moreover, the practice and doctrine of forgiveness of sin (cf. the paralytic) imply a conception of sin which is not primarily moral, with emotional overtones. Furthermore, priestly practice, as again exemplified in part by modern psychiatry, indicates that the evil with which religion deals is not wholly definable in moral terms and cannot be treated with moral means.

To say then that man is a sinner does not mean exactly the same thing as to say that he is morally wicked. Nor are moral evil and religious evil to be regarded as species of a common genus of evil.

### III

It is necessary now to inquire more precisely into the meaning of the concept sin. Neither its definition in terms of other disvalues nor the psychological description of the sense of sin are of much help to us in this inquiry. The latter effort represents, upon the whole, the confusion of objective and subjective so typical of modern spiritualistic theology. This confusion -- of sin with the sense of sin -- has its practical counterpart in the aberrations of emotional, revivalistic evangelicalism with its "unrealistic" attempts to arouse the sense of sin rather than to point to sin itself and to create a feeling of assurance rather than to point to salvation.

Various efforts have been made to define sin as sensuality or as selfishness. Such efforts are instances of the naturalistic fallacy. Selfishness and sensuality are doubtless sinful but neither flesh nor self are sinful per se. Nor is creatureliness the essence of sin. The relation of creature to creator does not involve sin; the majesty of God does not have human sinfulness for its counterpart. To be sure, the sense of man's worthlessness in contrast to the supreme worthfulness of God may be closely akin to the sense of sin. But in such experiences as Isaiah's and Job's, men would not be aware of their worthlessness -- they would know only the supreme worth of the creator -- were it not for the fact that prior to the experience they had tended to ascribe supreme worth to the self. The religious concept of sin always involves the idea of disloyalty, not of disloyalty in general, but of disloyalty to the true God, to the only trustworthy and wholly lovable reality. Sin is the failure to worship God as God. Yet it is more than the absence of loyalty to God. It is not possible for men to be simply disloyal; they are always loyal to something. Disloyalty implies a false loyalty and disloyalty to God always includes loyalty to something that is not God but which claims deity. Sin therefore is not merely a deprivation, not merely the absence of loyalty; it is wrong direction, false worship. Furthermore, loyalty to a false God implies rebellion against God. It is impossible



that it should be otherwise, unless God were something less than the Creator and the essence of Being. To make a god of the self, or of the class, or of the nation, or of the phallus, or of mankind, is to organize life around one of these centers and to draw it away from its true center; hence in a unified world, it is to wage war against God.

#### IV

We may return not to the first point -- the Christian doctrine that man is a sinner. The statement means not that men occasionally become disloyal to God or that their disloyalty is real only in so far as they consciously choose to be disloyal; it means rather that those to whom God is wholly loyal and who are by nature wholly dependent upon him are in active rebellion against him. The moral qualification that men can be held accountable for the disloyalty only insofar as they are consciously and willingly disloyal is quite beside the point, first of all because Christianity is not primarily concerned with the question of assessing the blames but with the fact and the cure; second, because this qualification rests upon a highly dubious doctrine of freedom. The starting-point of the doctrine of sin is not man's freedom but man's dependence; freedom accounts for the fact that man can be and is disloyal, not for the fact that he ought to be loyal. At all events, the important thing for man the sinner is not that he should feel a sense of guilt but that he should see his disloyalty, his false loyalty, and the consequences. Doubtless the sense of guilt played its important role for early Protestants and for evangelicals, but it has become a barrier to the modern man's understanding of the gospel.

The statement that man is a sinner, disloyal to God and therefore involved in evil consequences of a moral, physical, and social nature may be taken by us today as a general law, perhaps in a statistical sense only. We do not begin with the universal man, nor with a doctrine of original sin, though we may need to use the latter ultimately for purposes of explanation. We begin with the facts or with our observations, which are primarily observations of ourselves; but introspection is supported by individual and social psychology and by history. We observe that men are primarily loyal to themselves, to their nations, to their pleasures, to their race, to their machines, etc. We examine their actions and their systems of morality and we can say, with greater assurance than Paul had, that they have all fallen short of the glory of God. There may be exceptions to the rule; perhaps the Marxians recognize a few exceptions to the rule of class loyalty; the rule remains as the only safe basis of conduct. The facts make the judgment inevitable that man is bad, disloyal to God, the only source of all life and all good; and that he is bound to take the consequences not because God is angry but because he is God.

#### V

It remains for us to try to sketch some of these consequences. The first result of disloyalty appears to be conflict within the individual and within society. It is an inevitable result, for to leave the One is to be scattered among the many. No other object is able to hold man's loyalty save that object on which he is actually dependent for life and meaning. Idolatry leads inevitably to polytheism and polytheism is conflict. It is doubtless true that some gods seem better than others, insofar as they unify men and their societies to a greater degree; thus the national god or the class god seems better than the god of self or Mammon or Venus or Bacchus. At the same



time the greater gods only transfer the conflict to a broader stage and become greater demons. A second consequence is death. We are beginning again to become aware of the fact that the death of cultures is the consequence of the sin of social wholes (nationalism, capitalism, communism), and that "spiritual" death, the disintegration of the self, is the consequence of false loyalties and conflicts. The moral consequences of sin -- man's inhumanity to man, cruelty to beasts, exploitation of nature, abuse of sex, greed, commercial profanization of creation and its beauty -- these are no less patent.

Of particular importance for the Christian strategy of life is the consequence of man's importance to rescue himself out of his disloyalty and rebellion, conflict, death, and vice. Moralism which makes the human free will the source of all good and evil cannot understand this impotence. Its saviour is the will; every problem is solved by an appeal to the will. But there is no such thing as a free will at all. It is either committed to God or to one of the gods. "The will is as its strongest motive is." Man cannot transfer his loyalty from one of the false gods to God by exercising his will, since that will is loyal to the false god. Every effort it makes is an effort in some direction. So long as man is loyal to himself, or to his nation, or his class, or to his moral standard based upon a self-chosen highest good, his efforts to rescue himself will be determined by his loyalty. The consequence is that he involves himself more deeply in disloyalty to God. The situation is similar to the effort to bring about international peace through international war, which results only in the increase of national loyalties and the increase of war; it is similar also to the effort to bring about social justice through inter-class conflict which results in the increase of class loyalties and of social injustice. Redemption from sin is possible only by a reconciliation to God, which cannot be initiated by the disloyal creature. Man the sinner is incapable of overcoming his sin.

