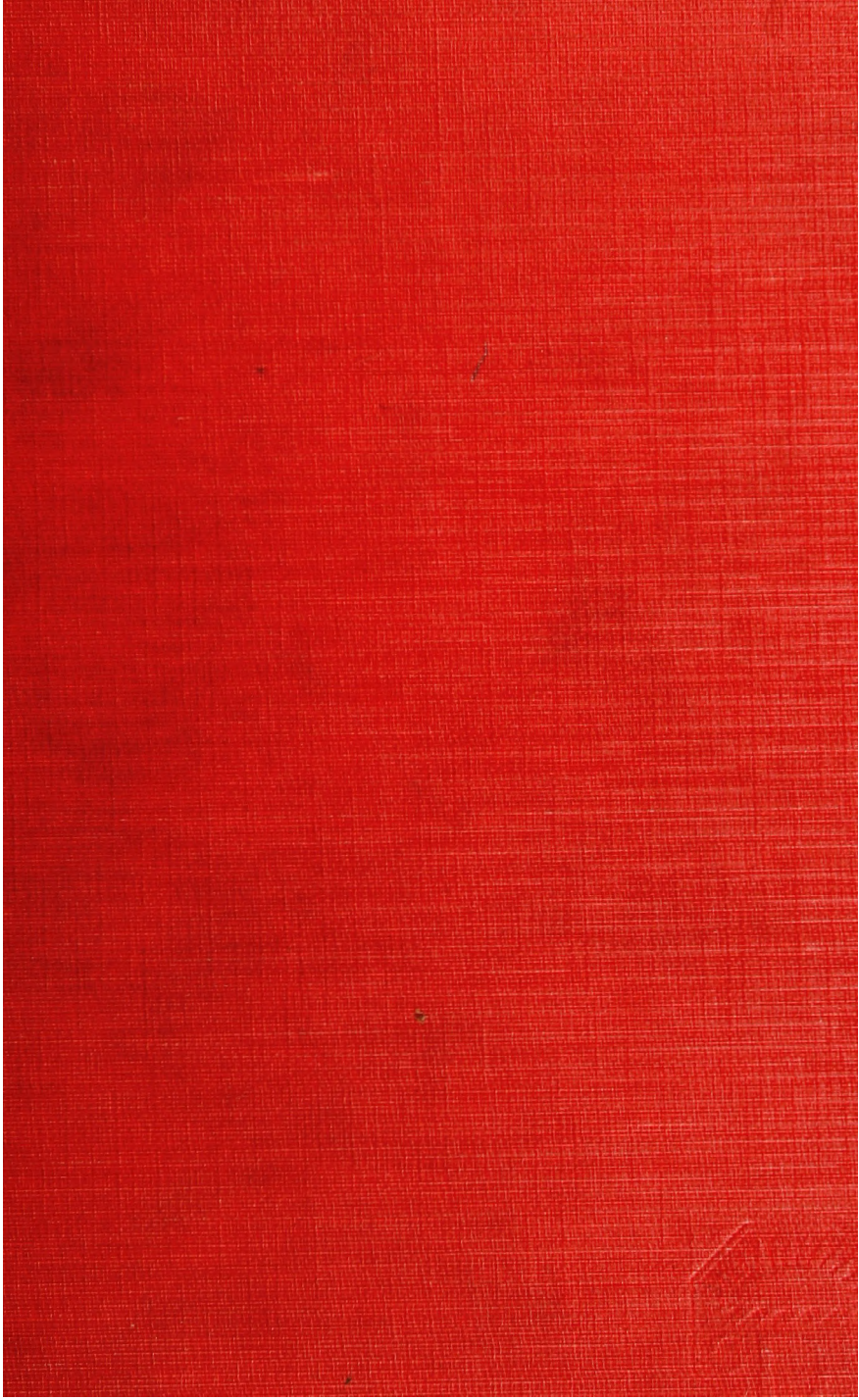

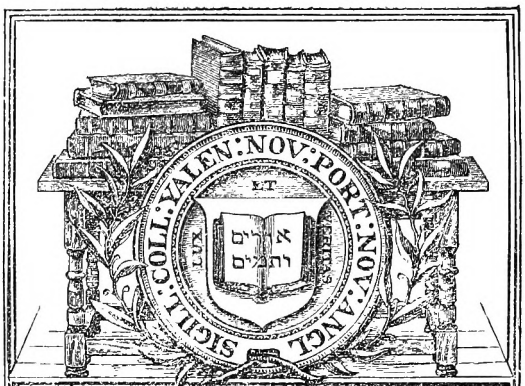

THE RELIGION OF POWER

HARRIS E. KIRK, D.D.

THE RELIGION OF POWER

A STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY IN RELATION TO THE QUEST FOR SALVATION IN THE GRÆCO-ROMAN WORLD, AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE PRESENT AGE

BY

HARRIS E. KIRK, D.D.

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TO

MY WIFE,

BEST FRIEND, FAITHFUL CRITIC

AND FELLOW WORKER.

PREFACE

THIS book is the outcome of personal experience. When I began my ministry, I was quite content to preach what I had been taught to believe, but when the need for a more intimate appropriation of truth became urgent, I sought to gratify it in some form of philosophy, being willing for the most part to translate historical conceptions of religion into the more or less complex terms of modern thought.

It soon became evident, however, that this was superficial. There was need for a firmer hold on truth, especially for an appreciation of the stabilising influence of the great past; and my mind turned towards the causal significance of Christianity.

This book is the result of a fresh endeavour to interpret Christian experience for myself; and whatever degree of confidence is imparted to the central affirmations of this course of lectures is due to a series of convictions rooted and grounded in historic reality. I believe that Christianity is the religion of power because I have experienced it in my own life. I believe that Jesus Christ is the

Son of God and that His gospel is the final and complete adjustment of the human spirit to its eternal relationships.

Naturally, what we have found to be true for ourselves we believe to be of some importance to others. In this spirit I send forth this book in the hope that it may aid inquiring minds to find Him who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

H. E. K.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTORY

PART ONE: THE QUEST FOR SAFE CONDUCT

PART TWO: THE RELIGION OF POWER

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTORY

LECTURE I

THE WESTWARD MOVEMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

LECTURE I

THE WESTWARD MOVEMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

THE purpose of this course of lectures is to study Christianity as the religion of power in relation to its Græco-Roman background. In shaping the materials I have kept steadily in mind the requirements of a number of people who desire to put behind the sentiments and impulses of religious experience a body of rich and deep conviction.

The need of religious convictions develops from experience. We begin with a simple and uncritical faith in the facts of Christianity as they are presented to us by environment. The influence of the home and the church usually determines such matters for us. But as experience develops, it brings our faith into comparison with the beliefs and life of the world, and this makes a fresh interpretation necessary. We begin to ask ourselves if what we were taught to believe is really true. We wish to know if there is a reasonable basis for faith, and ordinarily we seek ad-

ditional information by examining the sources of our experience.

The range of such an inquiry will vary according to the desire of the individual, but the result will be a growth of convictions on what we regard as essential points. If we care to pursue the inquiry further we may reduce our beliefs to system and get theology; and if we wish to go still further we may extract the essence from our theology and get a creed, which would be a clear statement of all that we believe concerning Christ and Christianity.

Most people are content with a simple faith, being willing to follow the teaching and example of their religious environment. Few people become theologians, and very few have a definite idea of a personal or self-selected creed.

There is, however, a minority that requires something more than a simple faith. People of this type are obliged by their intellectual necessities to investigate the basal significance of experience. They are unable to trust so important a matter to impulse. They need ideas as well as emotions. They do not require a complete theology, but they must have clear cut, conscientious convictions on essential points. Their passion is to "get to know Christ." This was a Pauline ambition and should be encouraged. Any one who knows this modern

world realises the urgency and sincerity of such a demand. An intelligent man without religious convictions is as helpless as a passenger ship in midocean without a navigator. The nurture of the intelligence is as important an element in spiritual growth as the cultivation of the affections or the discipline of the will.

It is this class to which I make my appeal. We are in this world not simply to hold or to enjoy a faith, but to propagate a faith. We are, or ought to be, the passionate advocates of salvation through Jesus Christ. But we cannot ask others to be Christians unless we are reasonably sure of our own status. It is not enough to have spiritual emotions: we must have ideas that explain these emotions, for without ideas faith cannot be propagated. Ideas are the hooks of faith that stick into the intelligence; they are the framework around which emotions grow, and character forms. Naturally we believe that what is true for ourselves must be important for others; and if we have convinced ourselves that we have a reasonable basis for faith, we shall not hesitate to challenge the world's intelligence in the effort to impart it.

If convictions are important, it is the better part of wisdom to select the best possible method of forming them. Shall we develop them in the

interest of a philosophy of religion, or shape them round the historic facts of Christianity? Shall our interest lie chiefly in the relation of propositions to each other in behalf of a system, or in a series of events in human history? Both methods are important, but I prefer the historical to the philosophical approach to the question, and for what seems to be a very practical reason.

Whatever philosophy of religion one may hold, must always be determined by the view one has of its historic significance. We must begin with history. But the peculiar temptation that waits on philosophy is the exaggeration of theoretic explanations. It is easier to suit the facts of history to one's theory than to bring one's theory into harmony with historic facts. And if we adopt the historic approach, it might turn out that we can not only begin, but end our view of religion in its history; we might get along without philosophy, because we should get an adequate view of religious truth from an historical standpoint. Most assuredly the power of religious conviction does not depend on one's ability to systematise religious truth. The realism of conviction is derived from actual contact with historic events. For history reveals something more than reasons; it reveals causes; it exhibits the causal significance of Christianity. It shows us a re-

ligion of power, dynamic unto the saving of souls. If we can shape our convictions on the causal aspect we may dispense with system.

It is clear that the intelligent man of to-day is not asking for a complete system of religious truth. He cannot be interested, save in a superficial way, in a philosophy of religion. Philosophies of religion are more admired than read. But the modern man does believe in power; he knows power when he sees it, and he has a very clear notion that power makes history.

It is upon the causal significance of Christianity that I wish to lay the emphasis. I am not indifferent to its philosophy, but I believe that appreciation of its power in history is sufficient to give reality and strength to faith, and to stabilise life in the face of many speculative problems which we may never be able to solve.

And I am encouraged to take this position by a recent statement of Mr. Balfour. In his Gifford lectures he has called attention to the double aspect of beliefs: "All beliefs have a position actually, or potentially, in a cognitive series; all beliefs, again, have a position, known or unknown, in a causal series. All beliefs, in so far as they belong to the first kind of series, are elements in one or more collections of interdependent propositions. They are conclusions, or premises, or

both. All beliefs, in so far as they belong to the second kind of series, are elements in the temporal succession of interdependent events. They are causes, or effects, or both."[1] This is an important distinction. We may regard our beliefs about Christianity as belonging either to a cognitive or to a causal series. Our aim may be either a complete system of religious truth, or an adequate interpretation of religious experience. The first is the legitimate object of the theologian, the latter is the practical demand of ordinary intelligence. The average man is not interested in the more or less successful attempt to systematise a series of interdependent propositions; but he is tremendously concerned with the effort to understand his relation to the causal aspect of religion. For whatever we may think of religious experience one thing is clear and that is that it is caused. Our experience is an effect; and the greater the spiritual maturity, the keener is the conviction that we are what we are by the grace of God.

To believe in the causal aspect of Christianity; to have a few clear ideas of its function in individual experience seems to me to be the chief demand of the time among those whose intellectual requirements force them to seek for something more than a simple and uncritical faith.

[1] "Theism and Humanism," pp. 58–59.

The power of Christianity is revealed in history. It has produced a series of interdependent events in the domain of man's life, and there is always something quite definite about history. Historic events are real. Let it be frankly admitted (since I have no disposition to deny it) that our personal attitude towards the claims of Jesus Christ will in some measure determine our view of the facts of Christianity; still it remains true, and on this alone I wish to insist, there is a certain fixed minimum of unchangeable fact, a definite deposit of indestructible truth in history, on which to base one's conclusions. I am far from saying that a complete system of religious truth is unattainable; to many it may appear quite desirable or even necessary; but what I do maintain is that we need not wait for this to become Christians. In my judgment we have enough in the history of Christianity to justify faith, and a closer contact with its causal significance will enable us to be strong and stable believers, in spite of the want of a complete theory of religion.

The most convincing facts of history are the ethical facts. Professor Meyers has recently defined history "as past ethics." [2] The degree in which the moral ideal is expressed in history, is

[2] See an interesting discussion of the idea in "History As Past Ethics," chapter 1.

the measure of our confidence in the explanations given by those who shared in the experience of its power. It cannot be questioned that Paul's account of the power that transformed his life is more convincing than an explanation coloured by present-day philosophy. For one thing, he was closer to the facts, and for another, his account resembles the one usually derived from our own experience.

The Christian knows that his experience is an effect, and his intelligence demands some explanation of its cause. He does not ask for a complete theory; he wants an interpretation of the power that is functioning in his conscious life.

And it is a great step in the direction of simplicity to remember that Christianity is deeply rooted in history; and that its history is interpreted in a series of trustworthy documents written for the most part by those who from the first were experimentally acquainted with its transforming power.

The need for religious conviction is met in the New Testament by doctrines. We may think of religious doctrines as belonging either to a cognitive or to a causal series. In the one case we have a series of interdependent propositions, in the other a series of causal explanations.

I believe that doctrine belongs to both series.

On the one hand doctrines are revelations of objective truth. They may be, and ought to be worked up into a system, simply because they are organically related. The church must have a systematic theology, if it is to furnish adequate instruction to its members. In addition to theology the church requires a creed; but the plain truth is that the church does not succeed in making theologians of its members. Few are capable of understanding a theological system; and fewer still have ever felt the necessity of holding a definite credal statement of all religious beliefs. Most people are content to accept the creed made and provided by the church of their preference.

But this conventional position by no means indicates the real attitude of the individual towards Christ and Christian truth. His real interest is not in a series of inter-related beliefs, so much as in the causal significance of Christianity. He is more interested in causes than in reasons because he is usually more impressed with power than with theories. I believe religious doctrines have this additional aspect. They belong not only to a cognitive but to a causal series. They are not only true, but useful, and were in some measure devised to meet the need of growing intelligence, with specific reference to this point, namely: to explain the function of the power which in the

beginning had originated a divine life within the soul. Doctrines are descriptive of function; they explain how Christ's redemptive power functions in individual experience.

If Christianity is the religion of power it will manifest itself in individual life. Knowledge of its function is necessary to a stable faith because it explains the utility and practical necessity of ideas on the main subject of religion. We do not know the nature of electricity; we do not need to understand the theory of the dynamo, that of course is professional knowledge; but we must know something of the function of electricity if we are to use it safely. We must study its habits and learn how to control it in the interests of our practical needs. Now the habits of this mysterious power are its functions. Increased knowledge of function means enlarged utility. Electricity has a lighting function, but it is capable of other uses. It has a heating function, it is useful as motive power, and above all it has a therapeutic function. The great utility of this mysterious force is due to a growing knowledge of function, or in other words to the doctrines of electricity. It is even so with the power of Christianity. It is rooted in the mysterious nature of the eternal God. The finite mind can never fully comprehend the Infinite intelligence. Theories of

religion are limited by this essential fact. But stability in faith turns, not on theory, but on a reasonable knowledge of the functional significance of divine power in the experience of the individual. The more he knows of function, the stronger and more vital will be his experience. From this standpoint there is a vast need of teaching doctrine. I believe there is an intense desire among intelligent people for a clearer knowledge of their religious experience. The teaching of doctrines will meet this need, for they are descriptions of function; a knowledge of function is an element in a stable faith. Moreover the realisation of the truth that Christianity is power will come, I think, from a functional interpretation of religious teaching.

Such an interpretation will gain vividness from a study of the background of early Christianity. It is easy to contrast Christianity with the religious and ethical views current in the Graeco-Roman world at the time of the Advent. The importance of such a study has long been recognised by scholars; I believe that such an investigation will prove a valuable discipline for growing Christians.

The study of the background brings into clear relief the originality of the new religion. Christianity is not a philosophy, neither is it a ritual;

it is fundamentally the religon of power. Its unique significance does not lie in the novelty of its ideas, but in its motive force. Its power has made history; it has created and sustained a community of representative persons, and transmitted a tradition which a sound Biblical criticism has never disturbed. Moreover, it has offered a Person as the object of faith, who is able to impart moral and spiritual vitality to every one who is willing to receive Him. Man's mind craves ideas but man's soul longs for communion with the living God. We can never be content to trust ourselves to a series of concepts however true they may be; we need and must have personal contact with a Person. Jesus Christ stands there, the one luminous spot in the world's darkness, a fixed and indestructible fact of history. He cannot be explained away. The philosophic tides of the world have for centuries surged round His base, but He stands out above them all like a great rock in a restless sea. He is the Desire of all the nations, and holds in His hands the key to the human heart, and is the final and complete adjustment of the human spirit to the issues of eternity.

The chief purpose of this series is to present Christianity as the religion of power, as it is revealed in certain of its characteristic documents; to observe its function in the unique experience of

its community life, and to set forth its originality as it appears on its Græco-Roman background.

In the first lecture we shall consider the westward movement of Christianity. To the background we shall devote the next four lectures, wherein we shall study the passion for adjustment between God and man, which manifested itself in certain historic quests for safe conduct. In one lecture we shall take up the conception of power and show how it was expressed in the resurrection of Jesus, and in the creation of the Christian community. In two lectures we shall consider the functional aspect of three characteristic Christian doctrines. In the concluding lecture we shall give some reasons for believing in the finality of Christianity, and its importance for the present age.

The study of the westward movement of Christianity brings to our attention the interesting condition of the world at the time of the Advent. This movement is explained by the fact that while the way was closed towards the Jew, it was open towards Rome and the gentile world.

The Jew was fated to mistake his destiny. God intended him to be a missionary of religion, but he persistently misconceived his calling and allowed political ambitions to confuse his spiritual outlook so as to preclude the possibility of accepting his Messiah. No people have ever loved

freedom more than the Jewish race, yet no people have so profoundly confused political with spiritual liberty. At the time of the Advent it was practically impossible for the Jew to think of a spiritual experience apart from political freedom. He wanted a Messiah whose kingdom was of this world, and this secular aim was responsible for his tragic failure.

A more specific reason for the failure of Christianity to move eastward is to be found in the divisions among the Jewish people. The dominant parties in church and nation were Pharisees and Sadducees.

The Pharisee was a religious patriot, and his remarkable influence over Israel was due to the peculiar development of Jewish religion that followed the Babylonian exile. Prior to the exile the Jew never thought of questioning his religious status because he was a child of Abraham and a member of the covenant race; but after the exile religion became a more intimate and personal matter. The old communal morality was set aside in favour of individual morality; and with the collapse of the Jewish city-state the need of a definite and personal way of salvation became paramount. The question before the Jew was how to get in right relations with God, and how to keep himself in right relations? The answer was given in terms

of legal obedience to the revealed law. But since the law required interpretation the order of Scribes arose, and with them a body of oral tradition which shortly was added to the written law, and this composite of revelation and tradition was the authoritative standard of Jewish religion. This tendency to exalt the law, by the end of the second century, B. C., had developed into the party of the Pharisees, who through the synagogue worship attained a vast influence over Jewish life and opinion. Believing as they did that spiritual freedom was conditioned by political freedom, the Pharisees were consistent opponents of foreign influences and in the time of Christ their ruling passion was to drive the Roman out of Palestine. Their patriotic ambitions tempted them to interpret the Messianic hope in a national and secular way; they believed that Messiah's mission would be to establish the law and nation and give the Jew spiritual and political authority over the world. It is hardly necessary to suggest how utterly unlike to the real kingdom of Christ this notion was. The complete difference between the ideals of Jesus and those of the Pharisees sufficiently explains why this class could not welcome Christianity.

The Sadducees were religious liberals. Their interest in tradition was limited by the desire to

preserve their priestly privileges intact. They were men of the temple just as the Pharisees were men of the synagogue. In politics, they were opportunists. They did not object to foreign influences; in fact their fixed policy was to preserve the *status quo.* Above all they had no wish to antagonise Rome, and were willing that the nation endure any sort of political bondage, provided they were unmolested in the enjoyment of their privileges. The chief fear of the Pharisees was heresy, that of the Sadducees was sedition. The Pharisees opposed Christ because of His attitude towards the law; the Sadducees opposed Him because His dominion threatened the political and ecclesiastical supremacy of their order.

Under these circumstances it was impossible for either of these powerful orders to accept Christianity. Their opposition was inevitable. At first they were not able to form an opinion of the facts; but when they did realise the drift of Christ's teaching they were perfectly willing to sacrifice Him rather than give up their pretensions. These parties controlled the Jewish church and effectively closed the way towards Judaism.

There was a class among the Jews deserving the highest consideration. They were called the "devout in Israel." This was the Godly remnant spoken of by the prophets that waited the advent

of a spiritual Messiah; but they had little influence on the policies of the nation. Among this class we find such as Simeon and Nathaniel, the parents of John the Baptist, and the mother of Jesus. They were ready to receive the Messiah and welcomed the missionary character of the new religion, but they could not vitally change the attitude of the nation.

But while the door was closed towards Judaism and the East, it was open towards Rome and the gentile world. It was a world of violent and vivid contrasts and its outstanding features are easily grasped.

In the first place it was an age of profound confusion and disappointment. It was a time of political disenchantment. The last century before Christ was distinguished by the breakdown of the Roman republic. The ancient political organisation was found to be inadequate for the new needs. The failure of the old safeguards had developed a wide spread feeling of insecurity in all departments of life, and nowhere was this so evident as in moral and spiritual matters. For several centuries the native faith had been on the decline. This religion was so closely identified with the fortunes of the state, that whatever instability appeared in political relationships was immediately reflected in the religious attitude.

The Roman religion depended on the city-state; but as the city-state gave way to the Roman commonwealth, and eventually developed into an empire, faith in the native religion was permanently impaired. The views of the intelligent Roman of the last days of the republic are reflected in the writings of Cicero. Cicero had no personal faith in the native religion, but he believed its revival to be a political necessity. Government needed a religious sanction, and politicians of Cicero's type were quite willing to restore the old religion; or even to improve it by the addition of the best elements of current philosophies or desirable features of the Oriental religions which were then very popular in Rome. But in spite of this the pessimism of the time is expressed in the passionate scepticism of Lucretius, or even in the gracious humanism of Virgil, that best of poets; while the need for stability is quite apparent in the strenuous efforts made by Augustus to revive interest in the native faith.

In the second place it was an age of intense religious inquiry. Eras of political disillusion have usually been eras of religious revival. Political disturbances ordinarily set men on fresh spiritual adventures, for where faith in government is impaired the need for protection becomes acute, and it is natural to seek for it in religion. In the

case of the Romans, when they could no longer trust themselves to the native gods, they turned eagerly to other and newer cults. This accounts for the wide spread influence of the Oriental mystery religions in the time of Christ. Magna Mater and Isis were especially influential.

The intelligent classes, while not indifferent to religion, usually sought peace in some sort of philosophy. The philosophies of Greece, especially as they had been interpreted by such men as Panaetius and Posidonius, were accessible to the intelligent man, and the influence of Stoicism and Epicureanism was far reaching. In all walks of life men were willing to discuss religion or religious philosophy. It was felt that an epoch of history was closing; the world was on the threshold of fresh departures and every one needed spiritual guidance.

These conditions make it easy to understand that the gentile world was ready for the Christian propaganda, and the readiness to receive the new religion was aided by two factors of the first importance. The first factor was the influence of the Jew of the dispersion, the second, the religious aspirations of God-fearing gentiles.

The first factor directly favourable to the expansion of Christianity was the wide spread dispersion of the Jew. For centuries the world had been in a

state of flux. Since Alexander's conquests peoples and races mingled freely, and when the Roman rule was firmly established it was almost as easy to travel about the world as it is to-day. At the Advent there were between five and eight million Jews resident in the Roman empire. The Jew was the most clannish of peoples, and he made his racial solidarity evident everywhere. Judaism was a *"religio licita"* in the empire during the early days of the Christian propaganda. Freed from the burdensome restrictions thrown round other foreign faiths, and protected by law in the exercise of his peculiar forms of worship, the Jew naturally attained a considerable influence as a religious factor, wherever his worship was established. The religious bond of the Jew was the synagogue. In every town and hamlet, as well as the metropolis, you would find the spiritual interest of the Jew centring in the synagogue. He always selected a commanding site for his house of worship, and the peculiarity of this religion naturally attracted the attention of the gentile peoples.