In conclusion, the consequence of the doctrine for Christian strategy may be more definitely pointed out than was possible at the beginning. Since man is bad, the restraint of evil -- particularly of the moral evil which is the result of sin -- is a necessary element in every plan for the conduct of life. "Thou shalt nots" take their place in the moral code; self-discipline and social discipline take the place of self-expression and social freedom. But three qualifications, at least, must be borne in mind in the exercise of such restraint. The first is that Christian restraint is the restraint of sinners by sinners and not by the just. It is restraint exercised on the basis of a law or scale of values which the disloyal mind discerns only darkly; it is the restraint exercised by those who acknowledge their equality with the restrained, for equality in sinfulness is also equality. Whatever be the meaning of the doctrine of election it cannot be used to justify a dictatorship of the "good" over the "bad." In the second place, any restraint imposed on the basis of human sinfulness must avoid the temptation of falling into moralism; it must be medicinal rather than vindictive, conservative rather than destructive; if it uses force, which it will be loath to employ, it will use it only in this way, knowing that force cannot redeem but only prevent some external consequence of sin. In the third place, the Christian strategy of the restraint of evil must be wholly subordinated to the strategy of the reconciliation. Later Puritanism fell into the great error of giving the doctrine of sin pre-eminence over the doctrine of redemption; hence its strategy of restraint took the place of the strategy of reconciliation. But the doctrine of sin is meaningful only as it presupposes the doctrine of creation and

furnishes the presupposition of the doctrine of redemption. And the use of restraint is definitely an interim measure which needs to be subordinated to the fundamental strategy of Christianity. As the communist must subordinate his interest in the amelioration of the worker's lot within the capitalist system to his interests in the revolution, so the Christian must put the Christian revolution first. Where this is forgotten the result is revisionist Christianity, an abhorrent heresy.



FROM THE BOOK OF SAMUEL: THOU ART THE MAN

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go forth to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking upon the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am with child."

So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people fared, and how the war prospered. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day, and the next. And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him that he may be struck down, and die." And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab; and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite was slain also. Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting; and he instructed the messenger. "When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone upon him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'"

So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. The messenger said to David. "The men gained an advantage over us, and came out against us in the field; but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall; some of the king's servants are dead; and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another; strengthen your attack upon the city, and overthrow it.' And encourage him."



When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she made lamentation for her husband. And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him. "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his morsel, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared it for the man who had come to him. Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul; and I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.'" David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die." Then Nathan went to his house.



## THE GRAND INQUISITOR \*

by Fyodor Dostoevsky

".....Do you know, Alyosha -- don't laugh! I made a poem about a year ago. If you can waste another ten minutes on me, I'll tell it to you."

"You wrote a poem?"

"Oh, no, I didn't write it," laughed Ivan, "and I've never written two lines of poetry in my life. But I made up this poem in prose and I remembered it. I was carried away when I made it up. You will be my first reader -- that is, listener. Why should an author forego even one listener?" smiled Ivan. "Shall I tell it to you?"

"I am all attention," said Alyosha.

"My poem is called 'The Grand Inquisitor', it's a ridiculous thing, but I want to tell it to you."

"Even this must have a preface -- that is, a literary preface," laughed Ivan, "and I am a poor hand at making one. You see, my action takes place in the sixteenth century, and at that time, as you probably learnt at school, it was customary in poetry to bring down heavenly powers on earth. Not to speak of Dante, in France, clerks, as well as the monks in the monasteries, used to give regular performances in which the Madonna, the saints, the angels, Christ, and God Himself were brought on the stage. In those days it was done in all simplicity. In Victor Hugo's 'Notre Dame de Paris' an edifying and gratuitous spectacle was provided for the people in the Hotel de Ville of Paris in the reign of Louis XI, in honour of the birth of the dauphin. It was called Le bon jugement de la tres sainte et gracieuse Vierge Marie, and she appears herself on the stage and pronounces her bon jugement. Similar plays, chiefly from the Old Testament, were occasionally performed in Moscow too, up to the times of Peter the Great. But besides plays there were all sorts of legends and ballads scattered about the world, in which the saints and angels and all the powers of Heaven took part when required. In our monasteries the monks busied themselves in translating, copying, and even composing such poems -- and even under the Tatars. There is, for instance, one such poem (of course, from the Greek), 'The Wanderings of Our Lady Through Hell,' with descriptions as bold as Dante's. Our Lady visits Hell, and the Archangel Michael leads her through the torments. She sees the sinners and their punishment. There she sees among others one noteworthy set of sinners in a burning lake; some of them sink to the bottom of the lake so that they can't swim out, and 'these God forgets' -- an expression of extraordinary depth and force. And so Our Lady, shocked and weeping, falls before the throne of God and begs for mercy for all in Hell -- for all she has seen there, and indiscriminately. Her conversation with God is immensely interesting. She beseeches Him, she will not desist, and when God points to the hands and feet of her Son, nailed to the Cross, and asks, 'How can I forgive His tormentors?' she bids all the saints, all the martyrs, all the angels and arch-angels to fall down with her and pray for mercy on all without distinction. It ends by her winning from God a respite of suffering every year from Good Friday till Trinity day, and the sinners at once raise a cry of thankfulness from Hell, chanting, 'Thou art just, O Lord, in this judgment.' Well, my poem would have been of that kind if it had appeared at that time. He comes on the scene in my poem, but He says nothing, only appears and passes on. Fifteen centuries have passed since He promised to come in His glory, fifteen centuries since His prophet wrote, 'Behold, I come quickly'; 'Of

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\* The Grand Inquisitor is Chapter V in Book V of Fyodor Dostoevsky's last novel The Brothers Karamazov, written in 1880.

that day and that hour knoweth no man, neither the Son, but the Father, ' as He Himself predicted on earth. But humanity awaits him with the same faith and with the same love. Oh, with greater faith, for it is fifteen centuries since man has ceased to see signs from Heaven.