The religion taught in these provincial synagogues differed in many important particulars from that of the Palestinian Jew. It was more liberal; less limited to ritual expressions and apt to emphasise ethical monotheism. Moreover the

Jew revealed to that melancholy age a contented and on the whole a happy life. The worship of the true God gave him a foothold beyond time and he was able to stand out above his age as a strong and stable force. Furthermore, he was full of missionary zeal and laboured to propagate his faith among the gentiles. This faith was the expression of the highest type of ethical monotheism known in those times, and the propaganda was aided by the Greek version of the Old Testament Scriptures. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of such a factor in preparing the way for Christianity.

The second factor of importance favourable to the spread of the new religion was the spiritual aspirations of God-fearing gentiles. This class is frequently mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul makes specific reference to them in his speech at Pisidian Antioch; Cornelius, the first uncircumcised gentile admitted to the church, Lydia, the seller of purple, and Justus, in whose house at Corinth Paul organised a church, were God-fearers. We hear of them in Thessalonica and Athens. The Greeks who came to Jesus in the passion week probably belonged to this class. The centurion of the gospels, who loved his servant, was also of the number. He is said to have loved the Jewish nation, and to have built them a syna-

gogue. They are variously described as "those that feared God," "those that worshipped God"; sometimes as "the devout" and once as "religious proselytes."

Up to recent times the God-fearers were identified with proselytes of the gate, and their significance was not clearly recognised; but recent investigations have conclusively shown that they were not proselytes at all. They never submitted to the distinctive rite of circumcision, but constituted what Schurer, our chief authority, has described as a "fringe of devout heathenism round the Jewish synagogue." [3] The God-fearer never intended to become a regular proselyte, but he accepted the monotheism and ethical standards of the synagogue worship. In some respects he observed the ceremonial law, notably that of tithing or of Sabbath keeping; he gave moral and often material support to the Jewish propaganda, and in many other ways aided in the spread of ideas favourable to Christianity.

But the God-fearing gentile is significant of much more than this. His religious aspiration shows that there were many in that age passionately seeking the true God. They had outgrown the native religion, they were too high minded to

[3] See Kirsopp Lake, "Earlier Epistles of St. Paul," pp. 37–40.

fall under the sensuous spell of the Oriental cults; moreover they were not content with current philosophies, but had grouped themselves round the Jewish synagogue, a body of receptive learners. They represent on gentile soil the ideal Jew after God's own heart and may properly be classed with those who were looking for the world's Saviour.

It was from this class that the largest and most influential accessions to Christianity came. They eagerly welcomed the new faith. When Paul was preaching in Corinth, in spite of Jewish protests, the majority of the God-fearers went over to the new religion and organised a Christian church in the house of Justus, one of their number. What took place in Corinth frequently happened in other places. If Paul felt it important to make a special appeal to this class in his speech at Pisidian Antioch, it is natural to suppose that he would do it elsewhere. It was the wholesale desertion of these powerful auxiliaries as much as the strangeness of the new teaching that occasioned the bitter hostility of the Jews towards the Christian propaganda.

This explains the rapid spread of Christianity over the gentile world. Granted a people suffering from political and religious disillusion, in passionate search of a way of life, and keenly interested in religious discussions; granted an age in-

creasingly under the influence of two powerful factors, such as the Jew of the dispersion and the God-fearing gentile, and all that was needed for a rapid spread of the new religion would be an enthusiastic presentation of its central message. It was the concurrence of these notable factors: a passionate missionary propaganda and a world eager for its message that carried the gospel from its provincial surroundings in Jerusalem to the heart of the world's metropolis, and transformed it from a small Jewish sect into a religion of conscious power and universal mission.

The story of the westward movement is told in the Acts of the Apostles, a book of first rate historical importance not only because it is the only account we have of the beginnings of church history, but also because it was written by a man who had the historic sense developed in a remarkable degree. Recent investigations have practically demonstrated the fact that this book was written by Luke, a gentile physician and companion of Paul, at Rome during Paul's first imprisonment.[4] Luke alone among New Testament writers had a genuine historical spirit. He is not an annalist but a biological historian. His aim is to describe a great movement and he selects his facts

[4] Harnack: "Luke the Physician; Date of Acts and the Synoptic Gospels." Crown Theological Library.

with special reference to its development. He was intensely aware of the dramatic qualities of history, and masses his facts so as to reveal the underlying principle of growth and enable the reader to follow the story to a logical conclusion.

Luke's aim is to tell the story of how Christianity moved out of Jerusalem and the Jewish world to become a world religion in the metropolis of gentile civilisation. It is a story so vividly told that it captures the imagination, yet of such clarity and massive strength as to produce in a reasonable mind the strongest sort of persuasion of its truth.

The story falls into three divisions: first there is the stage of beginnings, centring at Jerusalem, in which Peter is the leader; second there is the stage of transition centring in Antioch of Syria, in which Barnabas and Saul are the leaders; and third there is the story of culmination centring at Rome, in which Paul is the leader.

Beginning in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, we get the primitive conception of Christianity. The new faith is still organically related to the old, and the teaching is offered solely to Jews and proselytes under the shadow of the temple. The testimony of the infant church is given in Peter's sermon and is concerned with Jesus of Nazareth. This teaching was limited to three things: first, Jesus was the Jewish Messiah,

second, the resurrection was proof of His Messiahship, and third, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a demonstration of Messiah's power to save.

At first the propaganda occasioned no decided break with the Jewish authorities. Futile efforts under the lead of the Sadducees failed for want of support from the Pharisees. The latter were disposed to let well enough alone. Jesus was dead, the movement could not last, and in so far as the resurrection teaching was concerned, this was in some respects in sympathy with their own beliefs. The disciples seemed to be a band of mistaken reformers: why not let them alone? This view was reflected in the speech of Gamaliel. It was true that the enthusiasm of the disciples was disconcerting, but the authorities were little disposed at that time to interfere.

But an incident occurred shortly after that made it imperative that the two great parties in the Jewish church should forget their differences and unite to suppress the new faith. Rapid growth in the church occasioned a division of labour and certain deacons had been chosen, among whom was Stephen, a Jew of the dispersion, with profound insight into the radical character of the new religion and considerable ability as an orator.

The speech of Stephen was the beginning of the period of transition and brought the infant com-

munity to a full consciousness of the significance of its faith. Stephen's sermon reflects the thinking of a Jew of the dispersion, who while loyal to ancient traditions is still broadminded and catholic in his view of truth. He asserted his belief in the divine significance of ancient tradition. Undoubtedly both law and temple were divine institutions; and of course this was the conviction of a true child of Abraham. But he asserted in addition that since Jesus had come, both law and temple had been superseded; and that all that was essential to Judaism had been taken over into the new religion.

The radical nature of such teaching is obvious since it at once set aside everything that Pharisee and Sadducee believed Judaism to be. The immediate effect was the martyrdom of Stephen, the closing up of the ranks among contending factions, and the beginning of an organised movement to suppress the new faith. It is a dramatic example of poetic justice that the man selected to lead this campaign of extermination should have been destined to become the chief advocate of the despised religion.

The historian proceeds to describe the effect of persecution on the fortunes of the infant church. We see the birth of missionary zeal, and the spread of the gospel through Samaria into Syria,

We hear of a notable ministry of Philip, and of an unprecedented admission of an uncircumcised gentile into the membership of the church. With dramatic fulness, Saul's conversion is described, but little is said of his long retirement in Tarsus.

Resuming the main thread of his narrative, Luke tells of the rapid development of the church in Antioch of Syria. This movement was so important that it was deemed best to supervise it from Jerusalem, and Barnabas, a Cypriote Jew, was sent to direct the work. Barnabas was a discerning man and from the outset had been Saul's friend. He now summons him from his retreat in Tarsus and under the joint leadership of these two men the church attained to such distinction that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. Hitherto they had been known as "people of the way," a sect of Judaism, but it was now evident that this was a mistake.

The difference between Judaism and Christianity at once raised the question as to terms of admission for gentiles. Were they to be admitted to church fellowship on terms of faith and repentance, or must they first become proselytes to Judaism? Cornelius it is true had entered the church on the simple terms of faith and repentance, but this was regarded as an exception. The

church at Antioch had been founded on the same terms, but this had been done by certain nameless disciples without the authority of the church in Jerusalem. Should the authorities of the parent church insist upon the more rigid terms, or accept the inevitable and allow gentiles to become Christians without becoming proselytes?

At first the question was allowed to drift; a private agreement between Saul and the Jerusalem authorities opened the way for a foreign mission and the church at Antioch sent out Barnabas and Saul as the first missionaries to heathen lands.

But this gave great offence to Jewish Christians of the stricter sort, and when Paul returned from the first mission journey the need for an official deliverance on the question was paramount. Such a deliverance was made by the great council of Jerusalem, in favour of the liberal policy. Gentiles were to be admitted to church fellowship on faith and repentance, without reference to their attitude towards Judaism. This was a far reaching decision, for it enabled Christianity forever to cast off its Jewish limitations; but it was not accepted as final by the stricter type of Jewish Christian, and the opposition finally developed an anti-Pauline missionary society known as the Ju-

daizers, whose pernicious activities troubled the church for years after.[5]

The council of Jerusalem closed the period of transition and opened that of culmination. Freed from the hampering influence of Palestine, Paul came to his own as the Apostle to the gentiles; one by one the great centres of population fell under the spell of his wonderful ministry, and churches sprang up in Thessalonica, Philippi, Corinth and Ephesus. Paul wisely followed the trade routes and planted Christianity in places from which it would quickly spread to Rome. The glorious church which had grown so influential in the metropolis is evidence of the quick dispersion over the gentile world.

Paul's ambition was world-wide. At the end of his third journey he contemplated a fourth which should carry him to Spain, at that time supposed to be the end of civilisation. During this journey he proposed to realise a long cherished desire to see Rome. The rest of Luke's story is taken up with the partial realisation of this plan. It is a story of Jewish intrigue: of tumults in Jerusalem, of narrow escapes and night alarms; of disputations and imprisonments in Cæsarea, culminating in thrilling adventures by land and sea, and Paul's

[5] For the importance of this controversy, see MacGregor's "Christian Freedom," the Baird lecture for 1913.

arrival at last in Rome, a prisoner of the Lord. Here the story fittingly ends.

This thing was not done in a corner. At every point the movement was in contact with the life and opinion of the world. The gospel interested all sorts of people. It came into a welter of races and religions. It touched superstition, intellectual confusion and insistent need.

What was the temper of those times? What were the intellectual forces the new religion had to meet? What of the rival faiths with which it was compared? What were the moral and spiritual aspirations of that changeable and all too-human age? In a word, what was the background of life and opinion upon which the gospel was projected? These are some of the questions upon a study of which we are about to enter.

PART ONE: THE QUEST FOR SAFE CONDUCT

LECTURE II

THE RITUAL QUEST FOR SAFE CONDUCT

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THE RITUAL QUEST FOR SAFE CONDUCT

FROM the beginning man has been a seeker after God. This quest is occasioned by a need for a right relation with God that becomes urgent in proportion as man develops a moral experience. Religion in so far as it is a human development is man's effort to meet this need.

No period of man's history is without this distinguishing feature, but perhaps no age has more keenly felt the need of a right relation with God than that which forms the background of early Christianity. It was, as we have seen, an age of political and religious disenchantment. The rapid shifting of political barriers, the breakdown of ancient religious supports, and the violent manifestations of passionate cruelty which characterised the last days of the Roman Republic, together with the increasing mobility of life tended to bring the question of moral direction to the front and set the individual on a fresh quest for God. We are about to begin the study of some of these quests. All of them were efforts to answer the

question: How can a man get right with God?

At the outset, however, it will be well to define our notion of religion. Religion is man's most concentrated conception of spiritual need. It is the manifestation of an impulse which has been defined as "the effective desire to be in right relation to the Power manifesting itself in the universe." [1] This desire is often based on different notions of deity. Man may believe in one God or in many gods; he may follow superstition or spiritual revelations, but the fact of consequence is the presence from the beginning of this imperious need. The need for right relations expresses itself in various ways, which tend to become typical and historically continuous because they indicate representative phases of spiritual experience. We shall consider in this and immediately succeeding lectures certain of these typical forms, but in the beginning it is best to form an idea of their general character.

They may be described as quests for safe conduct.[2] The need for a right relation with God develops when man becomes aware of the mystery of life. He felt the mystery of his being long before he clearly thought about it, and his

[1] Howerth, quoted by Fowler: "The Religious Experience of the Roman People," p. 8.

[2] I owe this phrase to Mr. L. P. Jacks.

first response to it came through the imagination rather than the intellect. Man felt that he was dependent on a power whose presence was manifest in nature. What was this power? Was it a person, or an impersonal force? Did it think, feel, and will like a man? The natural impulse was to think of this power in such terms as to mask, if not entirely to destroy its strangeness. The easiest way of overcoming the mystery of God was to make Him in man's image, to invest Him with human attributes.

The notion of the Infinite and Eternal was a painful one for the primitive mind. It was too remote, awful and vague in that form, to satisfy human need, hence the tendency to polytheism was present from the first. Man broke up the Infinite into a number of finite parts, and by investing these several parts with human attributes, he brought God within the range of the feelings and comprehension of the understanding. Man's first impulse was to find a human life in God, and when he thought he had found this, it made him very much at home in the world. This was, as Lowes Dickinson has truly observed, the distinguishing feature of Greek religion.[3] Among the Greeks, the gods were the first citizens of states,

[3] "The Greek View of Life," pp. 3–4.

the founders of races and the natural protectors of peoples.

These early conceptions were elaborated in highly coloured mythologies; but in spite of the complexity and beauty of these imaginative forms, the likeness of the gods to men was never lost sight of. Their passions were human, all too human; and so long as man was able to think of the central mystery of his life in familiar terms, the need for adjustment was but vaguely felt. It was present, of course, but never burdensome. He was very much at home in the world because God was altogether like himself.

But the moral sense grew with man's growth. Enlightenment developed conscience, and man began to feel the spur of instinctive morality. This developed into a critical tendency which operated in two directions. On the one hand man became sceptical of his gods, on the other hand he began to question his religious status. He could neither satisfy his conscience, nor be at home in the world. He was haunted by a feeling of not being right before God, and a fresh quest for a right relation with the Power manifesting itself in the universe became imperative.

Unable any longer to be at home in the world he becomes aware of the need for moral guidance, and begins to think of religion as an expedient in

the way of safe conduct through the world. His problem is a very simple one: How can he get through this world with credit and safety? The answer to this question takes various forms. Sometimes it is expressed in ritual performances, at other times in ethical speculations. In the case of the Jew it took the form of obedience to a revealed law. These methods of adjustment reduce themselves to type; they begin to make history and can be isolated and studied in detail. They are of immense value in understanding man's religious conceptions because they express certain persistent phases of spiritual experience.

All these methods of adjustment were current in the Græco-Roman world when Christianity began its westward movement. From Egypt and the East came the most attractive ritualistic religions, from Greece the most important ethical conceptions, and from Palestine the religion of revelation; and each exercised a remarkable influence over the peoples to whom the gospel was preached.

The influence of these several forms of religious teaching was due to the fact that the age acutely realised the need for safe conduct. Man felt that he had a clear title to his sins. Moral sensibility made him aware of the lack of harmony between his experience and the mysterious Being whose

power was manifest in the universe. The question of right relation was fundamental. Man wanted moral security and spiritual certitude. He was quite impatient with vague and inchoate notions of religion and demanded a concrete and definite transaction with the Deity. This explains the syncretic tendency of the time, which is, as we shall see, strikingly reflected in the writings of Cicero.

The problem of safe conduct was urgent for a very simple reason. A man may be very well content with his religious status so long as he is not obliged to think about it. But if events force him to reflect he may become dissatisfied with it, and when this takes place he will lose confidence in his status. In other words reflection of any kind is apt to reopen the question of safe conduct. It is not necessary to prove that a view of religion is false; it is only necessary seriously to question it. Now the passion for certitude in religious matters which characterised this age was met on every side by a questioning spirit. The age wanted to believe in something because it wanted peace; but it could not escape the pains of doubt. That is why the period of the Advent was one of passionate religious inquiry. The Græco-Roman world was in quest of safe conduct and at the same time sceptical of familiar ways of salvation. The old

Roman gods were either dead or inactive. They could no longer satisfy the yearning for peace and security which characterised the age; still men felt that an answer to their main question could be found. They were ready to listen to any prophet or any gospel. They were willing to examine any kind of religion, and what is even more significant, they were busy constructing new religions out of ancient faiths and philosophies. The syncretic tendency of the time shows this. One cult would borrow from another, and each sought the best elements in current faiths.

When Paul carried the gospel into the gentile world there were three persistent forms of spiritual experience exercising a mighty influence over the people: salvation by ritual, salvation by ethics, and salvation by legal obedience to a revealed law. The first was represented by the Oriental mystery religions, the second by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophies, and the third by Judaism.

These conceptions were by many questioned, and by some found inadequate. For one thing they were old. Each had a past which could not be lived down. The old Roman religion was still devoutly followed in rural communities, but it had little save a political influence in the centres of population. As a religious movement the Augustan revival was a failure from the start. The

Oriental cults were immensely popular with the masses but they had little significance for serious-minded intellectuals. These as a rule sought consolation in philosophy and ethical speculation. They confessed the inadequacy of theory, and felt the need for a "virtue-making power." Many of them were trying to live in harmony with the example of some ancient philosopher. Judaism, of course, had powerful adherents, even among gentiles. The presence among the latter of God-fearers is an evidence of the superiority of Judaism over other cults; still the eagerness with which they embraced Christianity shows the drift of the times. The ethical monotheism of the Jew of the dispersion made the question of a right relation with God very urgent, but the sense of morality which it created tended to cast suspicion on ceremonial methods of all kinds.

The truth is the moral sense of the age was running far in advance of its religious supports. Conscience was driving men into a blind alley. Political and social changes made the need of moral guidance painfully evident, but a satisfactory moral dynamic was not forthcoming.

Into this welter of faith and doubt, of insistent need and painful questioning, came the new religion. Could Christianity answer the great question and set man right with God? Could it afford

humanity an undisputed status before the Most High? This interest in religion gave Paul and his associates a peculiar opportunity. The world was in a sense prepared for Christianity. We must not suppose, however, that the religious interest of the time was a self-conscious and deliberately intelligent effort to criticise, examine, reject, or accept any religion. What was present in this age was a tendency. People felt that the old notions would not do; they were haunted by a sense of moral insecurity. Religion as commonly understood was degraded into a feeling of nervousness—an unreasoning dread of gods and dæmons. They were very uncertain about the future. This feeling had an immense power for tormenting people simply because it was vague and inchoate. Dread was in the air, like a poisonous atmosphere. Men questioned the next step. The need for a clear and explicit way of life was paramount.

This vague sense of need is responsible in part for the early descriptions of the Christian community. Before the idea of the church took definite shape, the disciples of Christ were called the people of the way. They moved through the world with such confidence and precision that people were inclined to ask them the reason for the hope that was in them, and they could only reply: "We have sanctified Christ in our hearts as Lord."

The gospel was the way of life. It is also responsible for certain things in Paul's epistles, as when he discusses Greek philosophy with the Corinthians, the tyranny of elemental spirits with the Colossians, or elaborates the great doctrines of the faith in the letter to the Romans. By natural endowment and spiritual experience Paul was fitted to apprehend what the gentile world needed. He gave his teaching a form that would make it intelligible to that restless and unstable age.

Before, however, we begin the study of how the background influenced Christian teaching we must consider in detail the characteristic forms of spiritual experience manifested by certain quests for safe conduct then current in the Græco-Roman world. We must try to understand why these methods of salvation were being questioned at the beginning of the Christian era.

The first of these ways is the ritual quest for safe conduct. The impulse to get right with God by means of ceremonial performances is the oldest religious quest of mankind. The belief that by means of external observances man can lay the Eternal under tribute is deeply rooted in human nature. Salvation by ritual is the religion of the natural man, simply because it is the one phase of religious experience that has no necessary connection with morality. If one believe in the ab-

solute efficacy of external performances he will be under no obligation to think of religion as a sanction for morals. A strictly ritualistic notion ordinarily stifles the ethical impulse. It intoxicates the senses, exploits the emotions, debauches the imagination, and, by putting the conscience to sleep, enables man to make the best of both worlds. For this reason ritual has always been popular with the masses. The aptitude of primitive man for religion conceived as a mythology was far in excess of his aptitude for material comfort. Long before he had learned how to make adequate provision for his physical necessities he had elaborated a scheme of worship highly ritualistic in character.[4] A ritualistic religion cannot create moral sanctions. What usually happens is that the moral sense develops independently and then turns round upon the ritual and transforms it ethically. This was the conspicuous service rendered to Greek religion by the sophists of the fifth century B. C.

The immense popularity of ritual forms makes a study of this phase of religious experience very important. The ritual quest for safe conduct was represented in the Græco-Roman world by the mystery religions, which came for the most part

[4] Fairbairn: "The Philosophy of the Christian Religion," pp. 188–189.

from the East. A study of some of these cults is necessary if we are to understand the religious situation confronting the gospel during the westward movement of Christianity. Such a study will show how they prepared the way for Christianity, not only because they intensified the need for guidance, but also because of their signal failure to furnish it.

It is difficult for us, who are accustomed to think of religion in terms of an absolute moral imperative, to estimate the power of ritual in the religion of the ancient world. It was powerful in two directions: on the one hand it captured the imagination by its splendid appeals to the senses. Even so confirmed a sceptic as Lucretius confessed that he was powerfully impressed by the ritual of Magna Mater. On the other hand ritual had an immense influence on the spirit of the devotee. It silenced the questioning of the mind and tranquillised the heart by the realistic precision of its modes of worship. The performance of ritual seemed to accomplish a reconciliation with the gods in a visible way.

In order to appreciate the power of such appeals, let us suppose that you were convinced that you would never be able to provide a reasonable competence for your old age; and you were assured if you would memorise and recite each 4th

of July the Declaration of Independence before an officer of the United States provided for that purpose, that the government would assume entire responsibility for your future, you would have no difficulty in accepting this proposition. And this was the sort of promise made by these Oriental cults. As Cumont observes, "if a Divinity was invoked according to the correct forms, especially if one knew how to pronounce its real name, it was compelled to act in conformity to the will of its priest. The sacred words were an incantation that compelled the superior powers to obey the officiating person, no matter what purpose he had in view. With the knowledge of the liturgy men acquired an immense power over the world of spirits." [5]

These promises were always associated with splendid appeals to the senses. Naturally they had a powerful hold on the masses and this taken together with the fact that the cults began to spread at a time of political and religious unrest easily accounts for their popularity.

We must keep steadily in mind the material fact that these cults were able to produce the most satisfactory sort of impression on the spirit of the worshipper. It is easy to suggest their inadequacy. But this is quite immaterial. The fact

[5] "Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism," p. 93.

is these cults were healing and consoling influences in a profoundly distressed age, and some knowledge of them is required if we are to understand the forces of life and opinion that came in contact with the gospel.

The study of these religions is very difficult for two reasons: first, because we know next to nothing about their rituals, and secondly, because the syncretic tendency was present from the beginning. The interpretation of a mystery cult depends for the most part on some knowledge of its ritual. Its essential meaning is not expressed in a theology, but in forms of worship. And we know little of the ritual because it was performed in secret. It was open to the initiate only, and rarely came to the knowledge of contemporary writers. There is a little in Plutarch; we have a romantic account of the ritual of Isis in the writings of Apuleius; Lucian tells us something of the ritual of the Syrian Goddess, but these notices are of little value in forming an opinion of their nature in the early decades of the first century. Furthermore these cults were subject to the syncretic tendency. They borrow, modify and transform whatever is to their liking. They constantly react on each other. The powerful ethical criticism of the time was forcing the pagan theologians to disavow or disguise much that was gross and

repellent. They often clothed their teachings in the best and most popular forms of other religions. The result is that the religious conceptions of the early part of the first century lack distinctness. Still it is possible to consider these cults in a general way. We shall confine our attention, however, to the mystery religions which came to Rome from the Orient, since their influence best illustrates the ritual quest for God.

There were at least four Eastern religions besides Judaism current in the Roman empire. These religions were: the Cybele-Attis cult which came from Phrygia; certain Syrian nature cults which were tending towards monotheism; the Isis-Serapis cult which came from Egypt, and last and greatest of them all, the cult of Mithra. It has been clearly shown that Mithra had little influence in the empire until the second century of our era. Such scholars as Cumont,[6] Kennedy,[7] Clemen,[8] Dill,[9] Schweitzer,[10] and Harnack,[11] agree that it came late to Rome. Pompey, if we are to

[6] Op. Cit., 140.

[7] "St. Paul and the Mystery Religions," pp. 114–115.

[8] "Primitive Christianity and Its Non-Jewish Sources," pp. 30–32.

[9] "Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius," pp. 589–591.

[10] "Paul and His Interpreters," p. 186.

[11] "The Mission and Expansion of Christianity," Vol. 2, pp. 318–320.

believe Plutarch, found traces of Mithra among the Cilician pirates in the first century B. C.; the cult was probably known to the foreign legionary in the provinces long before it reached Rome; but there is no reliable evidence that Mithra had an important influence on the religious situation until the second century, and for this reason it has no place in our inquiry. We shall limit ourselves to the religions known to have had an influence on current opinion at the beginning of the Christian era.

The religious notions of the pagan Semites were propagated in the early empire by the Syrian merchant and slave. These were nature cults that originated in the worship of the vital principle. In the beginning they were gross and materialistic; but while the Egyptian was never quite successful in raising his gods above the dust, the Syrian finally lifted his conception of deity to the high heavens. As Cumont, our chief authority, has pointed out, as these nature myths came under the influence of astrology, the notion of deity they symbolised was refined and exalted until it took the form of a God beyond the stars, whose dwelling place was the high heavens, in short, a God Almighty.[12] Thus these Syrian cults, of little value otherwise, assisted other religions in exalting

[12] Op. Cit., pp. 127–129; 199.

their gods, and aided in the spread of monotheism particularly among the peoples not influenced by Judaism.[13]

The Phrygian religion was a nature cult also. Cybele was the mother of all things, the goddess of nature and especially of wild nature. She was the seat of the vital principle, giving the seasons and the harvests, sending the storm and the rain, and ruling over the changing year. Early in her history she is associated with a strange creature, called Attis, who figures as her consort. In the beginning it is a tale of vulgar passion and self-mutilation; but Attis slowly evolves into a symbol of the changing seasons, and finally becomes a dying and reviving god. The cult was served by mutilated priests, and its worship was a wild frenzy very like that of the cult of Dionysus in ancient Greece.

This Eastern religion came to Rome in 204 B. C. under very interesting circumstances. The crisis occasioned by the Second Punic War compelled the Romans to consult the Sibyls, and as a measure of state policy they advised the introduction of a new religion. They even went so far as to suggest the propriety of bringing the Great Mother to Rome. Acting on this suggestion the Romans

[13] On the general tendency towards monotheism in the last century of the Republic, see Fowler's "Roman Ideas of Deity," Lecture 2.

sent an embassy to Phrygia, and Cybele, symbolised by an old black stone, was brought in splendid state to assume her sway over the city of the seven hills. The stone was deposited in the Temple of Victory on the Palatine April 4th, and this day was made a festival. The Romans, being especially anxious to preserve the foreign character of the cult, gave the festival a Greek name, "the Megalesia." Thirteen years later a temple was dedicated to the Great Mother but for many years the Romans were forbidden by senatorial enactment to take any part in her worship.[14] In spite of this Cybele flourished. Her worship was highly offensive to Roman taste and it remained a religion of a foreign minority until the empire, when it rapidly grew in influence. It retained its hold until the fourth century when it was finally absorbed into the cult of Mithra. The Romans despised the mutilated priests but were powerfully influenced by the worship. Magna Mater was very attractive to women. She had no theology, gave unrestrained expression to the emotions and depended entirely on her frenzied forms of worship.

The cult of Isis-Serapis came to Rome from Alexandria a century before the Christian era. This syncretic religion was devised by the Ptol-

[14] Fowler: "Roman Festivals," p. 70.

emies as a political expedient. It was an effort to merge the Egyptian cult of Isis-Osiris with popular Greek conceptions for the purpose of welding together the foreign subjects of the empire. It is likely that the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries had something to do with this transformation. This cult, like that of Magna Mater, remained a religion of a foreign minority until the empire, after which, in spite of repeated efforts to suppress it, it gained a vast influence in Rome, especially among women. Osiris, like Attis, was a dying and reviving god, but the chief contribution of Isis was her tremendous emphasis of ritual,

All these cults had many gross elements. Their frenzied forms of worship were offensive to the Roman sense of decorum. They had, and this must be kept steadily in mind, little or no connection with morality. But in spite of obvious limitations they propagated certain religious conceptions hitherto foreign to the Roman temperament, which were not only attractive to the people but of great utility in the spread of Christianity. Their wide influence shows the drift of the times. The people were looking for certain things in religion and they found them in these cults. What were some of these things? If we know this we

can understand the sort of religion the age was prepared to accept.

The mystery religions emphasised the idea of personal immortality. To the disillusioned Roman, burdened with a sense of existence in a world of political and social disorder, aware of the futility of philosophy and no longer able to believe in the pale abstractions of the native religion, the appeal of these warm, sensuous cults of the East was almost irresistible. He was offended by the frenzied worship, he despised the effeminate and mutilated priests, but he was powerfully impressed by their splendid promises. They offered union with the life of the gods through certain visible and compelling sacraments. To observe a ceremony or submit to a purification conferred a lasting benefit. They used ritual performances with great skill and effectiveness. The initiate always had a definite transaction with deity; something invariably happened to him; the ritual never failed. Ceremonial brought the worshipper into direct contact with divinity and he became an enthusiast—a man full of the gods. It was natural that the starved imagination of the people should welcome the splendid ceremonial of the East in place of the cold and repulsive abstractions of the old Roman religion.

These cults were served by a non-secular priest-

hood, a new thing in those days. A priest of the Roman religion was an officer of the state, and religious observances were parts of public duty. The new cults by comparison familiarised the people with the idea of a personal and non-political religion. The temples of the native religion were government buildings: units of a political organisation; the new cults were directed by ministers whose only function was religious and the ritual was performed in an open church. The temples were open at all times; there were daily services and the gods were always accessible. The opportunity of taking part at all times in religious services would naturally appeal to a people whose notions of worship had hitherto been limited to state ceremonials.

We cannot overestimate the attraction of the open churches and the non-secular clergy. The old Roman religion at its very best was a cold, abstract sort of thing. It was a state religion rather than a religion for the individual. Its religious books were as dry as law reports while its conception of decorum was not calculated to appeal very strongly to the emotions. It made little use of the imagination and deliberately discouraged enthusiasm. The new cults on the other hand were warm, sensuous, and passionate. They deliberately appealed to the emotions, and exploited the

imagination. They were personal religions adjusted to individual need. Worship was not an affair of political duty but an invariable expression of personal preference. Such an appeal was calculated to meet the craving of the time for a larger expression of individuality. Men were acutely conscious of personal needs, they were looking for a personal religion. They wanted (and who can blame them) a religion adjusted to the emergencies of every day life; and the open church, the daily services, and the non-secular clergy met the need for the time being in a very satisfactory way.

These cults also provided a new conception of social relationships. Under the old *régime* the ordinary basis of fellowship was the family, the clan, and the city-state. Worshippers of national deities were never free from a feeling of isolation. The people were kept apart by a rigid caste system. The Romans, especially in that unstable time, were suspicious of all voluntary associations that were not in accord with established custom. But the city-state with its exclusive solidarity was gone. The world was adrift on the tide of empire and cosmopolitanism made men lonely. It aroused while it could not satisfy their social instincts. The freedmen, rapidly rising in wealth, culture and independence, demanded a new basis

for social fellowship, a bond more in harmony with individual necessity. The new cults were peculiarly fitted to meet this need. They were essentially social and democratic. They expressed the feeling of John Wesley that "people should go to heaven in companies and not one by one." All men, without regard to their previous condition, became brothers in the temples of the gods. Master and man, freedman and slave found themselves associated on terms of equality in the daily worship. The brotherhood had a community supper which symbolised this new relationship. By placing a new value on the individual, by opening avenues of escape from the loneliness of the time, these new religions were able to satisfy the social hunger that was then everywhere evident in the organisation of guilds and fellowships, burial societies and fraternities of various sorts: ostensibly founded on business or economic interests, but in reality manifesting the longing for relationships of a social kind more in harmony with individual need. By turning social passion into religious channels these cults made it easier to form Christian communities among peoples already familiar with the form and desirability of such associations.[15]

[15] For an interesting account of the social passion of the age, see Dill: "Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius," Book II, Chapter 3.

These cults were called mystery religions because they had secret rites and esoteric doctrines. The elaborate ceremony of initiation was calculated to arouse the curiosity and eventually to develop the latent mysticism of the time into a powerful spiritual influence.

It must not be forgotten that these cults had little or no connection with morality. They were sacramental religions rather than moral dynamics, and quite indulgent of human frailty. This was particularly true of the cult of Isis. She was, as Cumont truly observes, "honoured especially by the women with whom love was a profession" and her temples were often scenes of disgraceful intrigue.[16] Still the power of these religions was great. They maintained their influence in the face of persecution, and devotees were sometimes capable of martyrdom. They were capable of giving peace and consolation to a melancholy age. It was faith in the absolute efficacy of ritual performances that reconciled the orderly Roman to the orgiastic genuflections of Cybele's eunuch priests. It was faith in her power to save that prompted proud Roman matrons to bathe in the chilly Tiber in winter, or walk round the temple of Isis on their bleeding knees. Satirists like Juvenal might scoff at these things, but it matters little. Many

[16] Op. Cit., p. 90.

poor disillusioned people found in the service of these strange Eastern religions a peace and consolation they could not obtain from the old native faith.

The popularity of these cults taken together with their history is a supreme example of the success and failure of a ritualistic religion. Ritual is powerful so long as conscience is dormant, but once rouse the moral sense and it will turn upon ritual and either reject it entirely or modify it so as to destroy its original form. This process of transformation was undoubtedly going on as early as the first century. Parallel with the spread of these cults was a growing ethical movement represented by certain philosophies, particularly Stoicism. No religion, least of all such cults as these, can withstand the transforming criticism of ethics, and it was a regnant morality that gradually undermined their influence.

This came about partly through syncretism, and partly by supersession. In the fourth century of our era paganism was transformed and confronted Christianity in the religion of Mithra, but Mithra finally yielded to the Man of Galilee. In the early decades of the first century, however, the influence of ethics is represented by a tendency to borrow ideas and practices from other religions,

and the effort to bring conduct into conformity with moral requirements.

The conflict between ritual and ethics may be illustrated by a consideration of the question of origins. How would these cults appear when contrasted with a religion like Christianity?

A fourth century impression of the conflict between ethics and ritual is thus summed up by Cumont: "Never was the lack of harmony greater between the moralising tendencies of theologians and the cruel shamelessness of tradition. A god held up as the august lord of the universe was the pitiful and abject hero of an obscene love affair. . . . The men of letters and senators attending those mysteries saw them performed by painted eunuchs, ill reputed for their infamous morals, who went through dizzy dances similar to those of the dancing dervishes. . . . We can imagine the repugnance these ceremonies caused in everybody whose judgment had not been destroyed by a fanatical devotion." [17]

But the disposition to bring tradition to the test of ethics was very powerful even in the first century. The moral character of the priests was severely condemned by Petronius and Juvenal. A century later the devotees of these cults did not escape the scorn of Lucian and Apuleius. And

[17] Op. Cit., pp. 71–72.

if one were disposed to follow the tradition of Attis or Osiris to its source one came upon coarse nature myths, and the portentous figures which bulked so largely in the imagination even of the first century turned out to be symbols only. It was far otherwise with the Christian tradition. Trace this to its origin and you come upon the historic figure of Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, abounding in good works; holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners. It was the tremendous contrast between a Person of historic reality, and a series of myths and symbols rising out of the superstitions of the past that finally discredited the mystery religions and led to the triumph of the church.

It was the demand for an historic basis for religious tradition that inspired the writing of the gospels. The church on gentile soil had no religious books except the Greek version of the Old Testament and occasional letters to individual communities. Christians depended in the beginning on oral tradition. They received Jesus Christ as their Saviour upon the testimony of the Apostles. But so soon as Christianity came into contact with other cults the question was bound to rise: Did the glorious Saviour of Apostolic preaching have a beginning in history? Was He a real Personality, or was He like Cybele or Isis, a

myth also? Was Christ a symbol of God, or God manifest in the flesh? In some respects the real problem of the Apostles in dealing with gentiles was not to convince them that Jesus was God, but to prove the reality of His human and earthly life. They were obliged to show that Jesus was an historic Person. In response to this need the first gospels were written. We cannot easily measure the power of these simple narratives—the artless simplicity of Mark, or the gracious humanism of Luke—in affording historical realism to a glorious tradition. Back of Apostolic preaching was this historic Personality, the life, death and resurrection of the world's Redeemer; and as this preaching created and sustained the purest form of morality consecrated as it was by faith in the Divine Master, it was inevitable that the age should realise that a new and distinct power had come into the world.

It is true that the Oriental mystery religions aided in the spread of ideas favourable to Christianity. They made the Romans familiar with such notions as immortality, salvation, purification, redemption, a non-secular clergy, an open church, a brotherhood based on religious relationships, in short with the conception of personal religion. But the difference between Christianity

and these cults was fundamental. At bottom it was an ethical difference.

In regard to this difference the conclusions of Prof. Fowler are very convincing. After showing in his masterly treatment of "The Religious Experience of the Roman People" how far the old Roman religion as well as these Eastern cults had aided in the spread of ideas favourable to the new faith, he says: "All this taken together, so far from explaining Christianity, does not help us much in getting to understand even the conditions under which it grew into men's minds as a new power in the life of the world. The plant, though grown in soil which had borne other crops, was wholly new in structure and vital principle. I say this deliberately after spending so many years on the study of the religion of the Romans, and making myself acquainted in some measure with the religions of other peoples. The essential difference, as it appears to me, as a student of the history of religion, is this: that, whereas, the connection between religion and morality had so far been a loose one at Rome, indeed, so loose, that many have refused to believe in its existence, the new religion was itself morality, but morality consecrated and raised to a higher power than it had ever yet reached. . . . I confess that I never realised this contrast fully or intelligently until I

read through the Pauline epistles from beginning to end with a special historical object in view. It is useful to be familiar with the life and literature of the two preceding centuries, if only to be able the better to realise in passing to St. Paul, a Roman citizen, a man of education and experience, the great gulf fixed between the old and the new, as he himself saw it."[18]

This impressive statement confirms the judgment of an earlier scholar who says that when "the attention of a thinking heathen was directed to the new religion spreading in the Roman empire, the first thing to strike him as extraordinary would be that a religion of prayer was superseding the religion of ceremonies and invocation of gods."[19]

But these Oriental cults came under the influence of ethical criticism before they were brought into contact with Christianity. Salvation by ritual was confronted with salvation by ethics. This brings us to the ethical quest for safe conduct, to which we shall turn our attention in the next lecture.

[18] Pp. 465–466.

[19] Dollinger: "The First Age of Christianity and the Church," p. 344; quoted by Fowler: Op. Cit., p. 468.

LECTURE III

THE ETHICAL QUEST AMONG THE GREEKS

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MAN's primitive religious impulse is "an effective desire to be in right relation to the Power manifesting itself in the universe." By universe we may mean the world without, made up of sensible impressions, or the world within, made up of thoughts and desires. Where God is conceived as manifesting Himself through the external world the desire to be in right relation to Him will ordinarily express itself in ritual forms, and religion will be used as a screen. But where God is conceived as manifesting Himself through the internal world, the effort to be in right relation to Him will express itself as a phase of moral idealism, and religion will become a way of life.

Primitive man was interested in religion because he wanted to be at home in the world, but when the moral sense developed, the desire for right relations was transformed into a quest for safe conduct. This singular change is best illustrated in the religious experience of the Greeks. The aim of Greek religion, as Lowes Dickinson

has suggested, was to make man at home in the world. The easiest way to do this was to make the gods in man's image. The infinite was broken up into finite parts, and each part was personalised, localised, and worshipped in detail. The gods were founders of the Greek race, and the first citizens of the city-state. They were very like men; their passions and desires were altogether human. This conception of religion is expressed in the Homeric poems and for a long period was entirely satisfactory. The religious impulse developed the ritual, and the ritual was a screen which tempered the light of the eternal and enabled man to be at home in the world.

But occasionally this screen was penetrated by a trenchant criticism, which eventually introduced a disturbing element into the Greek religious consciousness. The earliest Greek philosophers were physicists whose main interest was in the study of natural phenomena, still they came to devote a great deal of attention to moral questions. The moral aspects of life appealed very powerfully to the poetic temperament, and philosophers and poets working from different points of view were able seriously to disturb the primitive contentment. "The evolution of theological and religious thought in Greece may be regarded as the result of the action and interaction of the two rival

principles of orthodoxy and dissent. . . . On the one hand the poets, especially Pindar, Æschylus, and Sophocles, without abandoning the old Homeric anthropomorphism, gradually purified and spiritualised the elements of religious idealism already contained in the Homeric poems. . . . On the other hand the pre-Socratic philosophers were more and more led by their physical speculations towards a view of the universe in which no room was left for the Homeric gods, and began to express their dissent at a very early period of Greek thought."[1] The sombre idea of Fate or Nemesis came to the service of man's somnolent moral nature and awoke the conscience to a keen criticism not only of popular religious traditions but also of the conduct of life. As the moral nature developed man became aware that he was not as much at home in the world as he used to be. Religion could no longer serve as a screen because it could not satisfy the needs of conscience, and the desire for safe conduct through this life became a dominant passion.

The need for safe conduct was very acutely felt in the fifth century B. C. This was the age of enlightenment, the period of the sophists and the poet Euripides. For one thing philosophers were becoming deeply interested in the moral aspect of

[1] Adam: "The Religious Teachers of Greece," pp. 18–19.

life. They had discovered the world of spirit which augmented the moral imperatives of life and developed the notion of individual responsibility and the worth of personality. The Greek genius for intellectual activity was fully born in that age. From this came a disposition to examine, criticise and modify traditions of all kinds. "The age of the sophists," according to Zeller, "was a period of fermentation preceding the age of construction."

The sophists aimed to teach goodness, by which they meant "the art of succeeding in a democratic state, when you do not yourself belong to the ruling democracy, and in particular, the art of getting off when you are attacked in the courts of law." [2] This was a peculiar sort of goodness, and doubtless the profession had a questionable side; still the original aim of the sophists was to teach men to think for themselves, especially on moral questions. They believed in the divine right of the individual as opposed to the arbitrary authority of tradition. This tendency of the fifth century is best illustrated by the teaching of Protagoras. He is remembered chiefly for his famous aphorism, "Man is the measure of all things." He was the first of the pragmatists, holding that truth

[2] Burnet: "Greek Philosophy, Thales to Plato," pp. 109–110.

was relative to the individual. The test of truth was its practical consequences, its essential utility.[3] Applying this principle to religion he distinguished between traditional conceptions and moral relations which had to do with the conduct of life. He did not care to break violently with ancient traditions; it was in fact highly inexpedient to do so; but he acted on the assumption that in essential things it was best to follow the custom of the country. In all other matters he advised men to think for themselves.

The growing feeling of individual importance which was the distinguishing feature of this age tended to clarify the need for safe conduct. It made the question of moral guidance an object of inquiry and transmitted the problem of its solution to the next age.

This brings us to Socrates, the first ethical thinker among the Greeks. There were two qualities of his personality which must be kept steadily in mind. One was his immense intellectual power, the other his mystical, or shall I venture to call it, his religious temperament. These qualities enabled him to render a dual service to his age, first of diagnosis, and second of construction.

He had in a remarkable degree the power of

[3] For a different view, see Gomperz: "Greek Thinkers," Vol. I, pp. 450–454.

moral diagnosis. He seems to ask: What is the matter with this age? The people were richly endowed intellectually, of political sagacity and artistic sensibility, yet in spite of this they were not happy. It was easy to trace this unhappiness to evil. Men put true for false and false for true. They followed delusions of various kinds, and often mistook shadows for substance. Why? Because they did not know, because they would not think. They followed opinion rather than knowledge. They were chiefly ignorant of themselves, of their capacities, limitations and needs. It is interesting to observe that more than three centuries earlier Isaiah was saying the same thing about his age: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." [4]

According to Socrates man's misery was rooted in ignorance. His remedy for evil was knowledge, and his ruling principle the Delphic conception, "Know thyself."

The key to his view of human nature is found in the phrase, "No man errs of his own free will." He did not believe that man would deliberately choose evil, or reject the good. Therefore his remedy for evil is a sort of moral intellectualism. In and out of season he laboured to teach men to

[4] i:3.

think for themselves. His favourite method of attack was by means of a series of skilful questions to expose the fallacies lurking in generally accepted phrases so as to produce confusion and perplexity in the mind of his hearer. He would then ascertain the truth underlying current ideas and endeavour to lead his disciples to form sound convictions. He had the wise man's healthy contempt for popular opinion; he was passionately interested in fundamental principles, because he believed that once in touch with principles a man would naturally go right. In other words, he believed that knowledge and goodness were identical, that knowledge was power, and in so far as virtue was knowledge it could be taught. His scheme then of safe conduct was one of self-education.

Socrates did the world a great service when he taught men to reflect. There is much to justify the notion that evil is due to ignorance, or even to a more subtle thing, a want of clearness in one's thinking. It is a difficult and an important thing, this thinking for one's self. But while we must recognise the place of self-knowledge in any scheme of life it is easy to point out the weakness of the Socratic position. If knowledge were always power the principle would be a valid one, but it is now a commonplace of ethical thinking,

expressed long ago by Ovid: "I see the good and approve it, but deliberately practise the wrong," or better still in the words of Paul, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not." Socrates had discovered one of the reasons for human defection, but it did not go to the root of the matter. He does not appear to have had a clear notion of human perversity, and he is especially ignorant of the power of a lawless will.

The important aspect of his service was not in the problems he settled, but in giving an ethical direction to the mental inquiry of his time. From his day ethical questions had a definite place in Greek thought. It is not easy to overpraise his ethical passion. His wonder at the newly aroused sense of individual importance, his confidence in the power of clear thinking, and his splendid, if too optimistic, faith in the natural goodness of human nature arouse our admiration. The betterment of humanity was the aim of this Silenus-faced philosopher. He had little interest in speculation for its own sake, he did his thinking in behalf of a good life; and if his remedy is inadequate it is due in great measure to his downright sincerity. He was so passionately devoted to his ideal and so conscientious in his endeavour to attain it that he could not believe in the inaptitude

for moral strenuousness which later thinkers found so characteristic of human nature.

There is, too, in the teaching of Socrates a sort of religious fervour. He believed that he was guided in all things by a good dæmon. The Spirit of God was his monitor, "and the remarkable thing about it," says Burnet, "was that it never prompted him to do anything; it only opposed something he was about to do." [5] This belief in an inner voice, this confidence in the guidance of a spiritual monitor higher than man which frequently gives to his teaching a kind of religious authority, suggests the instability of his main contention; for so soon as man's conscience is developed by a growing knowledge of the moral ideal, its ethical demands will far exceed his ability to satisfy them, and the consequence is a rift in the soul which destroys faith in the innate goodness of human nature and sets man on a fresh quest for God.

This was what took place in the thinking of Socrates' greatest disciple. Plato's thinking illustrates the truth that when man earnestly seeks to understand himself, he finds not only himself, but God.

Plato followed the master's suggestions to their logical conclusions and by constructing his doc-

[5] Op. Cit., p. 130.

trine of ideas, he developed the highest type of monotheism in Greek philosophy. But with this fresh sense of Divine reality came a new knowledge of human nature. Protagoras had said that "man was the measure of all things." But Plato seems to ask: "What man?" The doctrine of ideas revealed an antagonism between flesh and spirit, and as little as Plato sympathised with Orphic mysticism he was one with it on this point. The Orphic sects taught that the soul was imprisoned in the body; the flesh was the tomb of the soul, a bondage to evil which could be broken only at death. Plato's thinking sharpened the dualism between flesh and spirit. On the one hand man was a complex of passions and appetites, on the other hand of ideals and spiritual aspirations. If man was the measure of all things it must be the spiritual man. But this higher self proved the reality of a world above the senses—fair and lovely—made up of ideas, ideals and communion with God. If this higher selfhood be accepted as the norm it not only measured man's possibilities, but suggested his limitations. The problem was one of emancipation. How was the spiritual man to rid himself of the earthly handicap? Plato tells us how this might be accomplished in his famous allegory of the cave.