No signs from Heaven come to-day  
To add to what the heart doth say.

There was nothing left but faith in what the heart doth say. It is true there were many miracles in those days. There were saints who performed miraculous cures; some holy people, according to their biographies, were visited by the Queen of Heaven herself. But the devil did not slumber, and doubts were already arising among men of the truth of these miracles. And just then there appeared in the north of Germany a terrible new heresy. 'A huge star like to a torch' (that is, to a church) 'fell on the sources of the waters and they became bitter.' These heretics began blasphemously denying miracles. But those who remained faithful were all the more ardent in their faith. The tears of humanity rose up to Him as before, awaiting His coming, loved Him, hoped for Him, yearned to suffer and die for Him as before. And so many ages mankind had prayed with faith and fervour, 'O Lord our God, hasten Thy coming,' so many ages called upon Him, that in His infinite mercy He deigned to come down to His servants. Before that day He had come down, He had visited some holy men, martyrs, and hermits, as is written in their 'Lives.' Among us, Tyutchev, with absolute faith in the truth of his words, bore witness that

Bearing the Cross, in slavish dress  
Weary and worn, the Heavenly King  
Our mother, Russia, came to bless,  
And through our land went wandering.

And that certainly was so, I assure you.

"And behold, He deigned to appear for a moment to the people, to the tortured, suffering people, sunk in iniquity, but loving Him like children. My story is laid in Spain, in Seville, in the most terrible time of the Inquisition, when fires were lighted every day to the glory of God, and 'in the splendid auto da fe' the wicked heretics were burnt.' Oh, of course, this was not the coming in which He will appear according to His promise at the end of time in all His heavenly glory, and which will be sudden 'as lightning flashing from east to west.' No, He visited His children only for a moment, and there where the flames were crackling round the heretics. In His infinite mercy He came once more among men in that human shape in which He walked among men for three years fifteen centuries ago. He came down to the 'hot pavement' of the southern town in which on the day before almost a hundred heretics had, ad maiorem gloriam Dei, been burnt by the cardinal, the Grand Inquisitor, in a magnificent auto da fe', in the presence of the king, the court, the knights, the cardinals, the most charming ladies of the court, and the whole population of Seville.

"He came softly, unobserved, and yet, strange to say, every one recognized Him. That might be one of the best passages in the poem. I mean, why they recognized Him. The people are irresistibly drawn to Him, they surround Him, they flock about Him, follow Him. He moves silently in their midst with a gentle smile of infinite compassion. The sun of love burns in His heart, light and power shine from His eyes, and their radiance, shed on the people, stirs their hearts with responsive love. He holds out His hands to them, blesses them, and a healing virtue comes from contact with Him, even with His garments. An old man, in the crowd, blind from childhood, cries out, 'O Lord, heal me and I shall see Thee!' and, as it were, scales fall from his eyes and the blind man sees Him. The crowd weeps and kisses the



earth under His feet. Children throw flowers before Him, sing, and cry hosannah. 'It is He -- it is He!' all repeat. 'It must be He, it can be no one but Him!' He stops at the steps of the Seville cathedral at the moment when the weeping mourners are bringing in a little open white coffin. In it lies a child of seven, the only daughter of a prominent citizen. The dead child lies hidden in flowers. 'He will raise your child,' the crowd shouts to the weeping mother. The priest, coming to meet the coffin, looks perplexed, and frowns, but the mother of the dead child throws herself at His feet with a wail. 'If it is Thou, raise my child!' she cries, holding out her hands to Him. The procession halts, the coffin is laid on the steps at His feet. He looks with compassion, and His lips once more softly pronounce, 'Maiden arise!' and the maiden arises. The little girl sits up in the coffin and looks round, smiling with wide-open wondering eyes, holding a bunch of white roses they had put in her hand.

"There are cries, sobs, confusion among the people, and at that moment the cardinal himself, the Grand Inquisitor, passes by the cathedral. He is an old man, almost ninety, tall and erect, with a withered face and sunken eyes, in which there is still a gleam of light. He is not dressed in his gorgeous cardinal's robes, as he was the day before, when he was burning the enemies of the Roman Church -- at that moment he was wearing his coarse, old, monk's cassock. At a distance behind Him come his gloomy assistants and slaves and the 'holy guard.' He stops at the sight of the crowd and watches it from a distance. He sees everything; he sees them set the coffin down at His feet, sees the child rise up, and his face darkens. He knits his thick grey brows and his eyes gleam with a sinister fire. He holds out his fingers and bids the guards take Him. And such is his power, so completely are the people cowed into submission and trembling obedience to him, that the crowd immediately make way for the guards, and in the midst of deathlike silence they lay hands on Him and lead Him away. The crowd instantly bows down to the earth, like one man, before the old inquisitor. He blesses the people in silence and passes on. The guards lead their prisoner to the close, gloomy vaulted prison in the ancient palace of the Holy Inquisition and shut Him in it. The day passes and is followed by the dark, burning 'breathless' night of Seville. The air is 'fragrant with laurel and lemon.' In the pitch darkness the iron door of the prison is suddenly opened and the Grand inquisitor himself comes in with a light in his hand. He is alone; the door is closed at once behind him. He stands in the doorway and for a minute or two gazes into His face. At last he goes up slowly, sets the light on the table and speaks.

"'Is it Thou? Thou?' but receiving no answer, he adds at once, 'Don't answer, be silent. What canst Thou say, indeed? I know too well what Thou wouldst say. And Thou hast no right to add anything to what Thou hadst said of old. Why, then, art Thou come to hinder us? For Thou hast come to hinder us, and Thou knowest that. But dost Thou know what will be to-morrow? I know not who Thou art and care not to know whether it is Thou or only a semblance of Him, but to-morrow I shall condemn Thee and burn Thee at the stake as the worst of heretics. And the very people who have to-day kissed Thy feet, to-morrow at the faintest sign from me will rush to heap up the embers of Thy fire. Knowest Thou that? Yes, maybe Thou knowest it,' he added with thoughtful penetration, never for a moment taking his eyes off the Prisoner.