First he conceives a number of prisoners im-

mured in a long and gradually sloping chamber. They are bound so that they cannot move and are obliged to look at a blank wall at the end of the cave. Behind and above them is a fire burning, and between them and the fire is a pathway flanked by a low wall. Along this pathway men are passing, carrying a number of vessels. These vessels, rising above the low wall flanking the pathway, cast their shadows on the blank wall at the bottom of the chamber. These shadow shapes are all that the prisoners see. He now supposes that the prisoners are released. At first they are reluctant to leave the cave. As they are taken into the light they are so confused that they are unable to distinguish the shadows from the objects which cast them; but gradually they become accustomed to distinguish real objects; then they become aware of the element that reveals them. They recognise light itself, and finally by following it to its source, discover the sun.[6]

According to Plato men in their natural condition are creatures of delusion. Knowledge is of shadow shapes only, and has no validity because it has no connection with reality. But if men display an aptitude for thinking they gradually leave the cave and learn how to distinguish real

[6] "The Republic," Book VII. Translated by Davies and Vaughan.

objects from shadow shapes. Eventually they become aware of the element of truth which reveals reality, and finally by tracing truth to its source they find the eternal God. Thus the human spirit emancipates itself from the prisonhouse of the flesh. Every human idea has its divine counterpart. To know this is power, because it leads to God. Such knowledge is also virtue, and virtue means happiness.

This is very beautiful but is open to criticism. If every man was naturally endowed with a passion for high intellectual endeavour; if he felt that his relation to God was the first and most important business of life, he might choose this contemplative way, and attain to Platonic virtue. But suppose man lacks a natural capacity for reflection, suppose he prefers a life of fleshly indulgence, how are you going to persuade him to abandon the cave? Plato does not answer this question simply because he is thinking of a certain type of man; of a man like himself of philosophic genius and ethical passion of the highest order. The good man is an intellectual aristocrat. If a man is to be saved he must turn philosopher and give himself to rigid intellectual discipline. But the masses who prefer to live in the cave, dealing ever with shadow shapes, must be left to their own devices.

By opening the way to God only to the man of passionate ethical aspiration Plato parts company with the great majority; his quest for safe conduct leads nowhere. On the contrary, it raises a greater problem: Where can be found a virtue-making power of sufficient practicability to realise the Platonic ideal? Obviously it could not be found in the Socratic precept, "Know thyself." Knowledge alone was not enough. There must also be desire and moral passion to attain goodness, and Plato's gospel would have no meaning to those lacking these things. In this fashion Plato raised a problem which the more practical mind of Aristotle endeavoured to solve.

Aristotle, a man of universal interests, is never more practical than in his dealing with ethics. He aims to bring philosophy down to the level of the ordinary man and make it practicable for a work-a-day world. While agreeing with Plato in saying that a virtuous life requires reflection, he insists that the concept of virtue should be clearly defined and, in the effort to give it greater distinctness, makes three important statements: first, virtue is not an extreme position, but a golden mean; secondly, it is not confined to specific actions, but is a habit of mind which must be formed by education and social discipline, and

thirdly, the power to form virtuous habits comes from an ideal political environment.

These points deserve further consideration. Virtue is conceived as a golden mean between extremes. Excess and deficiency are characteristics of vice, and the mean state a characteristic of virtue. For instance, courage is the mean between the excess of foolhardiness and the deficiency of cowardice; temperance the mean between licentiousness and insensibility; or modesty between shamelessness and bashfulness. This of course is entirely in harmony with the Greek ideal of proportion.[7]

Aristotle makes an important distinction between intellectual and moral virtues. Intellectual virtues belong to the rational part of the soul, such, for example, as wisdom and prudence. The moral virtues belong to the irrational part of the soul. This he describes as the concupiscent part of human nature, which, while not possessing reason, is capable of obedience to reason. Intellectual virtue is fostered by teaching and reflection, but moral virtue is the product of habit. Moral virtue is the fruit of a proper discipline of the irrational or concupiscent part of the soul. This calls for strenuous endeavour, since man is

[7] "The Nicomachean Ethics," pp. 47–48. Weldon's translation.

subject to both reason and impulse and they are frequently in conflict. Moral virtue is the issue of this struggle, it is the direct result of habits formed in obedience to right reason.[8]

The power to form habits of moral virtue is derived chiefly from an ideal political environment. Ethics is a branch of political science, and the good life can be realised only under social discipline. It is the function of the state to make men good. By means of its authority it must discipline the irrational part of the soul in conformity to right reason.[9]

These points are open to criticism. From an ideal point of view the notion of a golden mean is above reproach, but it does not work in practice. The conception of the balanced life is an unstable one; it gives too much scope to prudence, and in the last analysis bases morality on expediency. "Be not righteous over much, neither be thou over much wicked," has been the favourite creed of culture; in fact the Epicurean code of morals was largely shaped by this notion of the mean.

Aristotle's distinction between the rational and irrational parts of the soul is a very important one. He clearly sees what his predecessors had but dimly discerned—that human nature is not en-

[8] Op. Cit., pp. 32–34.
[9] Op. Cit., pp. 345–346.

tirely subject to right reason. The disposition to act contrary to reason, to obey irrational impulses and follow perverse inclinations, must be reckoned with. This thing of being good is a strenuous business. "The mind reigns, but does not govern," says Woodrow Wilson. "We are governed by a tumultuous house of commons made up of the passions, and the ruling passion is prime minister and coerces the sovereign." Knowledge is not sufficient; man needs power to perform that which is right. He must be assisted in attaining a good life, and Aristotle is inclined to look for this in the direction of an ideal political environment. Doubtless a philosophic genius would voluntarily choose the path of virtue, but the plain man must be assisted on the way. This was the function of the state. Before the individual could be improved man must devise an ideal political institution, through which alone social discipline could be realised. Hence Aristotle places the virtue-making power in the function of the state. Dealing with this difficult question he says: "If theories were sufficient of themselves to make men good, they would deserve to receive any number of handsome rewards, and it would have been our duty to provide them. But it appears in fact, that, although they are strong enough to encourage and stimulate youths who are already

liberally minded: although they are capable of bringing a soul which is generous and enamoured of nobleness under the spell of virtue, they are impotent to inspire the mass of men to chivalrous action; for it is not the nature of such men to obey honour, but terror, nor to abstain from evil for fear of disgrace, but for fear of punishment. For as their life is one of emotion, they pursue their proper pleasures and the means of gaining these pleasures, and eschew the pains which are opposite to them. But of what is noble and truly pleasant they have not so much as a conception, because they have never tasted it. Where is the theory or argument which can reform such people as these?" [10]

Aristotle's diagnosis is admirable. In recognising the difficulty of subduing the concupiscent part of the soul he was far in advance of his predecessors, but his view of that discipline is distinctly disappointing. The virtue-making power, which, according to Socrates, belonged to all men, and according to Plato, to a certain type of man, is by Aristotle lodged with the state. Ethical sanctions are derived from political relations.

The weakness of the position is clear, since it provides nothing for the proper discipline of a lawless will save an external relation to a political or-

[10] Op. Cit., pp. 343–344.

ganisation. But social discipline has never been sufficient. Nothing short of a radical change of human nature from within can accomplish this. And the want of power in a political institution to provide an effective control of individual perversity practically reduces Aristotle's scheme to the Platonic level. It is for the few rather than the many. Assuming that it were possible in a compact city-state to provide a social discipline adequate to meet the situation, still the attainment of virtue in the citizen would be conditioned by the permanence of that form of government. The ethical sanction would be no stronger than the state itself. And if anything should happen to disturb political security it would immediately invalidate the ethical sanction. And if this should occur, the question of safe conduct would become acute again.

And this took place in Aristotle's lifetime. All ethical theories up to and including Aristotle's were conceived within the limits of the Greek city-state. But certain forces were now at work which were calculated to disturb and eventually to destroy that form of government.

One of these forces was a constantly growing sense of individual importance. Man was outgrowing his traditions. The rationalistic movement, which in the fifth century had begun to

question and modify ancient religious and political traditions, was peculiarly active in this direction in the fourth century. The notion of individual significance was being formulated, and this disturbed the social life of the age. Men were less interested in ultimate theories and wanted a way of life. The quest for safe conduct was becoming urgent again because the needs of the individual were felt to be paramount.

But another momentous change was impending. On the one hand man's spirit was going out to meet the world; on the other hand the world was coming to meet him. The spirit of unrest within the city-state was met from without by the rapid rise of the Macedonian power and the conquest of the world by Alexander the Great. The barrier between East and West was broken down and the currents of life and opinion freely mingled. The ancient provincialism was giving way to a new sense of cosmopolitanism and a feeling of world-wide interests cut up and modified the old racial exclusiveness.

Man was tormented by a new fear and a new desire.[11] He feared the consequences of this momentous political upheaval. Could he retain his political freedom under the new conditions? Did not these changes expose the native Greek,

[11] Bevan: "Stoics and Skeptics," pp. 24–28.

ever the passionate lover of liberty, to slavery and degradation? Did not the collapse of the city-state seriously impair if it did not utterly destroy the authority of ancient religious traditions? Man was tormented by new and disturbing ideas about everything. He was intensely conscious of loneliness. In this enlarging world he was without shelter for body or soul. He was like a youth, born and bred in a provincial community, who suddenly finds himself alone and friendless in the streets of a great city. Amid new forces, strange faces and novel experiences he feels the remoteness and insignificance of his cherished traditions, the utter inaptitude of his point of view on everything. Such a man will desire a way of life above everything. So felt the people of the ancient world, particularly the conservative citizens of the old city-state when Alexander broke down the barriers between East and West and gave them a chance to see things from a cosmopolitan point of view. Old religions, philosophies and moralities; old notions of political rights and privileges were felt to be out of date. The time called for a new intellectual outlook. It wanted new teachers and new schools of thought to meet the new needs.

But if these momentous changes made man fearful, from another point of view they inspired him

with a new desire. He wanted to take his place in the new order of things. He began to have visions of a wider human relationship and gradually became aware of the possibility of a world brotherhood. A fresh sense of the solidarity of humanity was altering the ancient racial exclusiveness. If the passing of the old made him lonely, the coming of the new order made him keenly desire a share in its experience.

The most pressing problem was how to meet the new conditions. Obviously the old theories would not suit the new age. They were too abstract and elusive to interest the plain man. He desired something that had to do with the business of living. It was a time when the ordinary man had to think about himself, and especially when everybody was looking for a way of life and a scheme of thought adjusted to the new conditions.

It was to provide a way of life that the philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism were devised. These philosophies represent the ethical quest for safe conduct in the Græco-Roman world. How these systems attained their influence over the ages immediately following Alexander's conquests is an important inquiry if we are to understand the temper of the times to which the gospel was preached.

The primary need of the fourth century was for individual guidance. This need is responsible for two features of the new philosophies. On the one hand they were quests for the chief good by means of ethical discipline; on the other hand they were intensely dogmatic.

The morality of the Greeks up to the time of Socrates was instinctive rather than reflective. Even with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle ethics was subordinated to political science. The ethical sanction was bound up with the fortunes of the city-state. But the city-state was doomed. Man was rapidly outgrowing its provincial limitations, besides, Alexander's successes proved that form of government inadequate. This immediately separated the science of ethics from politics and made it a distinct object of inquiry. What the individual required was to be assured of a way of life which could afford tranquillity apart from favourable circumstances and unconditioned by political relationships. Under the old economy the chief good was always conceived as a composite thing, composed of many elements besides moral sanity. Youth, personal beauty, riches, intellectual power and political security under the compact form of a city-state were not only desirable concomitants but the essentials of happiness. But the changes of the fourth century had completely destroyed

this conception. It was impossible under the new conditions to realise a composite ideal of the chief good. Man was stripped bare of all outward goods; he lost contact with inherited religious supports; he was tormented with new desires and new needs, and was forced to seek spiritual compensations apart from external conditions. How could he meet such a world as this? How could he face its adversities and cope with its uncertainties? How could he become a contented citizen of this enlarging commonwealth of humanity and still retain a tranquil mind? The new philosophies endeavoured to meet such needs as these.

But the age was indifferent to argument and weary of speculations dealing with ultimate questions. These seemed beside the mark. The problems of life were urgent, and men wanted quick answers. They wanted something that would work, and work promptly. Some were inclined towards universal scepticism. It is interesting to remember that Pyrrho of Elis, the founder of the Sceptical school, followed Alexander to India and returned more than ever convinced of the futility of knowledge. He believed that nothing could be known for certain about anything. Vague probability was the only guide of life. This school persisted in the Græco-Roman world and had in Carneades a very able advocate, but we are not

concerned with it here. The point of importance to remember is that the age was indifferent to sustained arguments and elaborate systems, and demanded dogmas. It was ready to believe in *ex-cathedra* deliverances of any kind, provided they had to do with the problem of moral direction.

It is an interesting thing, this recurrent demand for dogma in the history of human opinion. After ages of rationalism people will turn from argument and system and demand the dogmatist. It is a time when men will believe a conception not because they think it is true, but because it is powerfully and dogmatically proclaimed. It was the demand for dogma, this disposition to believe in a powerful preaching that gave to the philosophies of the fourth century something of the quality of Hebrew prophecy. It was the desire to believe in dogmas that made the personality of the philosopher a more important element than his teaching. The devotion of the followers to Epicurus savoured of religious veneration. In fact, it was attachment to his memory that protected his system from the syncretic tendencies of the succeeding centuries. Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school, had a personal influence that went far beyond the influence of his teaching. All this indicates that the age was rapidly approaching a time when it would readily yield to personal lead-

ership, when it was going to realise so acutely the need for a way of life that it would follow any man who could speak with authority on the main question.

We must study these systems from this point of view. We cannot discuss them in detail; indeed, it is not desirable that we should. What is needed is to understand their spirit and main intention. They were intensely sincere efforts to meet a pressing need of the times. They were not attempts at final systems of thought, but inspired by the practical necessities of a series of profound changes growing out of Alexander's conquests.

Stoicism centres in the will, Epicureanism in the desires. Zeno's main principle was that man has the power to will the good, and gain absolute independence of external conditions of life. The right use of the will would make man free in a world of change. Zeno held, and rightly I think, that many of life's evils come from an over-elaboration of desire. If you reduce the number of your desires, you reduce your needs to a minimum, and you at once limit the possibility of worry. Desire must be brought under the discipline of the will. Man overcomes the world by a noble defiance, by the adjustment of his demands upon it to the requirements of a disciplined personality. But what assurance of success has he? Supposing his in-

tention to be right, can he depend on the universe? Will it help or hinder him? Is the universe friendly or otherwise? Zeno answers that the universe is friendly because it is rational. All that is necessary to realise the chief good is to adjust decisions to right reason; hence the problem is simply one of adjustment. But by what rule? Zeno replies "by following nature." To "follow nature" means to obey her essential meaning. But what is the essential meaning of nature? Zeno goes back to the speculations of Heraclitus. Heraclitus taught that the universe was made of fire. It was instinct with reason and spirit. The universe in short was alive, and this life had a voice which he called the *"Logos,"* or word. The word was intelligible to any one who was willing to listen to it. It told man that God and humanity were alike essentially rational beings, and this notion of implicit rationality was taken over by the Stoics, and when they speak of following nature they mean to obey the voice of reason, which is the spirit and life of all things. This in many respects resembles Bergson's *"elan vital"* or push of life. It is open to all who have the sense to understand it. "Will to be good," Zeno seems to say, "and you may defy circumstances." By bringing the will under the control of reason man could never go wrong simply because the universe is friendly,

in short instinct with Providence, with God. There is a Semitic strain in Stoicism which is expressed in this characteristic doctrine. Zeno himself was a native of Citium in Cyprus, and many of the later Stoics were Semites.

The notion of an immanent and guiding Spirit in the universe is suggested in the beautiful hymn of Cleanthes, the immediate follower of Zeno:

"O king of kings
Through ceaseless ages, God, whose purpose brings
To birth, whatever on land or in the sea
Is wrought, or in high heaven's immensity;
Save what the sinner works infatuate." [12]

This quotation suggests Stoicism's noblest contribution and characteristic weakness. By following nature the Stoic believed he was following God. Man was akin to the eternal, and God was always willing to aid the striving spirit. It was a strenuous effort to adjust human nature to the requirements of God, and at the same time give man a position of undisturbed tranquillity in the midst of a changing world. Undoubtedly it proved a powerful agent in stabilising minds naturally disposed to goodness, but its characteristic confession is found in the statement that the Sovereign Will has no meaning for the "sinner infatuate." This, however, did not disturb the Stoic, because he was not interested in the "sinner infatuate."

[12] Adam's translation: See Hicks' "Stoic and Epicurean," pp. 14–16.

He accepts Aristotle's notion of the irrational part of the soul and endeavours to destroy this side of human nature by a rigid discipline of the desires; but the older Stoics thought of goodness and badness in such an absolute sense that they left no possible encouragement for the ordinary man. A man was either good or bad, and that was the end of it. Either he followed nature wholly, or not at all. There was no middle ground. They admitted that the ideal wise man was rare in our work-a-day world, but they would not alter their view. Of course, this made for hardness, austerity and grimness, but it made men strong enough to face the world with a valiant spirit.

There was another element in Stoicism which made for hardness: I refer to its doctrine of intention without desire.[13] The Stoic believed that desire in great measure determines happiness. Reduction of the number and intensity of desires limits the possibility of unhappiness. But his special aim was not to make man happy but to make him good, and goodness was an affair of the will rather than of desire. Still he did not believe in cloistered goodness. The Stoic must take part in the world's work because he belonged to a universal brotherhood. But he must aim to serve others without allowing his feelings to become in-

[13] Bevan: Op. Cit., pp. 58–67.

volved. He must serve his neighbour, but he must not love him, neither must he worry if his service is a failure. His purpose was to do good to others but he would indulge in no useless regrets. Compassion or pity were vices because they operated against the interests of peace. "In the service of his fellow man he must be prepared to sacrifice his health, to sacrifice his possessions, to sacrifice his life; but there is one thing he must never sacrifice—his own eternal calm." [14]

The Stoic was trying to end life in himself. He is the Pharisee of the heathen world, a preacher of an impossible creed of strenuous endeavour; a seeker always after virtue: very much of a Puritan, sometimes a prig, always a dogmatist, and always tremendously interested in preserving at any cost his peace of mind. But he was something more and greater than this. He was a citizen of the world because he believed in the universality of reason. He cheerfully put behind him the old social and political conceptions; he broke away from ancient speculations and faced the new age with a noble defiance of circumstance, simply because he believed that everything meant intensely and meant good—for him. We can hardly overestimate the power of Zeno's mind battering syllogisms and dogmatic preachments in stabilising

[14] Bevan: Op., Cit., p. 67.

an age adrift on a sea of cosmopolitanism. Men were willing to seize anything substantial enough to carry them through the great flood to peace and safety. This is enough to account for the influence of Stoicism on the life and opinions of later centuries.

The foil of Stoicism was Epicureanism. The Stoic believed in overcoming the world by defiance; the Epicurean by a judicious compromise and the avoidance of extremes. One was founded on predominance of will, the other on the proper co-ordination and development of desire. Stoicism had in it a Semitic strain of exclusive devotion to an ideal; Epicureanism expressed the Greek sense of proportion; the aim of the one was the safe life, of the other, the complete life.

Epicurus believed that most of life's troubles were due to excess and one-sidedness. He traced much of life's unrest to religious observances and endeavoured by means of the physical speculations of Democritus to show that, while there were gods, they took no interest in the affairs of men. He elaborated an atomic theory of the universe, holding that only two things exist: atoms and the void. All things being atomic and subject to change, the fear of gods and the fear of death are delusions. Best banish such fears and concentrate attention on this life. Since it is all we

have, we ought to make the best of it. He aimed, you see, to abandon all extreme positions and all impossible quests, and to adapt life to a wise compromise with daily responsibilities. Happiness was to be realised in a proper co-ordination of desires, in the enjoyment of the amenities of human intercourse, in the cultivation of friendships and the pleasures of social life.

In brief the ideal of the Stoic was perfection through the predominance of will over desire, while the ideal of the Epicurean was comfortableness in the cultivation and control of desire.

The chief good according to Epicurus was the pursuit of pleasure; but by pleasure he meant only a condition of existence free from pain or want. In the avoidance of excess and indulgence, in the combination of plain living and high thinking, he was a conspicuous example of his teaching. But the weakness of the system lies in its loose definition of pleasure as the chief good and in giving too large an influence to worldly prudence. By leaving such matters to individual preference it is easy to understand why the system broke up into a series of lawless tendencies. We must not forget, however, that Epicureanism had an immense significance for one of the noblest minds of the last century of the Roman republic, and in the *"De Rerum Natura"* it attained a dignity and moral

strength which gave it wide influence in that age.

These practical methods of dealing with the issues of life represent the ethical quest for safe conduct, which manifests itself among the Romans in the scepticism of Lucretius, the opportunism of Cicero, the humanism of Virgil, and the resignation of Seneca. Stoicism and Epicureanism were final efforts to obtain peace through philosophy. They had an important bearing on the religious situation in the Græco-Roman world when Christianity began its westward movement.

LECTURE IV

THE ETHICAL QUEST AMONG THE ROMANS

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ALEXANDER'S conquests had, as we have seen, an important influence on the social and political life of fourth century Greece. His successes further enlarged the conception of individual significance and, by destroying the old city-state, made man a citizen of the world. By undermining ancient traditions concerning politics and religion these momentous changes brought the question of safe conduct to the front as the paramount need of the times. The age was impatient with arguments and too much in a hurry to concern itself with speculative systems. It desired something positive, concrete and simple, and was willing to believe in dogma and listen to prophecy. It was an era of popular preaching and ethical propaganda. Under these circumstances Epicureanism and Stoicism arose. And it was due to the fact that the moral situation of the Roman world immediately preceding the Christian era resembled in many important particulars that of fourth century Greece, that these philosophies had such a wide in-

fluence on the period. In this lecture we shall consider the ethical quest among the Romans as reflected in the opinions of four great men. We shall study it in the scepticism of Lucretius, the opportunism of Cicero, the humanism of Virgil and the resignation of Seneca. These men earnestly endeavoured to adjust the human spirit to the requirements of the moral nature, but if we are to understand why they believed this to be such an important problem we must seek the reason in the history of those times.

The last century of the Roman Republic has fittingly been called "the terrible century." It stands almost alone among the ensanguined pages of history. "That period in Italy," says Prof. Conway, "had seen twelve separate civil wars, six of which had involved many of the provinces; a long series of political murders, beginning with the Gracchi, and ending with Cæsar and Cicero; five deliberate legalised massacres, from the drum head court martial which sentenced to death 3000 supposed followers of Gaius Gracchus, to the second proscription dictated by Marc Antony. Men still spoke with a shudder of the butchery of 7000 Samnite prisoners in the hearing of the assembled senate, and the boy Virgil would meet many men who had seen the last act of the struggle with Spartacus and his army of escaped gladiators—

6000 prisoners nailed on crosses along the whole length of the busiest road in Italy, from Rome to Capua." [1]

The causes of these grave political disorders were various, but they may be reduced to one: to the fell disease which the Greeks called *"stasis,"* that attacks political organisms at certain periods of their history. *Stasis,* as Prof. Fowler defines it, is "to take up a distinctive position in the state, with malicious intent towards another party." [2] This is illustrated by the oligarchic oath quoted by Aristotle: "I will hate the Demos, and do it all the harm in my power." Of course, such an attitude was fatal to patriotism, for it developed into an exaggerated form of partisanship, or what socialists call "class consciousness." *Stasis* usually began with friction between the few and the many and was always intensified by war; for war increased the burden of taxation, engendered animosity between rivals and developed selfish ambitions.

This malignant disease of *stasis,* which destroyed the Greek city-state, was epidemic in the last century of the Roman Republic. It is necessary to consider the development of a tendency hitherto foreign to the Roman temperament.

[1] Virgil's "Messianic Eclogue," pp. 33–34.
[2] "The City-State of the Greeks and Romans," p. 254.

The misfortunes of a nation often rise from its conspicuous successes. The final victory of Rome over Carthage was from many points of view a vast misfortune. By that victory she won her peace, but she also discovered her fatal power for conquest. It was the beginning of the end of Roman simplicity. The old Romans were farmers. If they went to war, as they often did, it was in defence of their homes, but with the conquest of Carthage Rome became a nation of aggressors. Victory over a foreign foe developed the passion for world dominion. As conquests followed with relentless precision, restlessness attacked the body politic, and the country was soon overrun with foreign soldiers, without a shred of patriotism and utterly indifferent to the control of the civil power. Factions developed around great leaders, political jealousies ripened into fratricidal strife and civil war, social disorder and a riot of irresponsible passion destroyed the peace of the state.

Stasis set in with the agrarian disputes of the Gracchi, and became epidemic in the next century. All the evils which Thucydides predicted would fall on the Greek city-state had fallen on Rome. Internal strife was the price she paid for world power.

In addition to this, Rome was exposed to what Cumont calls "the peaceful infiltration of the

Orient into the Occident." We are just beginning to realise the enormous influence of the Orient on the early Roman empire. The distinctive achievement of the Romans has been their conception of law. Almost everything else in art, science and religion came to them from the Orient. Even her form of government was eventually orientalised and most of the evils which resulted in her decline and fall came from her contact with foreign peoples.[3]

In the last century of the republic the passion for wealth, luxury and extravagance; the adoption of foreign fashions, manners and customs and the pernicious influence of foreign superstitions destroyed her old simplicity so that it could no longer be said that "the Roman Commonwealth stood on ancient character and on men." [4] It was an age of profound disillusion, when ancient traditions were questioned, and when men of thoughtful mind looked to the future with foreboding. Such an age as this could not but make a deep impression on sensitive and earnest natures, and its melancholy is reflected in its great literature.

But eras of political disenchantment often occa-

[3] Cumont: "Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism," Chapter I, passim.
[4] Ennius.

sion religious revivals. Prolonged unrest begets a passion for peace, and men begin to desire safe conduct and moral direction. They are inclined to look for compensation for material losses to some form of intellectual or spiritual experience.

The political disorders of the last century of the republic made the quest for safe conduct very acute. The old religion was in a manner of speaking dead. It was influential in rural districts, but had little vital significance for the thoughtful cosmopolite. Rome was filling up with new cults, coming for the most part from the East. Cybele and Isis were there with their splendid promises and ornate ritual performances; other conceptions were current, such as astrology, Syrian nature cults, and foreign fashions in divination. Judaism was not without influence, and many gentile minds were in sympathy with its ethical monotheism.

But none of these cults satisfied the cultivated man. He sought peace in some form of philosophy. The speculative systems of Plato and Aristotle had less influence, however, than the concrete conceptions of Stoic and Epicurean. These philosophies had been developed by influences with which the Roman was familiar. The break up of the city-state and the intensified sense of individual importance resulting therefrom, had made the question of moral direction paramount. Men

wanted peace and quiet in an age of trouble, and the reflective Roman found in the moral passion and slender speculative structures of these practical systems a tranquillity which nothing else could afford. Stoicism had a far wider influence than Epicureanism, since it was congenial to the Roman temperament; still the latter philosophy had powerful advocates, and in the person of Lucretius, one of the most earnest men of the time, it attained a moral grandeur that commended it even to that strenuous age.

The advantage of these systems over more speculative types lay in the fact that they were intensely dogmatic, professedly ethical in their aims, and their teaching could be expressed in easily remembered maxims. It naturally found its way into popular preaching and was a frequent subject for discussion in the schools of declamation.[5]

The tendency to philosophic discussion is strikingly shown in the writings of Cicero, but it was the signal achievement of Lucretius that he transformed a series of loosely related speculations into a rigid dogma, characterised by scientific consistency, poetic fire and spiritual enthusiasm.[6]

The great poem of Lucretius, on the "Nature of

[5] See Boissier: "Tacitus and Other Roman Studies," Eng. Trans., p. 163, passim.

[6] Fowler: "Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero," p. 329.

Things," is a religious phenomena. It probably had little influence on his generation, but as an expression of opinion on the urgent question of moral direction it is of the first importance. This poem reveals a mighty intellect of melancholy temperament and spiritual sensibility, trying to adjust itself to the eternal issues of life in the face of a most discouraging outlook. "Some men," says Henry Osborn Taylor, "live in the eternities, and must at their peril keep in tune with them. The need of adjustment belongs to them peculiarly." [7] This was the inspiration of *"De Rerum Natura."*

According to Lucretius the evil of the time had a body and a soul. The body consisted of political disorders which could be cured by no known prescription. The soul of evil he finds in a tyranny of fear; chiefly the fear of gods, and the fear of what might happen after death. "This terror, therefore, and darkness of mind must be dispelled not by the rays of the sun and glittering shafts of day, but by the aspect and law of nature." [8] Like all Epicureans he believed in the existence of gods, but he held that they took no interest in human affairs. They dwell "in their tranquil abodes, which

[7] "Deliverance," p. 2.

[8] "The Nature of Things," Bohn edition, Munro's translation, p. 43.

neither winds do shake nor clouds drench with rains, nor snow congealed by sharp frosts harms with hoary fall: an ever cloudless ether o'er canopies them, and they laugh with light shed largely round. Nature, too, supplies all their wants and nothing ever impairs their peace of mind." [9] Religious ceremonies designed to propitiate the gods were groundless and irrational. The fear of what might happen after death was equally false, since the soul was mortal and perished with the body. He developed the Epicurean theory of atoms into a rigid dogma in order to prove the truth of these contentions. It was best, he thought, to know the truth. His aim, you see, was not to make men at home in the world, but to get them through it with credit. He had no remedy for political disorders, and little social passion. He does not expect any change for the better. His single aim is to provide safe conduct through an intolerable world. Perhaps his point of view was that of many cultivated men of the time. The paramount need was an estimate of life that could quiet the mind. Lucretius believed he had found this in the atomic theory of Epicurus. With invincible dogmatism and prophetic fervour he preached salvation through the study of the nature of things. Since religion and immortality were delusions, it were best to rid

[9] Op. Cit., pp. 83–84.

one's self of such fancies and face the future with a tranquil mind.

No man of that period more truly represents the urgent need for safe conduct than Lucretius. In him we see a spirit stripped bare of all ancient supports, devoid of consolations save such as might be found within itself, calmly facing a future, than which one more hopeless or melancholy could hardly be conceived.

The important thing to remember is that Lucretius hated religion. His powerful ethical spirit turned round upon the religious observances of the time with relentless scorn, and his earnest scepticism cleared the threshing floor of a ruck of superstitions, and made it easier in the following century to believe in religion as a moral dynamic But what did Lucretius mean by religion? When we think of religion we think of churches, and spiritual relationships based upon a divine revelation. But of religion such as this, Lucretius knew nothing. By *"religio"* he meant two things: first a nervous fear of gods, and secondly, rites and ceremonies devised to rid man of this fear. In other words *"religio"* meant nervousness, dread, superstition. *"Religio"* manifested itself in rites and sacrifices designed to propitiate the gods, and while the poet had an instinctive reverence for the traditional observances of his race, he re-

garded everything that went by the name of cult or worship as an expression of superstition.

There was much in those days to justify this notion of religion. The notion of an Absolute and Infinite God has always been a painful one to a mind unassisted by a revelation instinct with a noble ethic. Too vast for the comprehension of a finite intelligence, it has always been easy to break it up into a number of parts and associate them with what is visible, familiar and human. But so soon as man had made the gods in his own likeness, he became dissatisfied with them, and the sense of the eternal passing beyond these visible and inadequate forms peopled the universe with nameless terrors. The Greeks were most successful in humanising the gods; and yet the altar that Paul saw in Athens was significant of the fact that men realised the impossibility of expressing the Infinite through finite forms, and had underwritten the uncomprehended elements of divinity and worshipped them under the comprehensive designation of "unknown gods."

The consequence of such a tendency has always been disastrous. For man began to think of gods as dwelling everywhere. They dwelt on the earth in birds, and beasts and creeping things; in trees and stones and running brooks. They dwelt in the heavens, in the sun and the moon and the silent

stars. All these deities assume the character and participate in the passions of men. The tyranny of elemental spirits was common in the time of Lucretius. The nervousness of life which fear of the gods inspired was transferred to the gods themselves. They, too, were nervous, capricious and irritable. You never could tell what a god would do; you never could tell what he wanted; what would please one might offend another. Besides you never could be sure where the gods lived, and you had to be careful how you moved about the world. You might step on a god, or eat him or offend him some way; and although nothing happened in this life, yet in the dread Acherusian quarters in the under-world the angry god would await you with a long-cherished vengeance.

A layman was helpless before this dread, and it delivered him, body and soul, into the hands of the professional religionist. A man could not marry, go on a journey or make a purchase without professional advice. Armies and fleets were held up because the auspices were unfavourable. The soothsayer, diviner and religious quack flourished on this weakness. The rich had many diviners, but the poor had to take their chance.

The Romans of the last century of the Republic were as dependent on the priest as moderns are upon the physician. The fear of gods was analo-

gous to the present-day fear of germs. Disease in those times was regarded as due to a dæmon; "if you could drive him out you could cure the disease. The same sort of thing is now said of bacilli, which, however, have the advantage that they can be seen under the microscope." [10]

This nervous dread was what Lucretius meant by *"religio."* His age was priest-ridden, ignorant and superstitious. He was convinced that the only way to peace lay through a scientific study of the nature of things. At one blow he would destroy the fear of gods and the fear of death. It was a sorrowful time at best. The world was full of disorder, injustice, slavery and misery; why, then, carry a needless burden, when the great book of nature lay open, and beside it stood the portentous figure of Epicurus—glory of the Greek race—ready to interpret it so that a wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein?

We know that the poet's estimate of religion was a mistaken one. His was not the only view that could be taken of it even in his day; but in so far as *"religio"* meant superstition Lucretius was right. Although he had no moral dynamic and lacked positive assurance that he could remedy the situation he had diagnosed, still he performed a great service in clearing the ground of alien

[10] Lake: "The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul," p. 196, note.

growths and prepared the way for a view of religion more in accord with moral and spiritual ideals.

A word in passing must be said of Cicero. If Lucretius represented the scepticism of the age, Cicero stood for its opportunism. Prof. Fowler calls him "the last-born son of the old city-state." [11] He was fond of philosophic speculation, and especially interested in the syncretic movement which combined Oriental mysticism with Greek ethics. He was also fairly well acquainted with Stoic and Epicurean teaching, and at one time in his life had been a disciple of the great Syrian Posidonius. Posidonius was the most learned man of his time, and his aim according to Mr. Bevan was nothing less than "to make men at home in the universe." [12] Cicero had long been under his influence, and traces of it appear in many of the great politician's writings. It can hardly be said, however, that Cicero was interested in a personal religion, but he thought highly of religious sanctions as aids to good government. Towards the close of life, under accumulating afflictions, he turned to Stoicism for consolation: and by many treatises on the nature of the gods, divination, moral questions

[11] "Roman Ideas of Deity," p. 5.

[12] For a brilliant account of Posidonius, see "Stoics and Skeptics," Lecture 3.

and the like, indicated that he was a seeker after God. Fowler thinks that had he lived in an Oriental city rather than in the metropolis he might have been a "God-fearer."[13] I have often felt that under favourable circumstances the same might have been said of Lucretius. Both men represent attitudes towards the question of safe conduct: one the sceptical, the other the opportunist, yet neither indicates the highest tendency of the age. For this we must turn to Virgil.

Virgil has exercised a powerful influence over the world's imagination, not only because of his poetic genius but also on account of his religious sensibility. He was the most spiritual man of the heathen world: a representative of a religious tendency that commends itself because it is rooted in the homely soil of humanism.

It is interesting to compare him with Lucretius. Both men felt that the evils of the time had reached a climax. Both had a healthy dislike for the crowded life of cities, and a passionate love for the open country, but they differed widely in their outlook. Virgil believed that the world was young, a mighty faith in that age of gloom. He stood in the darkness, it was true, but he was waiting for the dawn. The golden age was returning upon the world: that is why his poetry

[13] Op. Cit., pp. 4–5.

is so animated, why its most sombre passages are full of charm. It is the charm of an eternally youthful nature. He preached the worth of ordinary man, the glory of the great past, and the lasting significance of ancient mythologies. He is looking for a better era: a time of brotherly intercourse, an epoch of universal kindliness and political stability which will be ushered in through some personal agency.

It was far otherwise with Lucretius. He, too, stood in the darkness but he looked for no dawn. The world was in its decrepitude, and the sun of life had set forever. The universe was about to break up. What was the meaning of the strange mistakes of nature and premature old age; of the collapse of ancient states and the passing of old simplicities, and this oncoming tumult of riot and disturbance and unrestrained passion, but that soon the mighty atomic forces which rage and storm beyond the flaming walls of the world will invade our domain, and all things vanish away, leaving not a rack behind. The peace of Lucretius is the peace of hopeless abandon and heroic endurance; the peace of Virgil is the peace of restful confidence and serene faith in the future. He was as earnest as Lucretius, and as catholic in his tastes as Cicero; but he lacked the scepticism of the one as he escaped the opportunism of the

other. What was the secret of his optimism? I find it in three things: his spiritual sensibility, his tempered Stoicism, and his splendid faith in the power of personality.

His spiritual sensibility is revealed by his faith in the native religion. The ancient mythologies, which to Cicero were useful only as political expedients, were to the sensitive spirit of Virgil instinct with reality, all the more impressive because tempered by racial relationships and glorified by a splendid tradition. He believed that these old ritual performances embodied the religious experience of his people, a spirit of devotion that still lived in rural communities, and kept the altar fires burning in many a lowly dwelling. The ancient religion had united the gods and men in a living bond, and in spite of the collapse of the city-state and the oncoming tide of cosmopolitanism, the poet believed in the vitality of the native faith, and, like a captive Jew, waited for its restoration.

The Stoicism of Virgil was tempered by his humanity. The Stoic consecrated the new experience of cosmopolitanism by a doctrine of universal brotherhood. This sense of human solidarity had been steadily growing, and had come into Roman life in union with certain Semitic elements which had tempered and humanised the hard old creed.

This tempered Stoicism, for which Posidonius was largely responsible, was peculiarly acceptable to Virgil. He had the rare gift of making and deserving friends. A winsome spirit, he moved through his age, gathering the finest and best in his environment, and ever giving expression to his faith in man as man. Living in the metropolis, sought after by the great and powerful, the friend of Augustus and frequently moving amid the splendid wickedness of the age, he remained to the end unspotted and unspoiled, a frank, open-hearted humanist. His genius embodied the Stoic strength without its hardness, and his cleanness of heart kept him unsoiled in the midst of evil without loss of social passion or public efficiency.

Because of his faith in human nature, he felt that a time was coming when the goodness of God would be brought in sympathetic touch with the pathetic needs of the age through some powerful personal agency. The last century of the Republic was distinguished by nothing so much as a loss of faith in its political institutions. What could hold society together and impart stability to government? The old notions did not suit the new needs. The age wanted a strong man to set it right. The career of Julius Cæsar brought the notion of personal dominion to full consciousness; and when his death renewed the strife of civil war

the age eagerly turned to Augustus and invested him with imperial power. Augustus filled the imagination of the time, notably that of Virgil. There was a feeling abroad that something more than right principles was needed to safeguard the age from moral anarchy; this feeling passing over into religion developed into the cult of Emperor worship. Virgil keenly felt the need of personal leadership. His great Roman Æneas might appear in some strong man. We need not insist that his fourth eclogue is a prophecy of Christ, but in this poem he predicts the return of the golden age, which, under the leadership of a child about to be born, shall exceed other ages in peace and good will. In some respects this conception resembles Isaiah's Messianic predictions, so much so in fact that some scholars have maintained that Virgil was influenced by Jewish prophecy.[14] Whether this be true or not is unimportant; what is of moment here is the great confession of faith in the power of personality, a confidence in a leadership that should stabilise government and give peace to the individual. Virgil's great service to his age consisted in shaping up its instinctive desire for personal direction, in arousing hopeful anticipations concerning a change in the political and

[14] Virgil's "Messianic Eclogue," Mayor, Fowler and Conway, pp. 115–131.

spiritual situation, and from this point of view he may be regarded as a forerunner of Christianity. It is extremely difficult to resist the conviction that had he been more favourably situated, he, too, might have been a "God-fearer." At any rate he well deserves the praise of Dante:

"Thou didst like him, who goes by night, and carries the light behind him, and profits not himself, but makes the persons following him wise, when thou saidst: 'The world is renewed, Justice returns, and the primeval time of man, and a new progeny descends from heaven.' Through thee I became a poet, and through thee a Christian." [15]

We now pass to consider a great figure of the following century: a man whose teaching illustrates the strength and weakness of Stoicism in contact with practical life—I mean Seneca.

Naturally it may be asked: Why prefer Seneca to Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius? The answer is that Epictetus represents Stoicism in detachment, a Stoicism of contemplation rather than action. His theory is worthy of high consideration, but the range of his activities was so limited as to be of little value for our purpose. On the other hand Marcus Aurelius was a public character of large capacity. He realised Plato's dream of "a philosopher on the throne;" but his teachings illus-

[15] "Purgatory," vv. 67–74, Norton's translation.

trate the decrepitude of a system that was a weary old creed in the Antonine Age. His attitude is that of a judge rather than of an advocate; moreover he is too introspective for our purpose. Dr. Gildersleeve aptly calls him "a keeper of a pathological peepshow." [16]

What we wish to know is how will a Stoic meet the trials and temptations of such a period as the Neronian reign of terror? We know what the Stoic professed; but we should like to know how he behaved as a member of society and man of affairs. Such considerations make the career of Seneca of immense importance, because it exhibits better than that of his contemporaries the strength and weakness of the Stoic position.

Seneca was born in Spain and brought to Rome in the last years of the great Augustus. He grew up in the reign of the gloomy Tiberius and barely escaped with his life during the frantic reign of Caligula. He attained a high position in the state during the Claudian *régime,* but falling the victim of a plot was banished to Corsica, from whence after eight weary years he was recalled to become the tutor of Nero. He diligently tried to form the character of his royal disciple on a noble model; his treatise on "Clemency" written for Nero's guidance is a mirror for

[16] "Essays and Studies," p. 300.

princes, and is one of his finest productions. For a period he was one of Nero's chief ministers, but his influence on his capricious master was slight and always dangerous. His relation to Nero was represented in caricatures of the time as that of a butterfly acting as charioteer to a dragon.[17] Eventually the unnatural relation was broken off, and Seneca retired to his villa and gave himself to philosophic contemplation, the society of friends and the preparation for death. He died, finally, by his own hand at the command of Nero during the Pisonian conspiracy.

The character of Seneca is full of violent contrasts and these often appear in his writings. Perhaps there never was a man of such intellectual force and moral sensibility so entangled in a world that he despised, yet lacked strength of character to forsake. Rich beyond the dreams of avarice, he is constantly preaching the glory of poverty. He knew the burden and the danger of wealth. "A great fortune is a great slavery," he writes to Polybius.[18] It was his wealth rather than his supposed complicity in the conspiracy of Piso that made him an object of Nero's vengeance. While professing Stoic principles he often lived in Epicurean surroundings. Obliged by public

[17] Grant: "The Ethics of Aristotle," Vol. I, p. 351.
[18] "Minor Dialogues," Bohn edition, p. 360.

duty to mingle in corrupt society, he vainly longed for quiet and seclusion. Graver things have been said of him. There are tales of shameless intrigue and possibly he was implicated in the murder of Agrippina. As a youth it is likely he had a fair share in the vices and follies of his time. The truth is, Seneca was naturally disinclined towards corrupt society and under favourable circumstances would have more thoroughly realised the Stoic ideal; but situated as he was, his strength and weakness are alike revealed in almost every action. During his Corsican exile the brother of Polybius died. Polybius was the rich and influential freedman of the Emperor; and to him on that occasion the exile wrote a letter of consolation, ostensibly to offer his sympathy, but in reality to enlist the powerful henchman's services in securing his recall. In this letter he indulges in outrageous flattery of Claudius, when at heart we know he thoroughly despised the man. If we desire to know his real opinion of the Emperor we should read the *"Ludus de Morte Claudii,"* a pitiless satire on the supposed efforts of Claudius to enter into heaven.[19] In fact Seneca was something of a sycophant and timeserver, and it is easy to hold the opinion that has prevailed from Dion Cassius to

[19] Translated in the Loeb Classics under the title: "The Pumpkinification of Claudius."

Carlyle that he was a trimmer and a hypocrite. In some respects he is very like Bunyan's By-Ends. But there is something more to be said. If through weakness he often descends into the sink of iniquity, which in those days yawned at the feet of public men, he rises frequently to sublime heights of moral aspiration and spiritual contemplation. In his last days the man was penitent, contrite, and passionately interested in moral reformation. At heart he wished to do right, but found himself often obliged to make concessions that he knew to be wrong. He lacked power to break away from an evil environment; he sought in Stoicism something that would give him strength to check inherent weakness, and he probably succeeded as well as any well-meaning man of his age. It was easy for Epictetus to lay down the law in his state of detachment; it was pleasant for Marcus Aurelius to indulge in introspective speculations during the leisure of his military campaigns; but it was altogether another matter to live like a Stoic in the circles of society where Seneca's interests lay; and the man's inconsistencies make him all the more interesting as showing the strength and weakness of Stoic principles in contact with real life.

Stoicism was Seneca's religion. Many of his precepts are very like those of Holy Writ, and an

interesting parallel might be drawn between his teaching and that of Paul. This indicates that in his powerful intellect the ethical significance of life was being sharpened by an intensified sense of God.

He had, as Prof. Dill has indicated, to an unusual degree the power of moral diagnosis. He had the fatal gift of insight, and looked deeply into the heart of the age. He saw its sins and weaknesses, its sullen hates and vain ambitions, its keen desires and abortive remedies. More than all else he was aware of its profound melancholy. "Look round you, I pray you, upon all mortals," he writes to Polybius; "everywhere there is ample and constant reason for weeping. . . . Tears will fail us sooner than causes for shedding them. Do you not see what sort of life it must be that Nature has promised us men when she makes us weep as soon as we are born?" [20]

Seneca's insight was due to his perception of moral reality; he seemed to feel as if the drab life of the age was overlooked by an unattainable Purity. He had no adequate remedy for evil save to fall back on the familiar principle of Stoicism that what could not be cured must be endured. And his chief aim was to temper this endurance with sympathetic understanding. He was a good

[20] Op. Cit., p. 357.

diagnostician, but a poor healer, and he knew it. He is not willing to preach the hard old creed of self-sufficiency, because his own sad experience had made him realise the need of a dynamic. But he tempered his Stoicism with humanism. He was full of pity and compassion for the overwrought age, and so he became, to use a phrase of Prof. Dill, "a spiritual director." [21] Philosophy became a quest for consolation and a meditation on death. He shows us better than any contemporary writer how philosophy was ready to abandon the effort to set things right, and accommodate itself to immediate human necessity. The prime need of the time was for consolation, and so Seneca became a consoler, a lay-pastor who was among the people as one:

"Who most has suffered, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne,
And all his store of sad experiences he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head
And all his hourly anodynes." [22]

We have now traced the ethical quest for safe conduct from its inception in the age of enlightenment among the Greeks to its culmination in the resignation and sadness of the Roman Stoic

[21] "Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius," Book III, Chapter 1.

[22] Matthew Arnold· "The Scholar Gipsy."

Seneca. The real test of the religious status of a people is not what is manifest in the lowest expression of life, but what is missing from the highest reaches of aspiration. As M. Denis remarks: "When one wishes to find the conscience of a people, it is not always in their actual behaviour that it should be sought for: it is often entirely present in their prayers and in their regrets." [23] And this is the impression such a review of ethical opinion makes upon the mind of the impartial reader. The moral passion of that age was running far in advance of its moral power. Its main problem was how to translate *"gnosis"* into *"dunamis."* It had great ideals, but was keenly aware of their impotence. What it wanted was a virtue-making power that could transform precept into practice and ideals into character. The distinctive service of the ethical thinkers of the period was in making the problem explicit; in defining its limits, in sifting out the various methods of accommodating the human spirit to the imperious need for adjustment, and finally, by their confessions of futility, showing the utter inadequacy of any scheme of reform based on human nature.

These great men could draw near and hear what

[23] Quoted by Angus: "The Environment of Early Christianity," p. 30.

God would say, but few there were who could hear for others. Not one of them, unless it be Virgil, had any message of encouragement for the masses of the people. They have nothing to say for the plain man. Their ways of adjustment were open only to certain highly endowed classes; and eventually within these favoured groups the pessimism, sadness, and resignation serve better than anything in that age to show that what the world needed was not a diagnostician but a healer, not a reformer but a Saviour.

Even then, had they been aware of it, there were some who were looking for adjustment in another direction. Another teaching was abroad in the land. You would not find it in the temples of the mystery religions nor in the lecture halls of the philosophers, but you could hear it proclaimed in the humble synagogue of the Jew of the dispersion. Many gentiles had broken away from the native religion; they were still less inclined to adopt one of the Oriental cults then epidemic in the empire; neither were they looking for adjustment in the direction of philosophy. Their keenest wish was for a dynamic personality functioning in human history. They were waiting for a deliverer, a redeemer; and while waiting for him had grouped themselves, "a fringe of devout heathenism," round the Jewish synagogue. They were attracted by the

ethical monotheism of Judaism and inspired with its Messianic hopes. This brings us to the Jew, and opens the way for a study of a third phase of the quest for safe conduct, that manifestation of religious experience which seeks adjustment with God by means of legal obedience to a revealed law.