"I don't quite understand, Ivan. What does it mean?" Alyosha, who had been listening in silence, said with a smile. "Is it simply a wild fantasy, or a mistake on the part of the old man -- some impossible qui pro quo?"

"Take it as the last," said Ivan, laughing, "if you are so corrupted by modern realism and can't stand anything fantastic. If you like it to be a case of mistaken identity, let it be so. It is true," he went on, laughing, "the old man was ninety, and he might well be crazy over his set idea. He might have been struck by the appearance

of the prisoner. It might, in fact, be simply his ravings, the delusion of an old man of ninety, over-excited by the auto da fe of a hundred heretics the day before. But does it matter to us after all whether it was a mistake of identity or a wild fantasy? All that matters is that the old man should speak out, should speak openly of what he has thought in silence for ninety years."

"And the Prisoner too is silent? Does He look at him and not say a word?"

"That's inevitable in any case," Ivan laughed again. "The old man has told Him He hasn't the right to add anything to what He has said of old. One may say it is the most fundamental feature of Roman Catholicism, in my opinion at least. 'All has been given by Thee to the Pope,' they say, 'and all, therefore, is still in the Pope's hands, and there is no need for Thee to come now at all. Thou must not meddle for the time, at least.' That's how they speak and write too -- the Jesuits, at any rate. I have read it myself in the works of their theologians. 'Hast Thou the right to reveal to us one of the mysteries of that world from which Thou hast come?' my old man asks Him, and answers the question for Him. 'No, Thou hast not; that Thou mayest not add to what has been said of old, and mayest not take from men the freedom which Thou didst exalt when Thou wast on earth. Whatsoever Thou revealest anew will encroach on men's freedom of faith; for it will be manifest as a miracle, and the freedom of their faith was dearer to Thee than anything in those days fifteen hundred years ago. Didst Thou not often say then, 'I will make you free'? But now Thou hast seen these 'free' men," the old man adds suddenly with a pensive smile. 'Yes, we've paid dearly for it,' he goes on, looking sternly at Him, 'but at last we have completed that work in Thy name. For fifteen centuries we have been wrestling with Thy freedom, but now it is ended and over for good. Dost Thou not believe that it's over for good? Thou lookest meekly at me and deignest not even to be wroth with me. But let me tell Thee that now, to-day, people are more persuaded than ever that they have perfect freedom, yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet. But that has been our doing. Was this what Thou didst? Was this Thy freedom?'"

"I don't understand again," Alyosha broke in. "Is he ironical, is he jesting?"

"Not a bit of it! He claims it as a merit for himself and his Church that at last they have vanquished freedom and have done so to make men happy. 'For now' (he is speaking of the Inquisition, of course) 'for the first time it has become possible to think of the happiness of men. Man was created a rebel; and how can rebels be happy? Thou wast warned,' he says to Him. 'Thou hast had no lack of admonitions, and warnings, but Thou didst not listen to those warnings; Thou didst reject the only way by which men might be made happy. But, fortunately, departing Thou didst hand on the work to us. Thou hast promised, Thou hast established by Thy word, Thou hast given to us the right to bind and to unbind, and now, of course, Thou canst not think of taking it away. Why, then, hast Thou come to hinder us?'"

"And what's the meaning of 'no lack of admonitions and warnings'? asked Alyosha.

"Why, that's the chief part of what the old man must say."

"The wise and dread Spirit, the spirit of self-destruction and non-existence," the old man goes on, 'the great spirit talked with Thee in the wilderness, and we are told in the books that he "tempted" Thee. Is that so? And could anything truer be said than what he revealed to Thee in three questions and what Thou didst reject, and what in the books is called "the temptation"? And yet if there has ever been on earth a real stupendous miracle, it took place on that day, on the day of the three temptations. The statement of those three questions was itself the miracle. If it were possible to imagine simply for the sake of argument that those three questions of the



dread spirit had perished utterly from the books, and that we had to restore them and to invent them anew, and to do so had gathered together all the wise men of the earth -- rulers, chief priests, learned men, philosophers, poets -- and had set them the task to invent three questions, such as would not only fit the occasion, but express in three words, three human phrases, the whole future history of the world and of humanity -- dost Thou believe that all the wisdom of the earth united could have invented anything in depth and force equal to the three questions which were actually put to Thee then by the wise and mighty spirit in the wilderness? From those questions alone, from the miracle of their statement, we can see that we have here to do not with the fleeting human intelligence, but with the absolute and eternal. For in those three questions the whole subsequent history of mankind is, as it were, brought together into one whole, and foretold, and in them are united all the unsolved historical contradictions of human nature. At the time it could not be so clear, since the future was unknown; but now that fifteen hundred years have passed, we see that everything in those three questions was so justly divined and foretold, and has been so truly fulfilled, that nothing can be added to them or taken from them.

"Judge Thyself who was right -- Thou or he who questioned Thee then? Remember the first question; its meaning, in other words, was this: "Thou wouldst go into the world, and art going with empty hands, with some promise of freedom which men in their simplicity and their natural unruliness cannot even understand, which they fear and dread -- for nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom. But seest Thou these stones in this parched and barren wilderness? Turn them into bread, and mankind will run after Thee like a flock of sheep, grateful and obedient, though for ever trembling, lest Thou withdraw Thy hand and deny them Thy bread." But Thou wouldst not deprive man of freedom and didst reject the offer, thinking, what is that freedom worth, if obedience is bought with bread? Thou didst reply that man lives not by bread alone. But dost Thou know that for the sake of that earthly bread the spirit of the earth will rise up against Thee and will strive with Thee and overcome Thee, and all will follow him, crying, "Who can compare with this beast? He has given us fire from heaven!" Dost Thou know that the ages will pass, and humanity will proclaim by the lips of their sages that there is no crime, and therefore no sin, there is only hunger? "Feed men, and then ask of them virtue!" that's what they'll write on the banner, which they will raise against Thee, and with which they will destroy Thy temple. Where Thy temple stood will rise a new building; the terrible tower of Babel will be built again, and though, like the one of old, it will not be finished, yet Thou mightest have prevented that new tower and have cut short the sufferings of men for a thousand years; for they will come back to us after a thousand years of agony with their tower. They will seek us again, hidden underground in the catacombs, for we shall be again persecuted and tortured. They will find us, and cry to us, "Feed us, for those who have promised us fire from heaven haven't given it!" And then we shall finish building their tower, for he finishes the building who feeds them. And we alone shall feed them in Thy name, declaring falsely that it is in Thy name. Oh, never, never can they feed themselves without us! No science will give them bread so long as they remain free. In the end they will lay their freedom at our feet, and say to us, "Make us your slaves, but feed us." They will understand themselves, at last, that freedom and bread enough for all are inconceivable together, for never, never will they be able to share between them! They will be convinced, too, that they can never be free, for they are weak, vicious, worthless and rebellious. Thou didst promise them the bread of Heaven, but, I repeat again, can it compare with earthly bread in the eyes of the weak, ever sinful and ignoble race of man? And if for