LECTURE V

THE LEGAL QUEST AMONG THE JEWS

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In turning from the gentile to the Jew we pass from the region of speculation to the domain of revealed religion. The primitive religious impulse has been defined as "man's effective desire to be in right relation to the Power manifesting itself in the universe." The imperious need for adjustment led to certain quests or pilgrimages. Hitherto we have considered the pilgrimage of the imagination which culminated in the mystery religions, and the pilgrimage of the mind which manifested itself in the ethical speculations of the Greeks and Romans. We now take up the pilgrimage of the conscience which reached its climax in the legalism of the Jews.

The consideration of this question, however, has certain limitations. We are not to ask what the religion of Israel was intended to be under the providence of God; nor what that religion was in the teaching of the prophets, but what it came to be under the distorting influences of Jewish parties. We wish to understand why the Jew rejected

his Messiah in the age when Christianity began its westward movement.

The failure of the Jew is one of the great tragedies of history. Christianity met with greater receptivity among gentiles than among Jews; God-fearers pressed into the kingdom ahead of the chosen people, and a race that God had trained for centuries rejected its Messiah while heathen peoples received Him gladly. How shall this failure be accounted for? The explanation lies deep in the history of the past.

In becoming the special object of Divine providence the Jew had three distinct advantages over other peoples. In the first place he had a revelation of the true God. The monotheism of Israel was the direct outcome of revelation and not the product of a slow evolution. Not only did the Jew have the idea of one God, but this notion of Deity was founded not as among heathen peoples on unlimited power, but upon character. The one God was a holy and righteous God. In the second place, the Jew enjoyed a covenant relation to God; he was a chosen instrument of Divine providence. In the third place the Jew was in possession of a Divine law. All these features gave him a distinct advantage over other peoples.

What then was the notion of salvation held by the average Jew? How did he answer the ques-

tion of getting right with God? This is a fair question, and cannot be answered by a study of the prophetic teaching, or of the function of the law as it was interpreted by special revelation. Our question is rather with the notion of religion as it lay in the popular mind. The religious problem of the Jew was less complex than that of the gentile. The gentile had to determine the nature and attitude of the power manifesting itself in the universe from speculations of various kinds; and he never could be sure that he was right. With the Jew, on the contrary, the problem was very simple. The power manifested itself in a revelation. The supreme God had chosen Israel for a special destiny and given it a law. How then did the idea of right relations with God appear to the average Jew?

Apparently it passed through two distinct stages.[1] From the settlement in Palestine to the return from the Babylonian exile, the ordinary Jew had a very simple answer to the question of right relations. Being a member of the chosen race and a child of Abraham, he reasoned that he was born in right relation with God. Believing that he was the heir to all the covenant promises, he does not appear to have seriously questioned his religious status. Eventually this led to the de-

[1] F. B. Westcott: "St. Paul and Justification," pp. 11–14.

velopment of a conventional morality in harmony with the ritual and legal requirements of the law of Moses; and finally this notion of ritual obedience came into conflict with the moral sense of the race, especially with the teaching of the prophets. We are quite familiar with the stubborn resistance of the popular religion to all forms of prophetic influence. It was not possible for the average Jew to question his religious status so long as he believed that he was born in right relations with God. The question of safe conduct as an individual problem does not appear to have been raised until after the exile.

But the Babylonian captivity produced very profound changes in the Jewish view of religion. It had much the same general effect on the Jew as the collapse of the city-state had upon the spirit of the Greeks and Romans. So long as Jerusalem stood inviolate the average Jew lived undisturbed in his national exclusiveness. He was deaf to the warnings of conscience, and equally indifferent to the prophetic teaching. But when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians it meant the end of the old theocratic state. The death blow to national security brought the question of spiritual relationships definitely within the ken of individual consciousness.

The exile sharpened the sense of ethical mono-

theism; it made the average Jew aware of the spirituality of God; it brought the will of the Almighty into direct contact with a sensitive conscience. The natural result was to intensify the conception of spiritual reality.

The new sense of spiritual reality broke down the two barriers which hitherto had enabled the Jew to live at ease in Zion. On the one hand it substituted the church for the state. The old theocratic state having ceased with the fall of Jerusalem, a new notion, that of a spiritual community, came into the mind of the Jew, and right status with God was conceived as a personal rather than a national one. On the other hand, by placing emphasis on the moral rather than the ritual aspects of the law—since with the fall of Jerusalem he also lost contact with the temple worship—it sharpened the sense of individual responsibility and made the quest for safe conduct a personal one. For the first time, the average Jew became aware of the force of prophetic teaching. It was better to obey than sacrifice, and righteousness was believed to be more acceptable than burnt offerings. The new feeling of spiritual reality had destroyed communal morality and developed the notion of personal morality. The primacy of individual life was distinctly taught by Ezekiel. One of the common complaints of the exiles was that they

were suffering for the sins of their fathers. "Our fathers have eaten sour grapes," they said, "and our teeth are set on edge." But Ezekiel told them that this proverb should no longer be current in Israel, for "the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." [2]

The net result of the exile was to bring the question of safe conduct to the front as a problem for the individual. This led to a development of vast significance for the future of Israel.

From the beginning of their return from the Babylonian captivity, the Jews were troubled by two tendencies—a nationalist tendency and a cosmopolitan tendency. On the one hand some wished to keep Israel exclusive and separate from other nations; they were ambitious to restore the race to its old position as a separate state. On the other hand some felt the attraction of Persian influence. They were in favour of a more liberal policy of dealing with other peoples. One was a tendency towards spirituality, the other a drift towards secularism.

This difference of opinion was very acute when

[2] xviii: 20.

Ezra began his work of reform. His problem was a dual one. It was important at the outset to secure national solidarity. He was afraid of the cosmopolitan tendency because he believed that if this policy should prevail the Jew would lose his racial distinctiveness. But it was clear that the old city-state could not be restored. The bond of union, then, could not be a political one. It must be distinctly religious. He solved the political difficulty by dealing with it from the standpoint of a religious reformer. But the idea of religion needed definition, because the spiritual experience of the exile had subordinated ceremonialism to moral considerations, and the problem of right relations had become a matter for conscience to determine. Obviously he could not base his religious hopes on a repetition of the old temple services; these were still important, but they were not then fundamental. Ezra, therefore, determined to make the moral law the basis of national solidarity; and this was highly expedient, since it was in harmony with the new spiritual requirements of the individual. The Jew could no longer be satisfied with a communal morality; neither could he satisfy his conscience by the reflection that he was right with God because he was a child of Abraham. He had outgrown this view. He must find a basis of right relations in something that he

could do. But since he could not be content with ritual observances he was compelled to develop his religious activities in harmony with the moral aspect of life. In brief he must find an ethical sanction for conduct.

Ezra rightly comprehended the need of the time, and endeavoured to satisfy it with a fresh promulgation of the law of Moses. Under the pre-exilic *régime* the ordinary Jew was content with racial relationships; but under the post-exilic *régime* he adjusts himself to God through legal relationships. This new basis for national separateness, conforming as it did so accurately with the need of the times, sufficiently accounts for the success of Ezra's reforms. The secular party, which desired more liberal relations with gentiles, was defeated by the religious party which desired to preserve racial exclusiveness by means of a legal bond. The secularists gravitated towards the temple and its ritual services and eventually assumed the duties of the priests, while the religious party, being in the majority, gravitated towards the law, and eventually became the dominant influence in the synagogue worship.

But a new development immediately set in, because the law had to be interpreted, and the new order of Scribes arose in Israel, whose duty it was to expound and explain the law. But the

law not only required exposition, but also adjustment and expansion to meet the constantly growing needs of the people. In pre-exilic times this was the work of the prophets, but since in post-exilic times the voice of prophecy was silenced, the duty came into the hands of the Scribes. And the interpretations and expansions of the Scribes developed a body of oral tradition known as the unwritten law, and was so closely identified with the written law as to be regarded of equal importance; and the composite structure was finally accepted as the standard authority for Jewish religion.

As time passed the religious and secular tendencies drifted further apart and began to crystallise into distinct parties with different policies of government and conflicting national ideals. The secular party identified itself with the temple services, while the religious party concentrated its interest on the interpretation of the written and oral law and the development of the synagogue worship; until towards the close of the second century, B. C., we find them with specific names. The secular tendency associated with the temple worship developed into the party of the Sadducees, while the religious tendency associated with the synagogue developed into the party of the Pharisees; and these parties were di-

rectly responsible for the tragic failure of the Jew.

The Sadducees were the direct descendants of the priestly party which towards the close of the Greek period wished to Hellenise the Palestinian Jews.[3] They were a cosmopolitan party whose religious interests were limited to the conservation of the temple ritual and the enjoyment of priestly privileges; and for the preservation of these rights they were always willing to compromise with gentile influences in behalf of the *status quo*. As a rule they were of the nobility. Religion was an expedient in the interest of worldly position. The Sadducee ordinarily was a man of culture and refinement, a creature of loose and often sceptical views and at heart a secularist. His opposition to Jesus was based less on a religious than a political ground. He advocated the crucifixion of the Saviour on the ground that His mission was a seditious one. It was better, in his view, that one man should die than that the whole nation should perish. Apart from this aspect, his influence on the problem of safe conduct was negligible.

The Pharisee, on the contrary, is the most interesting, as he is the most pathetic figure in Jew-

[3] Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible: Article "Sadducees."

ish history after the exile.[4] From the beginning of that momentous experience there had been a religious or separatist party in Jerusalem. During subsequent changes of fortune, this party had consistently exalted the written and oral laws above ritual performances; and as consistently feared and opposed every attempt to bring Judaism into harmony with the cosmopolitan tendencies of the age. The world had outgrown simple conceptions of government, and since Alexander's conquests the East and West had been in intimate contact; still there were many Jews who honestly believed that the wave of cosmopolitanism could be successfully resisted; and as the gentile world pressed hard upon the little nation, the party of separation persistently emphasised a legal relation to God as the basis for racial solidarity. Towards the close of the second century B. C., the tendency of separation had developed into a powerful party known as the Pharisees.

The Pharisees differed from the Sadducees in many important particulars. Fundamentally they were a religious party, while the Sadducees were secularists. But there were other differences. The Pharisees stoutly maintained the authority of the

[4] Hastings, Op. Cit., Article, "Pharisees." For an appreciation of the Pharisee, see Herford's "Pharisaism." Crown Theological Library.

oral law and put it on a level with the law of Moses. They were full of missionary zeal. Our Saviour said that they would "compass sea and land to make one proselyte." [5] They were men of the synagogue rather than of the temple, but were chiefly distinguished by their principle of separation. They took solemn vows to have no dealings with gentiles, and they were not willing to give religious privileges to the "people of the land." They were zealously interested in the interpretation of the written and the oral law, and in the time of Christ the traditions of the elders had assumed such a complicated form that it was difficult to distinguish them from the original deposit of revelation. Moreover they had enlarged the sphere of the ceremonial law until it comprehended the most minute phases of conduct.

The Pharisees were the most religious men of their age, the Puritans of the first century before Christ, and we are obliged to recognise their earnestness and sincerity. They preserved a spiritual view of religion in the era of syncretism which followed Alexander's conquests, when so many religions and philosophies lost their distinctive character. Moreover we must admit that the vices of the Pharisees were not personal, but those of the system. They were victims largely of conscien-

[5] Matthew xxiii:15.

tious wrong-headedness, and their influence over later Judaism was paramount.

What was the source of Pharisaic influence? To answer this we must return to the question raised by the Babylonian exile. That question was: How can a man get right with God? The exile had taught the Jew that the old notion of right relations through Abrahamic descent was not sufficient. A new feeling of individual responsibility forced him to seek for a personal method of satisfying his conscience. The strength of the Pharisee's position lay in the fact that he answered this question in a way that was in many respects adequate for the needs of the time.

The Pharisee held that a right relation with God could be obtained by means of legal obedience to a revealed law. Originally the law was contained in the ten commandments, but since prophecy had ceased it became necessary to elaborate the original law so as to meet new conditions; hence had developed a vast body of traditions and interpretations known as the oral law. The law, written and oral, was the only rule of faith and practice. The law had the advantage of being concrete. Men felt that they must do something to be saved. It was this feeling that gave such great influence to the Scribes and Pharisees. The great tradition eventually assumed a

Divine significance and the Pharisees began to teach the doctrine of the eternity of the law. From many points of view the real God of the Pharisee was the law.

But the law was given to the chosen people only; obedience was the religious bond of the Jewish race, and its perfect working seemed to depend on a restoration of the state to its former independence. The supremacy of the law was bound up with a revival of nationalism, and this conception of the mission of the Jew determined the characteristic points of view of the Pharisee in the time of Christ. First, he insisted that man was saved by the law, that the law was eternal and unchangeable, and he was determined to resist any change or innovation. He consistently opposed Jesus because He would not accept his view of the law. The intense patriotism of the Pharisee led him to interpret destiny in national rather than in spiritual terms; at least he regarded spiritual dominion as conditioned by national independence, and this led him to think of his Messiah as an earthly rather than as a spiritual ruler.

Both powerful parties among the Jews expected a Messiah, and both looked for national security as a result of His reign. But while the Sadducee thought of political security as an end, the Pharisee regarded it as a means only. I think

the Sadducee would have been content with a Messiah subject to Roman rule. He would have been satisfied with any phase of political life that allowed him to enjoy unmolested his priestly privileges. If this new relationship permitted him to indulge his cosmopolitan tendencies, so much the better.

But the Pharisee held a sterner view. Political security was a necessary means of attaining spiritual dominion, and he would have been content with nothing less than a restoration of the old theocratic state, and a complete separation of the Jew from gentile influence. He was not afraid of a revolution. In fact he wished for it, and probably expected the Messiah to begin it. The Sadducee feared nothing so much as sedition; hence the secularist opposed Jesus because His principles seemed inimical to the *status quo;* the religious enthusiast opposed Him because His teaching was hostile to Pharisaic interpretations of the law.

It is easy to understand why the Pharisee misconceived the Messianic mission; it is also easy to comprehend his failure to accept Christianity. But his failure was significant of another thing. It was significant of the breakdown of the idea of salvation based on legal observances; and it is

with this aspect of the question that we are mainly concerned.

The Pharisaic system was the best product of later Judaism; in fact it was the best the Jew could offer to gentiles; and its failure to accomplish the desired result is an impressive illustration of the failure of the third great quest for safe conduct, which was one of the distinguishing features of the religious situation during the westward movement of Christianity.

The Pharisaic system failed for three reasons: it misconceived the law of Moses; its conception of religion could not satisfy the moral sense; and it could not successfully resist foreign influences.

The Pharisee misconceived the law of Moses. He believed that the law had been given as the way of salvation, but this is contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures. What was the Biblical function of the law? This is an important question, and can be answered, I think, in a simple way. The function of the law was a dual one: it was that of a diagnostician and of a schoolmaster.

In the first place the law was given in order that it might diagnose a moral situation that called for redemption. A law was needed to define sin, since where there is no law there is no clear consciousness of sin. From the beginning man had been haunted by a sense of evil; by a feeling that

he was not right with God. It was moral uneasiness that developed the primitive religious impulse into "an effective desire to be in right relations to the Power manifesting itself in the universe." A law written on the heart, while effective in making man uneasy, could not without further definition work a spiritual change in his view of his need. The function of the law was to diagnose the trouble, to create the notion of sin. It did this in two ways. The Shorter Catechism defines sin as "any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." On the one hand, sin has a horizontal aspect. Before the law came man did what was right in his own eyes; lines of behaviour crossed and recrossed each other without interference; but when the law was given, a straight line was drawn through human conduct, and at every point man's actions appeared crossing and recrossing this line. That is the meaning of transgression. The law created the notion of sin as disobedience and lawlessness; it revealed sin in its positive or commission aspect. On the other hand sin has a perpendicular aspect. Before the law came man was aware of not being in right relations with God. Something was wrong with his character structure, something lacking, but what he could not tell but vaguely; but when the law was given, a plumb line was dropped down beside

the character structure and it was seen to be out of plumb. This created the notion of sin as a want of conformity, of sin in its negative or omission aspect. The effect of the law was to sharpen and make definite what was implicit in experience. Transgression and want of conformity were the elements always present in the life of a fallen man.

In the second place the law was given to act as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. A schoolmaster in the old days was not a teacher, but an attendance officer. It was his duty to bring the pupil to the school, and when he turned him over to the teacher his work was done. This is Paul's argument in Galatians.[6] The law revealed man's desperate situation. It was a situation calling for remedy. The moral law diagnosed the situation, and the ceremonial law, through its types and sacrifices, was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Christ was the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world. And the law was most efficient. If the moral law made man aware of his need, the ceremonial law suggested an adequate remedy.

But the Pharisee misconceived the law. Instead of regarding it in its Scriptural light, he turned it into the way of salvation; and under

[6] iii:19–25.

his skilful manipulation it became a burdensome imposition upon an already overloaded people.

The Pharisaic system failed, because, by rigidly limiting the law to externals, it failed to satisfy a growing moral sense. This was a constant criticism of Jesus. The law as the Pharisees understood it did not go deep enough. Applied exclusively to the outer manifestations of life, it could not influence the thoughts or satisfy the conscience.

In previous lectures we have noticed a very significant phase of ethical development: how the growing moral sense of a people will turn round upon ancient religious traditions and cut them to pieces, or transform them ethically. It does not require an extended examination to discover that this process was going on within Pharisaism itself. Take the case of Saul of Tarsus. Externally his career as a Pharisee appears satisfying. Believing himself blameless before the law, he does not seem to question his religious status. But an examination of some of the autobiographical references in his epistles raises a question whether, after all, his satisfaction did not mask a profound uneasiness, as of a sense of something lacking, of an experience inconsistent with his ideals.

It is difficult to say to what precise period we

may assign that remarkable analysis of experience contained in the 7th chapter of Romans. This chapter is a "chamber of horrors and an Iliad of woes" and there is much in it that seems to refer to his pre-Christian experience. As a Christian he boasts of the freedom of his spirit; he is conscious of a feeling of harmony within himself produced by faith in the gospel; while the chapter under review indicates a mighty struggle between a law in the members and a law in the mind, quite out of harmony with his professions of liberty. For my own part, I am convinced that this chapter refers in some measure at least to his experience under the law. If he could look upon the law as limited to externals, he might be content; but this was precisely what so earnest a nature could not do. In spite of his Pharisaic training the law became spiritual and inward; it ceased to be a mere preceptive influence and became a power that searched his very soul. A diagnostician is often incapable of suggesting a remedy, but he can make his patient profoundly uneasy by telling him what is the matter with him. In Paul's case the law worked better as a diagnostician than as a schoolmaster. We have noticed how the growing moral feeling among Greeks and Romans tended to widen and deepen the rift in the soul, and to produce a feeling of conflict be-

tween flesh and spirit. Aristotle expresses it as a conflict between reason and passion in these words: "It is clear that there is in man another principle which is naturally different from reason and fights and contends against reason. For just as the paralysed parts of the body, when we intend to move them to the right, are drawn away in a contrary direction to the left, so it is with the soul; the impulses of incontinent people run counter to reason." [7]

What speculation was doing for the gentile, the law was doing for many Jews as earnest as Saul of Tarsus. How accurately he sums up the case in the familiar phrase: "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not." [8] This is a confession of a need for a virtue-making power; a demand for a remedy adequate to meet a situation created by the law. It is also a confession that power to meet this need is not to be found in human nature. And this was practically the same conclusion reached by ethical thinkers from Plato to Seneca. Speculation developed the conviction in the gentile mind, and the law created it for the Jew, and both were brought to the same level. Pharisaism failed simply because it could not meet the growing demands of

[7] "Ethics," Welldon's translation, p. 32.
[8] vii:18.

the moral sense, and this failure is significant of the failure of the quest for safe conduct by means of legal obedience. A man might keep the external demands of the law, and still be far from attaining peace. He had to reckon with an inner experience which the law could sharpen and intensify, but in no wise relieve, save as by suggesting submission to Christ. I do not mean to assert that thinking alone would have made Paul a Christian; but I do believe that a profound feeling of dissatisfaction with the Pharisaic programme made it easier to yield to Christ, when he was convinced that He had risen from the dead. In his epistles he attacks the law in no academic spirit. His passionate assertion of the freedom of the Christian against the tyranny of tradition is the offspring of a conviction that the Pharisaic conception of the law was not only inadequate, but positively harmful. But he gave the law credit for performing its divine function; it was an attendance officer to bring men to Christ. When this was accomplished its work was done.[9]

Pharisaism failed in the third place because it could not successfully cope with foreign influences. This is apparent from the history of the Jew of the dispersion. The power of the Pharisee was exercised in the synagogue. The Sadducee was

[9] See MacGregor's "Christian Freedom," passim.

a man of the temple; as an ecclesiastical politician he had little interest in provincial enterprises. The Pharisee, on the contrary, vitally influenced the life of the provincial Jew because the bond of racial solidarity was the synagogue service. But in spite of this the Pharisee found it difficult to plant legalism in gentile soil. The Jew of the dispersion emphasised the ethical rather than the legal aspect of religion. Separated by time and distance from the temple services, he was less interested in ceremonial observances than his Palestinian brother. Moreover, he was less susceptible to Pharisaic exclusiveness and more open to cosmopolitan influences. This is indicated by the speech of Stephen, a Jew of the dispersion. He devoutly believed in the temple and the law as divine institutions, but clearly saw that they had been superseded by Christianity. Under such circumstances the notion of ethical monotheism as the foundation of spiritual religion became clear and explicit. But the enlargement of the moral significance of God tended to educate the conscience and intensify the struggle between the human will and the ethical imperatives of the law; and the net result was a sense of inadequacy in the old way of salvation. The Jew of the dispersion was far more willing to receive Christianity than his Palestinian kinsman, not only because his mind

was open to new influences, but because the new religion adequately met the demands of the ethical nature.

In these particulars we have an explanation of the failure of Pharisaism. By misconceiving the law, so far from providing a way of salvation, the Pharisee actually made the quest for safe conduct more acute, since the law developed the moral sense and made man aware of the inaptitude of external righteousness. Our Saviour told the disciples that unless their righteousness should exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, they could not enter the kingdom. Possibly many Jews of the dispersion felt the same thing. The growing ethical feeling of the time made external methods of salvation unfit and useless, and created a demand for a virtue-making power that could give man an undisputed status before the most High God. The failure of Pharisaism was the failure of the third phase of the quest for safe conduct.

Our consideration of the background of early Christianity has been limited to a study of certain persistent forms of spiritual experience. The primitive religious impulse is "the effective desire to be in right relation to the Power manifesting itself in the universe." We have examined three historic answers to this imperious need. Some sought adjustment through ritual, others through

ethical reflections, and others, as in the case of the Pharisee, through legal observances; and the quests for safe conduct failed because they could not provide a virtue-making power; they were unable to evolve a moral dynamic of sufficient force to meet the requirements of a growing ethical passion. Every endeavour to attain peace naturally increased the moral urgency of the quest, and in the period under review this feeling was paramount. Where in the midst of this welter of religions, philosophies, and rituals could man find a virtue-making power? The age was too impatient to listen to argument; it was beginning, too, to weary of mere dogma. It most intensely craved the appearance of a power manifest in experience and working its will in historic forms and comprehensible ways. The most pathetic figures of the time were men like Seneca or Marcus Aurelius, representatives of the ethical quest; or men of the Pharisaic type, who held the impossible hope of a restoration of the ancient national exclusiveness. But they were men of the past. The more promising figures of the age on the other hand were Jews of the dispersion, and God-fearing gentiles. They were men of the new age, who could hope and aspire and grow. This was the harvest which our Saviour could see. It lay out there in the gentile world, prepared by cen-

turies of struggle and deferred hopes, of inapt speculations and unfruitful moral experiences.

What could Christianity do for that age? What could it say of the need for moral power? Could it satisfy the passionate desire for safe conduct? Was it too a mere theory, or a religion of myths and symbols and ritual performances? Was it another ethical philosophy, or new legalism—another link in the chain of bondage—or was it a virtue-making power, a story of a Mighty Personality that had come into the world, to seek and to save?

This was the inspiriting situation that confronted the many-sided mind of Paul when he looked beyond the narrow confines of Judaism to the Græco-Roman world. And this vision of opportunity is the explanation of his confidence when he writes to the Roman Christians: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek."[10] In the first epistle to the Corinthians he summons the ancient world to debate the question of safe conduct with him: "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world, for after that in the

[10] i:16.

wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." [11] For several centuries God had permitted the old world to think about the question of safe conduct, and while the moral strenuousness of life had become explicit, and ethical passion stimulated, no dynamic to meet the need had been devised. The scribe and the philosopher and the disputer of this world were silent in the face of this tremendous demand. But a new and entirely different force had come into the world. It did not rely on the enticing words of man's wisdom, or depend on an ornate ritual, but was communicated to man through faith in a historic Person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Mighty to save.