the sake of the bread of Heaven thousands and tens of thousands shall follow Thee, what is to become of the millions and tens of thousands of millions of creatures who will not have the strength to forego the earthly bread for the sake of the heavenly? Or dost Thou care only for the tens of thousands of the great and strong, while the millions, numerous as the sands of the sea, who are weak but love Thee, must exist only for the sake of the great and the strong? No, we care for the weak too. They are sinful and rebellious, but in the end they too will become obedient. They will marvel at us and look on us as gods, because we are ready to endure the freedom which they have found so dreadful and to rule over them -- so awful it will seem to them to be free. But we shall tell them that we are Thy servants and rule them in Thy name. We shall deceive them again, for we will not let Thee come to us again. That deception will be our suffering, for we shall be forced to lie.

"This is the significance of the first question in the wilderness, and this is what Thou hast rejected for the sake of that freedom which Thou hast exalted above everything. Yet in this question lies hid the great secret of this world. Choosing "bread," Thou wouldst have satisfied the universal and everlasting craving of humanity -- to find some one to worship. So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find some one to worship. But man seeks to worship what is established beyond dispute, so that all men would agree at once to worship it. For these pitiful creatures are concerned not only to find what one or the other can worship, but to find something that all would believe in and worship; what is essential is that all may be together in it. This craving for community of worship is the chief misery of every man individually and of all humanity from the beginning of time. For the sake of common worship they've slain each other with the sword. They have set up gods and challenged one another, "Put away your gods and come and worship ours, or we will kill you and your gods!" And so it will be to the end of the world, even when gods disappear from the earth; they will fall down before idols just the same. Thou didst know, Thou couldst not but have known, this fundamental secret of human nature, but Thou didst reject the one infallible banner which was offered Thee to make all men bow down to Thee alone -- the banner of earthly bread; and Thou hast rejected it for the sake of freedom and the bread of Heaven. Behold what Thou didst further. And all again in the name of freedom! I tell Thee that man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find some one quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born. But only one who can appease their conscience can take over their freedom. In bread there was offered Thee an invincible banner; give bread, and man will worship Thee, for nothing is more certain than bread. But if some one else gains possession of his conscience -- oh! then he will cast away Thy bread and follow after him who has ensnared his conscience. In that Thou wast right. For the secret of man's being is not only to live but to have something to live for. Without a stable conception of the object of life, man would not consent to go on living, and would rather destroy himself than remain on earth, though he had bread in abundance. That is true. But what happened? Instead of taking men's freedom from them, Thou didst make it greater than ever! Didst Thou forget that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil? Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause of suffering. And behold, instead of giving a firm foundation for setting the conscience of man at rest for ever, Thou didst choose all that is exceptional, vague and enigmatic; Thou didst choose what was utterly beyond the strength of men, acting as though Thou didst not love them at all -- Thou who didst come to give Thy life for them! Instead of taking possession of men's freedom, Thou didst increase it, and burdened the spiritual kingdom of mankind with



its sufferings for ever. Thou didst desire man's free love, that he should follow Thee freely, enticed and taken captive by Thee. In place of the rigid ancient law, man must hereafter with free heart decide for himself what is good and what is evil, having only Thy image before him as his guide. But didst Thou not know he would at last reject even Thy image and Thy truth, if he is weighed down with the fearful burden of free choice? They will cry aloud at last that the truth is not in Thee, for they could not have been left in greater confusion and suffering than Thou hast caused, laying upon them so many cares and unanswerable problems.

"So that, in truth, Thou didst Thyself lay the foundation for the destruction of Thy kingdom, and no one is more to blame for it. Yet what was offered Thee? There are three powers, three powers alone, able to conquer and to hold captive for ever the conscience of these impotent rebels for their happiness -- those forces are miracle, mystery and authority. Thou hast rejected all three and hast set the example for doing so. When the wise and dread spirit set Thee on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Thee, "If Thou wouldst know whether Thou art the Son of God then cast Thyself down, for it is written: the angels shall hold him up lest he fall and bruise himself, and Thou shalt know then whether Thou art the Son of God and shalt prove then how great is Thy faith in Thy Father." But Thou didst refuse and wouldst not cast Thyself down. Oh! of course, Thou didst proudly and well like God; but the weak, unruly race of men, are they gods? Oh, Thou didst know then that in taking one step, in making one movement to cast Thyself down, Thou wouldst be tempting God and have lost all Thy faith in Him, and wouldst have been dashed to pieces against that earth which Thou didst come to save. And the wise spirit that tempted Thee would have rejoiced. But I ask again, are there many like Thee? And couldst Thou believe for one moment that men, too, could face such a temptation? Is the nature of men such, that they can reject miracle, and at the great moments of their life, the moments of their deepest, most agonizing spiritual difficulties, cling only to the free verdict of the heart? Oh, Thou didst know that Thy deed would be recorded in books, would be handed down to remote times and to the utmost ends of the earth, and Thou didst hope that man, following Thee, would cling to God and not ask for a miracle. But Thou didst not know that when man rejects miracle he rejects God too; for man seeks not so much God as the miraculous. And as man cannot bear to be without the miraculous, he will create new miracles of his own for himself, and will worship deeds of sorcery and witchcraft, though he might be a hundred times over a rebel, heretic and infidel. Thou didst not come down from the Cross when they shouted to Thee, mocking and reviling Thee, "Come down from the cross and we will believe that Thou art He." Thou didst not come down, for again Thou wouldst not enslave man by a miracle. Thou didst crave for free love and not the base raptures of the slave before the might that has overawed him for ever. But Thou didst think too highly of men therein, for they are slaves, of course, though rebellious by nature. Look round and judge; fifteen centuries have passed, look upon them. Whom has Thou raised up to Thyself? I swear, man is weaker and baser by nature than Thou has believed him! Can he, can he do what Thou didst? By showing him so much respect, Thou didst, as it were, cease to feel for him, for Thou didst ask far too much from him -- Thou who hast loved him more than Thyself! Respecting him less, Thou wouldst have asked less of him. That would have been more like love, for his burden would have been lighter. He is weak and vile. What though he is everywhere now rebelling against our power, and proud of his rebellion? It is the pride of a child and a schoolboy. They are little children rioting and barring out the teacher at school. But their childish delight will end; it will cost them dear. They will cast down temples and drench the earth with blood. But they will see at last, the foolish children, that though they are

rebels, they are impotent rebels, unable to keep up their own rebellion. Bathed in their foolish tears, they will recognize at last that He who created them rebels must have meant to mock at them. They will say this in despair, and their utterance will be a blasphemy which will make them more unhappy still, for man's nature cannot bear blasphemy, and in the end always avenges it on itself. And so unrest, confusion and unhappiness -- that is the present lot of man after Thou didst bear so much for their freedom? Thy great prophet tells in vision and in image, that he saw all those who took part in the first resurrection and that there were of each tribe twelve thousand. But if there were so many of them, they must have been not men but gods. They had borne Thy cross, they had endured scores of years in the barren, hungry wilderness, living upon locusts and roots -- and Thou mayest indeed point with pride at those children of freedom, of free love, of free and splendid sacrifice for Thy name. But remember that they were only some thousands; and what of the rest? And how are the other weak ones to blame, because they could not endure what the strong have endured? How is the weak soul to blame that it is unable to receive such terrible gifts? Canst Thou have simply come to the elect and for the elect? But if so, it is a mystery, we too have a right to preach a mystery, and to teach them that it's not the free judgment of their hearts, not love that matters, but a mystery which they must follow blindly, even against their conscience. So we have done. We have corrected Thy work and have founded it upon miracle, mystery and authority. And men rejoiced that they were again led like sheep, and that the terrible gift that had brought them such suffering, was, at last, lifted from their hearts. Were we right teaching them this? Speak! Did we not love mankind, so meekly acknowledging their feebleness, lovingly lightening their burden, and permitting their weak nature even sin with our sanction? Why hast Thou come now to hinder us? And why dost Thou look silently and searchingly at me with Thy mild eyes? Be angry. I don't want Thy love, for I love Thee not. And what use is it for me to hide anything from Thee? Don't I know to Whom I am speaking? All that I can say is known to Thee already. And is it for me to conceal from Thee our mystery? Perhaps it is Thy will to hear it from my lips. Listen, then. We are not working with Thee, but with him -- that is our mystery. It's long -- eight centuries -- since we have been on his side and not on Thine. Just eight centuries ago, we took from him that what Thou didst reject with scorn, that last gift he offered Thee, showing Thee all the kingdoms of the earth. We took from him Rome and the sword of Caesar, and proclaimed ourselves sole rulers of the earth, though hitherto we have not been able to complete our work. But whose fault is that? Oh, the work is only beginning, but it has begun. It has long to await completion and the earth has yet much to suffer, but we shall triumph and shall be Caesars, and then we shall plan the universal happiness of man. But Thou mightest have taken even the sword of Caesar. Why didst Thou reject that last gift? Hadst Thou accepted that last counsel of the mighty spirit, Thou wouldst have accomplished all that man seeks on earth -- that is, some one to worship, some one to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all in one unanimous and harmonious ant-heap, for the craving for universal unity is the third and last anguish of men. Mankind as a whole has always striven to organize a universal state. There have been many great nations with great histories, but the more highly they were developed the more unhappy they were, for they felt more acutely than other people the craving for worldwide union. The great conquerors, Timours and Ghenghis-Khans, whirled like hurricanes over the face of the earth striving to subdue its people, and they too were but the unconscious expression of the same craving for universal unity. Hadst Thou taken the world and Caesar's purple, Thou wouldst have founded the universal state and have given universal peace. For who can rule men if not he who holds their conscience and their bread in his hands. We have taken the sword of Caesar,



and in taking it, of course, have rejected Thee and followed him. Oh, ages are yet to come of the confusion of free thought, of their science and cannibalism. For having begun to build their tower of Babel without us, they will end, of course, with cannibalism. But then the beast will crawl to us and lick our feet and spatter them with tears of blood. And we shall sit upon the beast and raise the cup, and on it will be written, "Mystery." But then, and only then, the reign of peace and happiness will come for men. Thou art proud of Thine elect, but Thou hast only the elect, while we give rest to all. And besides, how many of those elect, those mighty ones who could become elect, have grown weary waiting for Thee, and have transferred and will transfer the powers of their spirit and the warmth of their heart to the other camp, and end by raising their free banner against Thee. Thou didst Thyself lift up that banner. But with us all will be happy and will no more rebel nor destroy one another as under Thy freedom. Oh, we shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us. And shall we be right or shall we be lying? They will be convinced that we are right, for they will remember the horrors of slavery and confusion to which Thy freedom brought them. Freedom, free thought and science, will lead them into such straits and will bring them face to face with such marvels and insoluble mysteries, that some of them, the fierce and rebellious, will destroy themselves, others, rebellious but weak, will destroy one another, while the rest, weak and unhappy, will crawl fawning to our feet and whine to us: "Yes, you were right, you alone possess His mystery, and we come back to you, save us from ourselves!"