[11] i:20–21.

PART TWO: THE RELIGION OF POWER

LECTURE VI

CHRISTIANITY AS THE RELIGION OF POWER

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In passing to the constructive part of the subject we must keep in mind the significance of the background. The background is important first as defining the feelings of the Græco-Roman world concerning spiritual relations and outlook; and secondly, as indicating the sort of religion the age was prepared to accept.

The feeling that characterised the period was one of distress. The collapse of the old city-state had made it impossible any longer to believe in the native religion; and while the Oriental mystery cults were widely diffused, they had little significance at that time for serious-minded intellectuals. This class ordinarily sought peace in some form of philosophy. Epicureanism had many advocates, but the prevailing philosophy was Stoicism. But while Stoicism proved a healing and consoling influence to many distressed minds, its final effect was to further intensify the unrest of those who consistently followed it. It sharpened the moral sense, clarified the ethical imperatives of

life, but made the problem of safe conduct more acute. The want of a dynamic seriously limited the philosophy in the directions towards which the spiritual aspiration of the age was tending. It was realised that right principles were not sufficient; a moral dynamic was sorely needed; above all there was a passionate desire for the appearance of a power in the life of the times that could realise the spiritual aspiration and embody the ethical ideal which haunted every thoughtful mind. Judaism was influential; its conception of ethical monotheism powerfully attracted God-fearing gentiles; the promise of a Messiah had simplified the desire of the age for a demonstration of spiritual power within the domain of history; yet it was felt that something was wanting. What after all was the advantage of ethical monotheism if it only increased the feeling of imperfection, and further enlarged the disproportion between precept and performance, which tormented seekers after God? Where, too, was the Messiah? Why did He not come to set the age right? Even should He come, would He be able to solve the problem of safe conduct, and set man right with God?

These questions of course did not assume the form of rational inquiry; but they represented feelings and instincts, more or less vague and incho-

ate, yet powerful enough to intensify the moral distress of the age.

Furthermore, the feeling of insecurity tended to define the sort of religion the age was prepared to accept. If it were indifferent to inherited beliefs and weary of fruitless speculation, or even critical of the highest manifestation of religion current in the empire, it is not unreasonable to suppose that a religious appeal calculated to impress the times must proceed upon very different lines.

It must be an appeal not in behalf of a supposedly correct philosophy and dependent on the skilful manipulation of interdependent propositions, but able to point with absolute confidence to historic performances. Such an appeal could not make headway with promises alone, but must show that its promises were actually being realised. The problem reduced to its simplest terms was how to translate *"gnosis"* into *"dunamis"*; how to turn precept into practice, how to express the moral ideal in character.

The age was rich, too rich in fact in ideas; it was not barren of ideals, but it was painfully and consciously aware of its lack of power; and it was keenly felt that any solution of the problem of safe conduct must turn not on the revelation of a perfect moral system, but upon the operation of a moral dynamic; upon the discovery of a virtue-

making power at work within the sphere of man's experience.

The purpose of the study of the background has been to bring out the material fact that the age was ready to accept any religion that proved itself a moral dynamic in the realm of history.

If we accept this interpretation I think it will be an easy task to show the originality of Christianity on its Græco-Roman background. Our estimate of the unique significance of the new religion will be derived from the writings of the Apostle Paul, because he was the man chosen by God to interpret the gospel to the gentile world. Paul was the one man among the Apostles who had a comprehensive knowledge of the intellectual and moral temper of the Græco-Roman peoples. His thoughts and aims were in the closest possible touch with the age. He knew its peculiar needs; he was conscious of its high aspirations; he visualised its moral degradation and sympathised with its futility. He understood its philosophical presuppositions and rightly estimated its intellectual limitations.

The chief interest of Paul's age was religion. But the people as a rule were ignorant and superstitious. To put light in the place of darkness, to impart knowledge to the ignorant, above all to reveal the dynamic Personality of Christ to his

time, was Paul's ruling passion. He proclaimed the joy of the light bearer to the Athenians in these words: "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." [1]

There was something splendidly audacious about the Christian programme. Its advocates hoped to win a world steeped in philosophy, or enmeshed in the sensuous attractions of ritual and ceremony, by telling it a simple story. But the wisdom of God is evident from the results, for the world was ready to listen to a story that could correctly define its need and provide an adequate remedy.

What was there in the new religion most likely to appeal to the gentile mind? Surely it is not to be sought in its superficial aspects, for Christianity despised nearly everything that the pagan world praised, and praised nearly everything the pagan world despised. In the beginning it had to meet the test of ridicule; its preaching was foolishness and its gospel a "silly story"; but in the end it conquered the pagan world because of its inner worth.[2] It came to a people tired of epigrams, sick of discussions, and tormented by a moral idealism they could not hope to express in conduct. It offered salvation, both

[1] Acts xvii:23.
[2] Paulsen: "Ethics," p. 112.

for this life and that which was to come, through faith in an historic Personality, and eventually such preaching made a profound impression. Wherever the gospel was proclaimed people were converted and God-fearing gentiles pressed into the kingdom with joy and understanding. Christian communities sprang up in the strategic centres of population in Asia Minor and in Europe; and a splendid church exercised a glorious ministry in the metropolis.

At the outset the faith of the Christian community was simple and uncritical. The novelty of its ideas, the power of its promises, and the joy of its experience was sufficient for the time being; but as the new experience began to challenge the attention of the world, the people asked questions about it and compared it with other and more familiar ways of salvation. In contrast with the mystery cults it was painfully lacking in ritual and in sensuous appeal; in comparison with current philosophies it was singularly barren in dialectic discussions and rhetorical embellishments. But people were puzzled by its mobility. Judaism was rooted and grounded in the synagogue worship and racial relationships; but here was a religion that ignored differences of race and locality, that could move freely about the world, independent of tradition or local attachments. It

had all the attractive features of the mystery cults, such as the open church, the non-secular clergy, and it satisfied the social passion of the time in its community life. Moreover, it breathed lofty hopes of immortality and fellowship with the eternal God, and yet so far from depending on symbol or myth, or expressing itself in ornate ritual, it founded its promises on an historic Personality. It promised to unite man to God in such a way as to fully satisfy spiritual aspiration, and by faith in Jesus Christ to impart power to the realisation of the moral ideal. It promised these things, the very things the age passionately wanted, but could it accomplish them?

That was the crucial question, for it raised the problem of performance. At the outset it is quite likely that many whose faith in the mystery cults had been destroyed by the discovery that Cybele, Attis or Osiris, so far from being historic persons, were myths and symbols only, had demanded some proof of the historic reality of Jesus Christ. Was the splendid object of gentile faith, the glorious Saviour of the Pauline gospel, a myth or a reality? Had He once lived upon the earth, or was He a product of the theological imagination? Such questioning was inevitable, and at first it was easy to satisfy it by oral testimony. There were many alive at that early stage of the church

who had from the first been eye witnesses of the majesty of Jesus, and their testimony was adequate to meet the requirements of the growing community. But as time passed, and the churches multiplied—especially as the great leaders either suffered martyrdom or were cast into prison—the desire for a permanent record of the earthly life of Jesus led to the writing of the gospels. The characteristic demand for a dynamic Personality probably influenced Mark and Luke in the choice of materials, in order to exhibit the mighty power of Christ as the world's Saviour.

But the problem was growing all the time, and as spiritual life matured it demanded intellectual stimulus; sentiments and impulses required a solid basis of conviction. The demand of the age for a dynamic quality in religion was steadily forcing the advocates of Christianity to prove that it was a religion of power. The question was assuming a concrete form: was Christianity a religion of ideals or of performances? If it was a power, how did it function in history? What were the evidences of its strength? What were the elements of its efficiency?

The new faith was arousing criticism. Jews were speaking of the cross as a stumbling block, and Greeks were calling the gospel a "silly story." Was Christianity after all to prove a disappoint-

ment? In the end would it turn out to be as futile as a mystery cult, or as ineffective as a philosophic theory?

Paul realised that it was impossible to stifle or ignore intellectual inquiry, and he deliberately challenged the intelligence of his age, as he has of succeeding ages, by a direct appeal to reason. But his appeal was very simple and strikingly original. It had nothing of the complexity of current speculations. It was made, not in the interests of a philosophy of religion, but in behalf of historic demonstration. His ultimate aim was to tell the age what Christianity is, but his immediate concern was to show what Christianity can do.

The age demanded a test of Christianity; and while it still clung to the ancient obsession that its needs might be met by some philosophic or ethical theory, it was inclined on practical grounds to be suspicious of any religious appeal that resembled the futile methods with which it was painfully familiar. The age still thought of religion from a speculative point of view, but it was feeling after God because it wanted a dynamic; and this confusion in the mind of the age suggests two ways of testing a religion.

Mr. Balfour has reminded us of the double aspect of all beliefs.[3] On the one hand beliefs have

[3] "Theism and Humanism," pp. 58–59.

a position in a cognitive series, and on the other hand beliefs have a position in a causal series. When beliefs are viewed under a cognitive aspect we are interested principally in a more or less successful interrelation of a series of interdependent propositions, and this method followed to its logical conclusion results in a speculative view of religion. But when beliefs are viewed under a causal aspect, our interest is principally in a "temporal succession of interdependent events." Our aim is not to formulate a system, but to discover power. We may be unable to attain a perfect system of truth; still if we can discover a divine power functioning in the events of history and the experience of mankind we may attain an historic basis for faith.

As was intimated in the introductory lecture, I desire to base my interpretation of Paulinism on this latter conception. Paul was tremendously interested in a systematic development of Christian truth, and for many minds such a systematic conception of religion is a prime necessity; still it is clear that most of us cannot withhold our assent to Christianity until we get a complete and comprehensive theory of it. We must seek an adequate basis for religious faith in a knowledge of the functions of Christian power. I believe that a systematic view of religious truth is highly

desirable, but I am very well aware that for most men it is impossible; and I am confident that a perfectly satisfactory basis for faith can be found in the causal aspect of Christianity. And I hold this view not only because it seems to insure a practical and workable basis for faith, but also because it was Paul's method of approach to the intellectual difficulties of an age, which in so many important particulars resembles our own.

The difference between a cognitive and a causal view of beliefs suggests the two ways of testing a religion. One is to investigate its ideas, the other is to examine its power. One studies its principles, the other considers the facts and events that make up its history. One asks: What is religion? The other: What can religon do? One is the test of discussion, the other of performances and of fruit.

Paul's age was interested in both aspects of the question, but the moral stress of the time tended more and more to concentrate attention on the causal aspect. Superficially the age was willing to discuss the ideas of the new religion, but fundamentally it was intensely interested in its performances.

The test of religion by means of discussion is an easy test, since it can be indefinitely prolonged, and maintain its credit for a considerable time

without peril to itself. But it is quite another matter when one falls back on performances. That is the acid test of religion, and it was to this acid test that Paul submitted Christianity.

He seems to say to his age something like this: "I could prolong the discussion of Christianity indefinitely, and probably afford you, as I once did Stoics and Epicureans in Athens, much pleasure in so doing. But that is not my object. I do not come to you with the enticing words of men's wisdom, but in the power and the demonstration of the Spirit. I bring you no complete theory of religion; I do not wish to gratify your speculative ambitions, but I offer you a religion of power, based on the life, death and resurrection of a Divine Person; I offer you personal contact with a spiritual dynamic which functioning in your experience will bring you into vital relation with the eternal God."

This was the crucial question then, and it is the crucial question now. Is Christianity a religion of power? Most assuredly its originality does not lie in the novelty of its ideas. Many of its ideas are new, of course, but that is beside the mark. The ideas of Christianity are means to an end; in their doctrinal aspect they are descriptive of dynamic functions; they are given to explain the

working of a power. Christianity is original simply because it is a religion of power.

The quest for safe conduct had for its goal the reconciliation of man with God. It raised the question: How can a man get right with the power manifest in the universe, and tried to answer it in various ways, such as ritual observances, ethical speculations and legal obedience of a revealed law; and all failed simply because they did not have power. They were good diagnosticians, but poor healers, and they left the world more miserable than it was before. The want of power generally determined the most distinctive desire of that period. The absence of vitality in old political theories and ancient forms of government led to a willingness to entrust the fortunes of the state to a strong man. The world in Paul's age worshipped power as symbolised in the Roman Emperor; and it as keenly looked for power in religious experience. Could Christianity set man right with God, and keep him faithful amid life's increasing perplexities? That was the supreme demand made on the new faith, and Paul's answer was the proclamation of the religion of power.

A theory of power might explain the provisional influence of Christianity, but it could not sustain it. The important point was whether the contention was in accord with facts. Theoretical

cogency and enthusiastic propaganda were not sufficient. What people wanted was not a theory of power, but a demonstration of power in religious history. If Christianity were true, where were the evidences of its power on the field of human history?

As has been suggested, this need in the beginning was met by the gospels. The people were assured that the glorious Christ of the Pauline preaching, so far from being a myth or symbol, was an historic Personality. But as the spiritual life matured the question assumed a different form: Was the glorious Object of gentile faith one and the same with the gracious Figure enshrined in the gospel story? In other words was Jesus Christ alive? If so, He was dynamic; it would prove that the "Still Strong Man of the soul's need" had come, not as a symbolic ideal but an actual personality. Religion would not base itself on a pious memory of a dead Christ, but upon the living Lord of Glory. The death of Jesus would no longer appear as a calamity, but as one of the links in a causal chain of redemption, having its fitting climax in an historic resurrection. Paul connects these two conceptions in the epistle to the Romans. He is writing, he says, of "Jesus Christ, Our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; but de-

clared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." [4]

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is, according to the Apostle, the fundamental demonstration on the field of history of Christianity as the religion of power. I do not wish to enter upon an extended examination of the evidence for this stupendous fact. Apart from the Scriptural evidence, which seems to me entirely adequate, belief in the historic resurrection of Jesus is an inevitable inference from the whole course of Apostolic history.

It is frequently asserted that the resurrection of Jesus is to be understood as a symbol of immortality, or of the revival of spiritual life in man. If this were true, the resurrection could have no possible meaning for historic religion, for symbols produce no events. They belong neither to the cognitive nor to the causal series of beliefs, but are suspended in a mid-region of ineffective sentiments and are of no possible value in the solution of the problem.

A symbolic view of the resurrection is entirely contrary to the evidence. The New Testament, the only document on which we can depend for reliable information on the subject, nowhere de-

[4] i:3–4.

scribes the resurrection of Jesus as a symbol; on the contrary, it constantly describes it as a fact—as an actual event in the sphere of history. It was as much a fact of history as the birth, life and death of the Saviour. If His death were an actual event, so was His resurrection. To speak of this most momentous event in the history of mankind as if it were a symbol of "the renaissance of the spiritual" is to substitute rhetoric for historic realism.

The tradition of an actual historic resurrection of Jesus is as well attested a fact of Biblical truth as any we have. Not only have we the general consensus of the Apostolic church, supported by the amazing vitality of the gospel propaganda which professed to derive its power from the fact of the resurrection, but we have evidence of another kind of great significance.

On the one hand, if the resurrection of Jesus were symbolic only, it is difficult to understand why Christianity impressed the Græco-Roman world. The age was familiar with symbolic interpretations of religion, and increasingly sceptical of myths. In the first and second centuries the pagan theologians were doing their level best to rid their gods of the stigma of myth, and the mystery cults failed in the end partly because they had no historic roots. But Christianity steadily

advanced in spite of persecution and political opposition until it conquered the world, because it was the religion of power, authenticated by an historic resurrection.

On the other hand, if the resurrection of Jesus were symbolic only, it makes the problem of accounting for historic Christianity insolvable, except on the hypothesis that Paul himself created it. Yet to my way of thinking the strongest argument for the historicity of the resurrection apart from the dynamic character of early Christianity is the religious experience of Paul. He emphatically declares his conviction that if there had been no resurrection, it would invalidate the Christian hope of salvation, make faith vain, falsify the Apostolic testimony, and leave the world in its sins. Yet his life and ministry were founded on this fact, and reinforced at every critical stage by his spiritual experience.[5] He was a man of immense intellectual force, in the prime of his career, with an accurate insight into the temper of his time, and by race, and training, rooted and grounded in the most stubborn as it was the most plausible force opposing Christianity, I mean Pharisaism. Is it easy then to believe that such a man would break with the spiritual associations of a lifetime, and become the chief advocate of a

[5] I Corinthians, xv:14–19.

despised faith, that he would build round a personality the exact antithesis of the Pharisaic ideal, a religion that professed to be dynamic, when all the time he knew its historic pretensions were mythical and the central figure of his preaching, a creature of his imagination? It is absolutely inconceivable. Paul became a Christian because he believed that Jesus was alive. He was convinced that the great gulf between the human and the divine life had been bridged by the incarnation of the Son of God, and the resurrection was the historic proof of a spiritual dynamic operating within the sphere of human experience.

This is not only the strongest argument for the resurrection, but it is also the all-sufficient argument. If the resurrection be a fact of history, it explains and authenticates all that precedes it and all that follows it. It becomes the proof of power in the new religion. It belongs not simply to the cognitive series of beliefs, but is causal, productive and creative. It explains the Apostolic faith in the simple story of the cross; it explains the persistence of the gospel testimony in face of the world's opposition; it also explains Paul's willingness to submit Christianity to the acid test of performance.

The Apostles did not preach a beautiful symbolism. They were not interested in revamping

worn-out philosophical platitudes; still less were they indulging in the composition of lachrymose epistles of consolation. They were the enthusiastic advocates of a life-giving power, who put behind their passionate proclamations the courage and sanity of rich and deep conviction, because they knew beyond all question that Christ had risen from the dead. Christ was the power of God unto salvation. In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him Christians were complete. The age demanded proof of the reality of the Christian dynamic, and the Apostles preached the historic resurrection of Jesus.

What did the stupendous fact signify? It signified that the moral ideal, which had tormented ethical thinkers of all ages, and never more than in that period, had finally appeared in historic form—an actual fact of human experience. For two centuries thoughtful men had felt that something more than right principles was needed to set man right. It was increasingly felt that nothing short of a personal demonstration would be adequate; and many were trying to shape their conduct on the model of some ancient philosopher. The typical wise man of the Stoic was an impossible ideal. "The Stoics admitted that he was as rare in the real world as the phœnix; Socrates, perhaps, and Diogenes had attained; or perhaps

not even they." [6] What the world needed was a demonstration of the ideal in an historic personality. This was the significance of the resurrection. Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead. In Jesus the world had a perfect standard of goodness. More could be learned of goodness, by considering His character and conduct, than from centuries of ethical speculation.

But the resurrection did not reveal the moral ideal in detachment, having a mere preceptive value. If this were all, so far from relieving the tension, it would increase it to the breaking point. If the relation of Jesus, the perfect ideal of character, was that of a model to an artist, if it left the question of attainment to the skill of the individual, the burden would still rest on the human spirit, and this was precisely what the age could not endure. It was rich in ideals, but poor in power; and it wanted a dynamic, not in detachment but in actual contact with life. It was not enough that Jesus should prove His power by rising from the dead; the question still remained: Could this power function in human experience? The resurrection was a glorious fact, but was it a gospel for men? The religion of a moral ideal

[6] Bevan: "Stoics and Skeptics," p. 71.

is a religion of despair, but a religion of a moral ideal working in contact with human need is a religion of hope and power.

This question could not be answered by argument; what was required was historic proof. Men wished to be assured not only that Jesus was good, but that He could make other men good. Where then was the historic evidence of the dynamic quality of the resurrection? Paul found it in the Christian community. All over the empire, both in Asia Minor and in Europe, churches had grown up round the gospel message, and had attained distinction in life and character through faith in Jesus. This remarkable transformation was directly traceable to the gospel. Wherever it was believed, it worked. It proved its reality by its fruits. In the beginning the gospel preaching dealt little in argument. The message was given simply and concretely, but whoever accepted it experienced a spiritual change. For instance, Paul asks the Galatians: "This only would I learn of you: Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" [7] In Ephesians the Apostle connects the power of the gospel with the resurrection: "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins. . . . God who is rich in mercy, for his great love where-

[7] iii:2.

with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." [8]

The rise of the Apostolic church is a fact that has to be accounted for. Why was it that a people who formerly lived in sin and superstition, had suddenly risen above their age and attained to morality and spiritual power, to cleanness of life and unselfish zeal? The answer is found in the creative power of the gospel. It was intended to communicate power through faith to the individual.

To one familiar with those times, nothing is more impressive than the account given of these little Christian communities. Corinth was one of the wickedest cities in the ancient world. It was a most unlikely place for the realisation of a spiritual experience, and yet Paul is able to address that community as a church or household of God, sanctified in the Lord Jesus and called to be saints. In their old life they had been fornicators, thieves, liars and idolaters. "Such were some of you," says the Apostle, "but now ye are sanctified, now are ye justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of God." [9]

[8] ii:1, 4–6.
[9] I Corinthians, vi:9–11.

The presence of these transformed lives in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation was an undeniable fact; and this is explained by the dynamic quality imparted through faith in the resurrection of Jesus. Paul prays that the Ephesians may know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." This is a glorious fact: the power that created the Christian community and functions in the experience of the individual is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.[10]

Paul's age needed assurance of moral power. It craved a demonstration in human experience of a transforming ethical dynamic; and Paul and his associates pointed to the two outstanding facts: the resurrection of Jesus and the creation of the Christian community. Both were real events of history, and they were proof of the fruitfulness of the new religion. The resurrection of Jesus proved that behind the gospel message was a dynamic life; the Christian community proved the fact that the gospel was creative within the sphere of human experience; and the supreme revelation made by these two historic facts was this, that the virtue-making power, which for

[10] Ephesians i:19–20.

centuries had haunted the minds of ethical thinkers, had at last appeared in the historic Personality of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Mighty to save.

At the outset it appears that the preaching of these two essential facts—the resurrection of Jesus and the creation of the Christian community—was sufficient to stabilise the faith of the church. They were the most obvious facts and strengthened faith in the dynamic character of the gospel in the face of a rising tide of opposition.

But new problems were developing, occasioned by the growth of the church. So long as the church was growing extensively the simple appeal to essential and obvious facts would be sufficient to stabilise faith and inspire zeal; but so soon as the church began to grow intensively a new set of questions would arise. For example, people would wish to know something more in detail about the function of Christian power in individual experience. Paul clearly anticipates such a desire in the first epistle to the Corinthians. He had determined to know nothing among them save Jesus and Him crucified, not, however, because he had no deeper revelation, but because the carnal character of the Corinthian mind made it impossible at their stage of development to make further disclosures. But Paul does take up the

doctrine of the resurrection in that letter, and shows its relation to the individual experience. He realised that spiritual progress depends in part upon purity of heart and in part upon intellectual development. Granted that the heart is pure, a time comes to every man when he is obliged to think out the meaning of his experience; and Christianity must be able to meet that need. It is clear that a disposition to grow in knowledge inspired the Roman letter. Paul did not care that his converts should remain undeveloped intellectually. He wished them to become strong men in Christ Jesus; he will not always feed them with milk, but insist that they partake of strong meat.

Among the manifold tasks undertaken by the Apostle, that of thinking out the ultimate meaning of Christianity was very important; and when occasion justified it, he put his profoundest thoughts into letters to various communities. And it is not difficult to imagine that his thinking was shaped in part by the quest for safe conduct, which was a characteristic feature of his age.

The quest for safe conduct was inspired by an imperious need for adjustment with God. Such methods as ritual observances, ethical speculations and legal obedience to a revealed law had failed to satisfy the conscience of the time. Men

were disposed to ask, so soon as they became familiar with the outstanding features of the new religion: Can Christianity set man right with God? Is it the religion of power, and if so, where are the evidences of this fact? And Paul pointed to the resurrection of Jesus and the creation of the Christian community.

These facts being obvious, the next question would be: How does this power function in individual experience? How does it deal with man's past, present and future needs? How does Christianity adjust man to the requirements of conscience? How function in the present strife with evil? What assurance can be given that Christ will bring man to the goal of his hopes? Life was difficult at best; Christianity further complicated it because it invited persecution: assuming then that it was the religion of power, could it give peace in this present world, and assurance of final attainment of the next life?

These were important questions, and they had to be answered; for on the understanding of such questions would turn the stability and power of individual experience.