"Receiving bread from us, they will see clearly that we take the bread made by their hands from them, to give it to them, without any miracle. They will see that we do not change the stones to bread, but in truth they will be more thankful for taking it from our hands than for the bread itself! For they will remember only too well that in old days, without our help, even the bread they made turned to stones in their hands, while since they have come back to us, the very stones have turned to bread in their hands. Too, too well they know the value of complete submission! And until men know that, they will be unhappy. Who is most to blame for their not knowing it, speak? Who scattered the flock and sent it astray on unknown paths? But the flock will come together again and will submit once more, and then it will be once for all. Then we shall give them the quiet humble happiness of weak creatures such as they are by nature. Oh, we shall persuade them at last not to be proud, for Thou didst lift them up and thereby taught them to be proud. We shall show them that they are weak, that they are only pitiful children, but that childlike happiness is the sweetest of all. They will become timid and will look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen. They will marvel at us and will be awe-stricken before us, and will be proud at our being so powerful and clever, that we have been able to subdue such a turbulent flock of thousands of millions. They will tremble impotently before our wrath, their minds will grow fearful, they will be quick to shed tears like women and children, but they will be just as ready at a sign from us to pass to laughter and rejoicing, to happy mirth and childish song. Yes, we shall set them to work, but in their leisure hours we shall make their life like a child's game, with children's songs and innocent dance. Oh, we shall allow them even sin, they are weak and helpless, and they will love us like children because we allow them to sin. We shall tell them that every sin will be expiated, if it is done with our permission, that we allow them to sin because we love them, and the punishment for these sins we take upon ourselves. And we shall take it upon ourselves, and they will adore us as their saviour who have taken on themselves their sins before God. And they will have no secrets from us. We shall allow or forbid them to live with their wives and mistresses, to have or not to have children -- according to whether they have been obedient or disobedient -- and they will submit to us gladly and cheerfully. The

most painful secrets of their conscience, all, all they will bring to us, and we shall have an answer for all. And they will be glad to believe our answer, for it will save them from the great anxiety and terrible agony they endure at present in making a free decision for themselves. And all will be happy, all the millions of creatures except the hundred thousand who rule over them. For only we, we who guard the mystery, shall be unhappy. There will be thousands of millions of happy babes, and a hundred thousand sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil. Peacefully they will die, peacefully they will expire in Thy name, and beyond the grave they will find nothing but death. But we shall keep the secret, and for their happiness we shall allure them with the reward of heaven and eternity. Though if there were anything in the other world, it certainly would not be for such as they. It is prophesied that Thou wilt come again in victory, Thou wilt come with Thy chosen, the proud and strong, but we will say that they have only saved themselves, but we have saved all. We are told that the harlot who sits upon the beast, and holds in her hands the mystery, shall be put to shame, that the weak will rise up again, and will rend her royal purple and will strip naked her loathsome body. But then I will stand up and point out to Thee the thousand millions of happy children who have known no sin. And we who have taken their sins upon us for their happiness will stand up before Thee and say: "Judge us if Thou canst and darest." Know that I fear Thee not. Know that I too have been in the wilderness, I too have lived on roots and locusts, I too prized the freedom with which Thou hast blessed men, and I too was striving to stand among Thy elect, among the strong and powerful, thirsting "to make up the number." But I awakened and would not serve madness. I turned back and joined the ranks of those who have corrected Thy work. I left the proud and went back to the humble, for the happiness of the humble. What I say to Thee will come to pass, and our dominion will be built up. I repeat, to-morrow Thou shalt see that obedient flock who at a sign from me will hasten to heap up the hot cinders about the pile on which I shall burn Thee for coming to hinder us. For is any one has ever deserved our fires, it is Thou. To-morrow I shall burn Thee.

Dixi."

Ivan stopped. He was carried away as he talked and spoke with excitement; when he had finished, he suddenly smiled.

Alyosha had listened in silence; towards the end he was greatly moved and seemed several times on the point of interrupting, but restrained himself. Now his words came with a rush.

"But...that's absurd!" he cried, flushing. "Your poem is in praise of Jesus, not in blame of Him -- as you meant it to be. And who will believe you about freedom? Is that the way to understand it? That's not the idea of it in the Orthodox Church... That's Rome, and not even the whole of Rome, it's false -- those are the worst of the Catholics, the Inquisitors, the Jesuits!...And there could not be such a fantastic creature as your Inquisitor. What are these sins of mankind they take on themselves? Who are these keepers of the mystery who have taken some curse upon themselves for the happiness of mankind? When have they been seen? We know the Jesuits, they are spoken ill of, but surely they are not what you describe? They are not that at all, not at all...They are simply the Romish army for the earthly sovereignty of the world in the future, with the Pontiff of Rome for Emperor...that's their ideal, but there's no sort of mystery or lofty melancholy about it...It's simple lust of power, of filthy earthly gain, of domination -- something like a universal serfdom with them as masters -- that's all they stand for. They don't even believe in God perhaps. Your suffering inquisitor is a mere fantasy."



"Stay, stay," laughed Ivan, "how hot you are! A fantasy you say, let it be so! Of course it's a fantasy. But allow me to say: do you really think that the Roman Catholic movement of the last centuries is actually nothing but the lust of power, of filthy earthly gain? Is that Father Paissy's teaching?"

"No, no, on the contrary, Father Paissy did once say something the same as you...but of course it's not the same, not a bit the same, Alyosha hastily corrected himself.

"A precious admission, in spite of your 'not a bit the same.' I ask you why your Jesuits and Inquisitors have united simply for vile material gain? Why can there not be among them one martyr oppressed by great sorrow and loving humanity? You see, only suppose that there was one such man among all those who desire nothing but filthy material gain -- if there's only one like my old inquisitor, who had himself eaten roots in the desert and made frenzied efforts to subdue his flesh to make himself free and perfect. But yet all his life he loved humanity, and suddenly his eyes were opened, and he saw that it is no great moral blessedness to attain perfection and freedom, if at the same time one gains the conviction that billions of God's creatures have been created as a mockery, that they will never be capable of using their freedom, that these poor rebels can never turn into giants to complete the tower, that it was not for such geese that the great idealist dreamt his dream of harmony. Seeing all that he turned back and joined -- the clever people. Surely that could have happened?"

"Joined whom, what clever people?" cried Alyosha, completely carried away. "They have no such great cleverness and no mysteries and secrets....Perhaps nothing but Atheism, that's all their secret. Your inquisitor does not believe in God, that's his secret!"

"What if it is so! At last you have guessed it. It's perfectly true that that's the whole secret, but isn't that suffering, at least for a man like that, who has wasted his whole life in the desert and yet could not shake off his incurable love of humanity. In his old age he reached the clear conviction that nothing but the advice of the great dread spirit could build up any tolerable sort of life for the feeble, unruly 'incomplete, empirical creatures created in jest.' And so, convinced of this, he sees that he must follow the council of the wise spirit, the dread spirit of death and destruction, and therefore accept lying and deception, and lead men consciously to death and destruction, and yet deceive them all the way so that they may not notice where they are being led, that the poor blind creatures may at least on the way think themselves happy. And note, the deception is in the name of Him in Whose ideal the old man had so fervently believed all his life long. Is not that tragic? And if only one such stood at the head of the whole army 'filled with the lust of power only for the sake of filthy gain' -- would not one such be enough to make a tragedy? More than that, one such standing at the head is enough to create the actual leading idea of the Roman Church with all its armies and Jesuits, its highest idea. I tell you frankly that I firmly believe that there has always been such a man among those who stood at the head of the movement. Who knows, there may have been some such even among the Roman Popes. Who knows, perhaps the spirit of that accursed old man who loves mankind so obstinately in his own way, is to be found even now in a whole multitude of such old men, existing not by chance but by agreement, as a secret league formed long ago for the guarding of the mystery, to guard it from the weak and the unhappy, so as to make them happy. No doubt it is so, and so it must be indeed. I fancy that even among the Masons there's something of the same mystery at the bottom, and that that's why the Catholics so detest the Masons as their rivals breaking up the unity of the idea, while it is so essential that there should be one flock and one shepherd. .. But from the way I defend my idea I might be an author impatient of your criticism. Enough of it."

"You are perhaps a Mason yourself!" broke suddenly from Alyosha. "You don't believe in God," he added, speaking this time very sorrowfully. He fancied besides that his brother was looking at him ironically. "How does your poem end?" he asked, suddenly looking down. "Or was it the end?"

"I meant it to end like this. When the Inquisitor ceased speaking he waited some time for his Prisoner to answer him. His silence weighed down upon him. He saw the Prisoner had listened intently all the time, looking gently in his face and evidently not wishing to reply. The old man longed for Him to say something, however bitter and terrible. But He suddenly approached the old man in silence and softly kissed him on his bloodless aged lips. That was all his answer. The old man shuddered. His lips moved. He went to the door, opened it, and said to him: 'Go, and come no more....Come not at all, never, never!' And he let him out into the dark alleys of the town. The Prisoner went away."

"And the old man?"

"The kiss glows in his heart, but the old man adheres to his idea."

"And you with him, you too?" cried Alyosha, mournfully.

Ivan laughed.

"Why, it's all nonsense, Alyosha. It's only a senseless poem of a senseless student, who could never write two lines of verse. Why do you take it so seriously? Surely you don't suppose I am going straight off to the Jesuits, to join the men who are correcting His work? Good Lord, it's no business of mine. I told you, all I want is to live on to thirty, and then....dash the cup to the ground!"

"But the little sticky leaves, and the precious tombs, and the blue sky, and the woman you love! How will you live, how will you love them?" Alyosha cried sorrowfully. "With such a hell in your heart and your head, how can you? No, that's just what you are going away for, to join them...if not, you will kill yourself, you can't endure it!"

"There is a strength to endure everything," Ivan said with a cold smile.

"What strength?"

"The strength of the Karamazovs -- the strength of the Karamazov baseness."

"To sink into debauchery, to stifle your soul with corruption, yes?"

"Possibly even that...only perhaps till I am thirty I shall escape it, and then."

"How will you escape it? By what will you escape it? That's impossible with your ideas."

"In the Karamazov way, again."

"Everything is lawful," you mean? Everything is lawful, is that it?"

Ivan scowled, and all at once turned strangely pale.

"Ah, you've caught up yesterday's phrase, which so offended Miüsov -- and which Dimitri pounced upon so naively and paraphrased it!" he smiled queerly. "Yes, if you like, 'everything is lawful' since the word has been said. I won't deny it. And Miüya's version isn't bad."

Alyosha looked at him in silence.

"I thought that going away from here I have you at least," Ivan said suddenly, with unexpected feeling, "but now I see that there is no place for me even in your heart, my dear hermit. The formula, 'all is lawful,' I won't renounce -- will you renounce me for that, yes?"

Alyosha got up, went to him and softly kissed him on the lips.

"That's plagiarism," cried Ivan, highly delighted. "You stole that from my poem. Thank you though. Get up, Alyosha, it's time we were going, both of us."

They went out, but stopped when they reached the entrance of the restaurant.

"Listen, Alyosha," Ivan began in a resolute voice, "if I am really able to care for the little stickly leaves I shall only love them, remembering you. It's enough



for me that you are somewhere here, and I shan't lose my desire for life yet. Is that enough for you? Take it as a declaration of love if you like. And now you go to the right and I to the left. And it's enough, do you hear, enough. I mean even if I can't go away to-morrow (I think I certainly shall go) and we meet again, don't say a word more on these subjects. I beg that particularly. And about Dimitri too, I ask you specially never speak to me again," he added with sudden irritation; "it's all exhausted, it has all been said over and over again, hasn't it? And I'll make you one promise in return for it. When at thirty, I want to 'dash the cup to the ground,' wherever I may be I'll come to have one more talk with you, even though it were from America, you may be sure of that. I'll come on purpose. It will be very interesting to have a look at you, to see what you'll be by that time. It's rather a solemn promise, you see. And we really may be parting for seven years or ten. Come, go now to your Pater Seraphicus, he is dying. If he dies without you, you will be angry with me for having kept you. Good'bye, kiss me once more; that's right, now go."