Paul answered such questions as these by teaching the doctrines of Christianity. To use again Mr. Balfour's important classification of beliefs,[11]

[11] Op. Cit., pp. 58–59.

we may think of Christian doctrine as belonging either to a cognitive or to a causal series. If we think of it under a cognitive aspect, our interest will chiefly concern itself with a series of interdependent propositions, and our aim will be a complete system of religious truth. And this is not only a legitimate but a necessary duty of the church. The church must have a systematic body of teaching if it is to meet the intellectual requirements of believers. And it goes without saying that Paul was a theological genius, and that he had a very clear conception of the cognitive aspect of beliefs. But this does not seem to have been his immediate concern. What the age needed was not so much a systematic theology, as an explanation of the life and experience created by the gospel. And while he did not overlook the cognitive aspect of belief, his immediate concern was with its causal aspect.

I propose in the next two lectures to view certain characteristic doctrines under a causal rather than a cognitive aspect. Doctrines are undoubtedly revelations of essential and objective truth; but they are something more than this. Doctrines are descriptions of function. The function of a power is its characteristic mode of operation. The Christian life is divinely originated, but its growth depends in part upon the coöperation of man

with God; and our ability to work intelligently with God is conditioned by our knowledge of the functions of the power of God. The more we know of the habits and characteristic modes of that tremendous spiritual dynamic working in the individual experience, the greater is the benefit to be derived from its activities.

The characteristic emphasis placed on Christianity at the time when the intellectual development of the church made doctrinal teaching necessary was that it was "the power of God unto salvation." It was essentially dynamic and creative. Behind the Christian community was the experience of the individual; and the pressing question was: What is the function of the spiritual dynamic in individual life? Paul's answer was by teaching doctrines; doctrines are descriptions of function; they interpret the causal aspect of Christianity.

The strength of the believer is determined by the degree in which he understands the power working in his experience. Knowledge of function puts behind the sentiments and impulses of religion a body of unchangeable conviction. By thinking out the ultimate meaning of experience in the light of its functional implications, the believer comes to know the power of God in his thought and life.

This, in my judgment, is the right way to teach

religious doctrines. Few individuals realise a need for systematic statements of belief; but they are anxious to understand the functional significance of religious teaching in relation to the evolution of a strong and stable faith; and this was Paul's method of approach to the intellectual requirements of an age, which in many features of its life and thought so strikingly resembles our own.

LECTURE VII

CHRISTIANITY AS A JUSTIFYING POWER

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THE quest for safe conduct that distinguished the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era was inspired by the desire to be in right relation with God. Underlying the quest were three different ideals of life. According to the Greek, the ideal of life was completeness. Religion was important, but there were other things, such as philosophy, culture and worldly position, equally important. The chief good was a composite of material and spiritual advantages, realised in an ideal political environment. According to the Roman, the good man was the ideal citizen, the intelligent servant of the state. According to the Jew, the good man was the just man, who lived in harmony with the law of Moses.

These ideals of life were modified by the course of events. The sifting processes of history brought them to the same level, for with the collapse of the city-state the quest for safe conduct became a task for the individual. In the period following Alexander's conquests man's religious needs were

separated from his political relationships; and the outcome of the quest, whether manifested in a ritual, ethical, or legal form, was to intensify the need for a moral dynamic. In spite of racial differences the ruling passion of Paul's age was for moral direction, and the great Apostle met this demand with the conception of Christianity as the religion of power. The power of the new religion was manifest in the resurrection of Jesus and the creation of the Christian community. On the one hand the moral ideal had appeared in a Life, and on the other hand the gospel was effective in transforming character. The virtue-making power which the age wanted was operating in the domain of history. It was no longer an ideal or a theory, but a cause, manifest in a series of events.

Naturally the question would arise: How is this power communicated to the individual? At the outset the question was not acute, since most people were content with a simple and uncritical faith. The pardoning love of Christ was sufficient to set man right with God; it was enough that he could appeal to the fact of his experience—his changed life—to prove the power of the new religion.

But the question would become urgent so soon as experience required interpretation. The proc-

lamation of the forgiveness of sins did undoubtedly give peace to the believer, but it did not effectively change his feelings about the past. The characteristic feeling of the age was that salvation had to be earned. It was the product of human effort. For centuries the race had been working at the problem, and the quest for safe conduct had been a long, laborious and, in the end, a discouraging struggle to be in right relation with God. The feeling that salvation had to be earned was as common among gentiles as among Jews, and the struggle had left its mark on the race. It was a most difficult thing indeed to attain peace with God; so acute was the feeling at the beginning of the Christian era that it tended to obscure the originality of the new religion.

The first converts to Christianity were Jews or proselytes; and although they came into the new relation with God by means of faith and repentance, still their confidence in the new religion was reinforced by a prior relation to Judaism. It was generally felt that the only way to Christ lay through the law of Moses.

But when gentiles began to press into the kingdom, particularly when the remarkable growth of the church in Antioch of Syria finally convinced men of the originality of the new religion, the troublesome question concerning terms of admis-

sion for gentiles became very acute. Were they to be admitted on the simple terms of faith and repentance, or must they first become disciples of Moses?

The matter was allowed to remain unsettled, until a serious defection among the Galatian churches made its adjustment an imperative necessity. The council of Jerusalem officially decreed that gentiles were to be admitted on the simple terms of faith and repentance. But Jewish Christians of the stricter sort did not accept this decision as final, not only because they thought it unfair to the old religion, but also because they could not rid themselves of the inherited feeling that man must do something to save himself; and the further fact that this notion impressed the Galatians shows how deeply rooted the feeling was in the gentile mind. It seemed unreasonable and impossible to accept the blessings of Christianity on terms so simple.

The age was prepared to admit the inadequacy of the old methods of salvation; its present unrest was evidence of that, but it was still disposed to insist that a man must do something to save himself. Christianity had proclaimed peace with God through the forgiveness of sins; this was accepted provisionally, but it could not rid man of

the feeling that so simple a programme should be supplemented by something else.

The feeling that the Christian programme was inadequate exposed believers to the syncretic tendency of the times. The age was sceptical of simple things, and in love with complexity. The more popular religions were composite; they had been improved by the addition of desirable elements taken from other cults: why then should Christianity prove an exception? Greek, Oriental and Jewish influences sought admission into the Christian consciousness. They were all the more dangerous because they were vague and inchoate, and in the main friendly. They did not seek to displace the new faith; they simply asked that they be added to it for the sake of a better Christianity. They sought to beguile the believer from the simplicity that was in Christ.

Paul anticipates such questions as these in his various letters. With the Corinthians he insists that Christianity is not a philosophy but the religion of power. With the Colossians he maintains the great truth that Christ is the fulness of God, and that Christians are complete in Him. Christianity was sufficient for all human needs, and was not obliged to seek assistance from outside sources.

In spite of this, the feeling that man must do

something to save himself made it difficult to accept a religion of grace. Men would reason: How can so great an issue as the soul's salvation stand upon faith and repentance? Salvation had come by the hearing of the gospel; faith had communicated pardoning love and peace with God; moreover it had imparted a dynamic character to experience, but the old inherited feeling would not down: Can any religion save without strenuous human effort?

This question, so characteristic of the times, made a further interpretation of Christianity an immediate necessity. It did not in the beginning call for a systematic statement of Christian truth, but it did require an explanation of the functional significance of the Christian dynamic in human experience.

A function is a mode of action through which a power fulfils its purpose. The demand for further light on Christian experience was legitimate and Paul met it by teaching doctrines. Doctrines are descriptions of function; they explain how Christian power operates in individual experience.

In the Roman letter Paul declares that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, because therein is revealed a righteousness of

God.[1] Righteousness is a very important word and is used in two senses: as a description either of the character of God, or of a status given to man by God. In the first sense it belongs to a cognitive series; in the second sense to a causal series.

The gospel is power because it reveals a status which God gives to man through the redemptive work of Christ. Righteousness does not refer to man's conduct in this sense, but to his position in the sight of the Most High God. It is a graciously bestowed privilege whereby man is enabled to hold himself free from the claims of his past. This function of gospel power is called justification.

Justification is God's righting act, His adjusting power. It is the divine way of settling once and for all the question raised by the quest for safe conduct. That quest was for a right relation with God, and the gospel bestows this relation through justifying faith. The gospel reveals the fact that God has given man a status before Him which past experience cannot invalidate. Behind pardoning love is justifying grace. Justification is the function of the Christian dynamic which deals chiefly with man's past. Prof. William James has reminded us that there are three kinds of functions: productive, releasing, and transmis-

[1] i:16–17.

sive.[2] We may apply these differences to the conception of justification. Justification is the productive function of the atoning work of Christ, by which we mean that the status given the sinner before God is caused by the atonement. Faith is the releasing function of justification, by which we mean that faith releases the power of justification in individual experience. Peace is the transmissive function of faith, by which we mean that peace with God is communicated through faith in the righting power of God.

The conception of justification is here viewed, not as one of a series of interdependent propositions, but as a link in a chain of redemptive causes. This beyond question was Paul's method of approach to the problems raised by the growing experience of the church. The believer wished to know the implications of experience, chiefly, how did the Christian dynamic function in relation to the past? Could it suspend the inherited feeling that man must do something to save himself? Had the believer set out on a new quest, or had he arrived at the goal of his hopes? Pardoning love had undoubtedly given a kind of peace, but was it real or fictitious? Was it based on fiat or historic performance? If the resurrection of Jesus proved the dynamic character of the new religion, what

[2] "Human Immortality," pp. 13–14.

was its specific evidence of justifying power? Paul's answer to this important question was that behind the pardoning love of Christ which the gospel proclaimed stood the justifying grace of God, and behind justifying grace stood the great historic act of the atonement.

A clear conception of what is meant by the atonement of Christ is necessary if we are to understand what is meant by justification. Now there are theories and theories. Some theories exist for the sake of philosophic system; and other theories because they are needed to understand the function of power. A theory of the atonement necessary to comprehend justification is of this latter kind. Just as a theory of electricity is required to understand the functional habits of electricity, so is a theory of the atoning work of Christ required for a knowledge of its functional significance. Justification is the function of Christ's sacrificial death which has to do with one of the vital problems of human history: how can a man attain right status before God? Justification is God's righting act and is squarely based on the historic death of the Saviour; a theory of the atonement is therefore a prime necessity, if we are to comprehend justification.

There are but two logical views of the atonement: one is known as the moral influence theory,

the other as the theory of vicarious substitution.

The moral influence theory originated in the fertile brain of Abelard in the twelfth century; and although it has been changed from time to time to suit the popular mood, it is substantially the same now as then. "It views the death of Christ rather under the category of revelation than of atonement, as part of His prophetical rather than His priestly office. It is the great manifestation of the divine love, the pledge to men of God's eternal readiness to forgive the returning sinner. The divine justice needs no other satisfaction than the repentance and reformation of the sinner." [3]

There is some truth in this view. The preaching of God's love has a powerful influence on sinful natures, and is calculated to arouse feelings of regret and penitence. The simple story of the cross has mightily moved the ages; and if human nature raised no deeper questions, that is if man could hold his religion apart from his thoughts, and view his past and present performances apart from the criticism of conscience, it is possible he might content himself with such a view.

But the experience of the Apostolic church shows that a man cannot be content with an uninterpreted faith. We are obliged to reckon with

[3] Stearns: "Present Day Theology," p. 388.

a growing intelligence. We have already noticed how the moral sense will turn round upon inherited traditions and make demands which they are not always prepared to grant; and the need which led to the formulation of a doctrine of the atonement in the Apostolic church was aroused by the gospel offer. The gospel offered peace with God on terms of faith and repentance; in fact at the outset it resembled in many ways a moral influence. But so soon as the new experience came under the scrutiny of a growing intelligence, the question was at once asked: Is this proclamation of peace and pardon a reality, or a fiction? Is it preceptive only, or dynamic?

Growing Christians were compelled to ask the meaning of Christ's death, and it is an interesting thing to observe that a moral influence theory of the atonement never seems to have occurred to them. It was impossible for those who had been seeking salvation by the various strenuous ways revealed in the quest for safe conduct, and who had so keenly felt the need of a moral dynamic, to base their faith in adjustment with God on an influence, however beautiful or appealing.

Influence is not power. An influence may suggest an ideal or indicate ways and means, but it cannot create. Let us admit that the gospel did assure the sinner of God's pardon, if he would re-

turn, the main question is still unanswered: How are you going to get him to return? Where was the power that could move him towards the divine ideal? The old struggles for peace had convinced man of his moral immobility. He had ideals and theories abundant, but was deficient in power, and what is more important, he knew it. "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. . . . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this dead body?" Such thoughts are not confined to Scripture; they may be found in other forms in the writings of Lucretius, Cicero, Virgil, Seneca or Marcus Aurelius. Is it conceivable that men who acutely felt the need of a virtue-making power, and who passionately craved the advent of a strong Personality to adjust the age to its spiritual relationships, could have been content with a theory of that adjustment, which while it presented an ideal of such purity as to strike terror into sensitive minds, still resolved its saving power into a vague and sentimental influence?

It is a safe thing to say that Paul's age would not have been interested in a moral influence theory of the atonement, first because it could throw no light whatever on its present experience, and secondly because it had no doctrine of justification by faith. What the thoughtful man wanted was

not assurance of God's love: he had that; but he wished to go behind the love and understand its sanctions and historic roots. He wanted to know what position the love of Christ gave him in the face of the holiness of God? What was his status before the Great White Throne? A theory which invited him to be content with surface impressions largely emotional in character could have no meaning for him. The view cannot function in experience at its deepest level, because it has no justifying power. It interests but does not grip. It stirs sentiments but fails to move the conscience.

The moral influence theory of the atonement is popular because it allows considerable room for pride, and does not offend man's natural impulses. Superficially it attracts, but when it confronts the realism of deep experience it loses all meaning, because it appeals to the æsthetic rather than to the moral nature. It presents Jesus in a very amiable light, but "had Jesus been such an amiable preacher of human world-wisdom," says Paulsen, "His contemporaries would most likely not have considered it necessary to nail Him to a cross; the amiable, proper and charming people who live and let live, who understand the art of combining religion with culture, who incline towards easy-going congeniality, and enjoy the pleasures of the social cup, have never been regarded as dangerous and

nailed to crosses. If the Christianity of early times had been what the interpreters of later ages have now and then made it, the deadly enmity which it aroused in the world would be absolutely inconceivable." [4]

The theory is popular because it has no sting in it. It repeats the Socratic error that knowledge is power, that sin is a mistake, and that no man "errs of his own free will." But Paul's age knew better. It was acutely aware of perversity: "I see the good and approve it," said Ovid, "but deliberately do the wrong." Men could not believe in a love, however good, unless it was based on historic performances; they could not accept peace with God on a declaration of forgiveness, because they felt the force of the inherited tendency to do something, and were willing to receive salvation by faith alone, only when assured that behind pardoning love was justifying grace, and behind justifying grace was the great historic deed of the atonement.

And there is nothing amiable about the New Testament doctrine of the atonement. It frankly sets forth the death of Christ as the only possible way of reconciliation with God. It leaves no room for pride, has little patience with half-and-half measures, and revamps no lost illusions. It

[4] "Ethics," p. 96.

was a reproach in Apostolic times and it is a reproach now; but what does this matter if it be true? What did it matter to men of Paul's age what view the gospel took of human nature, if it gave an undisputed status before God? This tremendous doctrine put the Jew and gentile on the same level. All had sinned and come short of the glory of God, but nevertheless the gospel opened the way for a real communion with the living God. It was the "new and living way" to the throne of the heavenly grace.

The New Testament doctrine of the atonement is set forth in these words: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." [5] "It is impossible," says Sanday, "to get rid from this passage of the double idea of sacrifice, and of a sacrifice which is propitiatory. . . . And further, when we ask, who is propitiated? the answer can only be God. Nor is it possible to separate this propitiation from the death of the Son." [6]

[5] Romans iii:23–25.

[6] Quoted by Stevens: "New Testament Theology," p. 413, note.

The truth is, according to New Testament teaching, let it be plainly and frankly said, that Christ took the place of the sinner on the cross, died in his stead, and His death resulted in a propitiation of God. Without a real propitiation there can be no such thing as justification. "It plainly lies with the Deity," says Mr. Westcott, "to dictate the terms and conditions on which He will admit man within His covenant." [7]

The death of Christ is conceived as a propitiation of God; as having an effect upon the Divine relation to man. How shall this change be understood? Obviously most of the difficulties with this doctrine come from a loose definition of the idea of reconciliation. There are ways of illustrating the doctrine as inconsistent with the moral sense as they are with Scripture. But I think we can speak of it in a simple way, without doing violence to anything essential. Plainly there is a deep mystery in the atoning work of Christ; how the reconciling work was ultimately accomplished we cannot say, since it belongs to the mystery of the Divine nature; but the New Testament makes some things clear.

The word "reconciliation" is used in two senses in Scripture: either as a change of nature, or as a change of relation. The atonement of Christ

[7] "St. Paul and Justification," p. 38.

did not change God's nature, but it did change His relation to man as a sinner.

The atonement did not change God's attitude towards man. God does not love us because Christ died for us; but Christ died for us because God loved us. The atonement is the perfect revelation of divine love: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." [8]

The atonement did not change God's attitude towards sin. If the law of Moses condemned sin, the death of Christ so far from setting it aside, rather increased the divine condemnation. It was the perfection of condemnation: "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." [9]

But the atonement did change God's relation to the sinner. It enabled Him to be just, and yet to become the justifier of the unjust. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." [10] As such the atonement is God's consistent method of removing the barrier between man and Himself; consistent at once with God's

[8] Romans v:8.
[9] Romans viii:3.
[10] II Corinthians v:21.

holy nature, and man's fundamental moral necessities.

But the significance of the atonement is not limited to a proclamation of Divine love; its specific object is to provide for justification. Grace provides a righting power; it puts behind the offer of pardoning love an assured status before God. From this point of view justification is the productive function of the atonement; it describes the legitimate operation of atoning power within the sphere of human experience. Pardon is not suspended in an ineffective region of sentiment, but rooted and grounded in an historic deed. Justification is God's righting act, the final adjustment of the human spirit to the demands of its eternal relationships; it is God's act of reconciliation, effective unto the saving of souls because it derives its power from the atoning work of His Son.

But how is assurance of status to be gained? How is the righting power of God communicated to man? Paul's answer is by faith. Faith is the releasing function of justification. But some one may say: Grant the truth of your theory, is it necessary for a believer to have a theory of the atonement, in order to have peace with God? May he not be content with a simple and uncritical faith in Jesus Christ? The answer is yes

and no. It is perfectly true that many do get along without theories of religious truth; their faith appears to require little or no theology; still this does not indicate the superiority of this type of Christian. A faith without doctrines is a colourless faith, and may at any time become unstable. Even if it be capable of sustaining itself in the face of opposition, it has no power for propagating itself, simply because it has no ideas. Ideas are the hooks of faith which stick into other minds and take hold there often in spite of opposition. If one is willing to remain a babe in Christ, and depend on a favourable environment for successful resistance of the friction of this world, he may get along without theoretical explanations of religion. But it ought to be said that objections to religious doctrine often rise from mental indolence or from a superficial experience. And if one is to be a mature Christian, sustaining himself in the face of opposition, and propagating his faith in his own generation, he must think out the functional implications of his experience; he must go down to the roots and grapple with religion's inspiring problems, and the reason for this is a very practical one.

Any scheme of religion a thoughtful man accepts must reckon with the conscience. Now the conscience knows nothing of mercy, and makes

short work of proclamations based on pardon alone. When conscience sleeps it is content with a moral influence, but when conscience awakes it will demand a dynamic atoning deed. To forgive a sin does not remove its wrongfulness. The question of right or wrong is in charge of the conscience. Now the target of pardoning love is the heart, the emotional nature; but the target of justification is the conscience, the moral nature.

Paul's age demanded a religion that could deal with conscience. It would listen to preaching that began with pardoning love, but it would permanently yield to a religion only when it could satisfy the implications of the moral nature. A conviction of sin is necessary to an adequate comprehension of Divine love; and it was a conviction of the sinfulness of sin that made Paul's age go behind pardoning love to the deed of justification. The gentile felt the need of deliverance from the power of evil. The feeling could not suggest a remedy, but it was powerful enough to inspire a desire for a deliverer, a Saviour. In the meantime, however, it left man without excuse. It filled him with fear and dread and unrest. He saw punishments in his calamities and dreaded what might happen after death. The age was conscious of the need of a tremendous righting power which could adjust it to its eternal rela-

tionships. And if this feeling of need was common to gentiles it was equally so with the Jew. For the Jew had the law of God, and in spite of his professed security, he was keenly aware of the inadequacy of his way of life. Paul tells us how he felt about it in the seventh chapter of Romans. The law had revealed the sinfulness of sin both in its positive and negative aspects. "All had sinned and come short of the glory of God." And if a Jew felt thus before his law how much more keenly would he feel it in the presence of the White Purity which had come into the world and condemned the ideal religious figure of the age in the words: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."[11] The law confronted man with a debt he could not pay, it threatened him with a penalty he could not bear, and set him a task he could not essay. No assurance of Divine forgiveness could rid him of the feeling that he must do something to save himself, except on the assumption that behind that assurance was an historic righting power. The age was sick of preceptive moralities, and wanted power, and the only thing that could square it with conscience was a real justification, grounded on historic perform-

[11] Matthew v:20.

ance. It ought to be easy to comprehend this.

But it may be asked: Can a man have peace with God upon the assurance of pardoning love alone? The answer is provisionally yes, permanently no. Suppose you borrow money from a man and he deposits your note in a bank for collection. The note falls due and you cannot pay it, so you go to the creditor and confess the debt, admit that in spite of honest efforts you are unable to meet it, and throw yourself on his mercy. He forgives the debt and assures you of his friendship. Undoubtedly this relieves your mind for the time being, but how about the bank? Your plea will not be valid there so long as it holds your note. The mere fact of the pardon of the debt will not prevent a renewal of uneasiness, so you return to the friendly creditor, and he goes with you to the bank, takes up the note and destroys it in your presence. Your status with the bank is at once altered. Your peace is secured because the visible obligation has been destroyed. You are forever free from the debt. Why? Because the destruction of the note was a deed, while the pardon of the debt was a word only. The word of pardon was not effective until the obligation had been cancelled.

Now the conscience is a bank, and it holds man's notes for past transgressions. These notes are

sins. They are debts contracted in the past, but they hold over man's head the obligation to reckon with them in the future. Mere pardon will not finally bestow peace of mind. What man needs is the destruction of the obligation. He wants a power to go with him before the conscience, and make an end of the whole sad business. It was the function of the Mosaic law to establish the fact of debt, it is the business of the conscience to enforce its collection, but it is the function of justifying grace to cancel all obligations and give the debtor a status before God which the conscience cannot dispute. Justification not only removes the barrier between man and God, but also between man and his conscience. Bunyan in the allegory of the Holy War has beautifully illustrated this truth, when Emmanuel on the reconquest of Mansoul deprives conscience of his position as recorder, and makes him an under-secretary of love. Justifying grace transforms conscience into a servant, and sets the believer free.

The Biblical word which describes this experience is "peace." Peace is the transmissive function of faith. It is the precise assurance of a status before God, based on the historic deed of the cross, which conscience cannot dispute. It is not easy to break with the past. As poisonous exhalations rise from a marsh and endanger

health, so do thoughts of past transgressions threaten the health of the soul. It is very difficult to throw off the inherited tendency that one must do something to be saved. Persistence of this feeling means bondage. It enslaves the mind and wastes the energy of the will in fruitless works. The ancient world had learned the bitter lesson; the more passionately it sought peace, the more acutely conscious was it of the futility of human effort. It was not in man's power to save himself, but he could not abandon the quest. Paul put the question for the old world in the words: "O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from this dead body?" He saw and approved the good, but power to perform that which was right he found not. It was not in ritual, it was not in ethical speculations, and it was not in legal obedience of a revealed law. The service of the law was the most burdensome of all because it found sin in a state of suspended animation, and left it acutely alive as an evil power within the soul. But the glorious gospel proclaimed deliverance. Christ was the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believed. In Christ the law was abolished and a new righteousness was revealed, a God given status which none could dispute. The quest of the ages ended at the foot of the Cross, because the atonement

made justification a reality, and faith in Christ released the power of God in the individual soul and the issue was the enjoyment of peace that passed all understanding.

This was a wonderful revelation, because it meant the end of dead works and fruitless quests to serve the living God in the freedom of the spirit. To comprehend justification by faith will determine whether our religious experience is to be founded on a stable peace or on a new kind of bondage. I remember an incident of my childhood. An exposition was held in our town, and I went to it in a rather unconventional fashion. I entered it not by the door, but over the fence in a surreptitious manner. But although it was filled with many diverting things I could not enjoy them, because I was continually haunted by fear of detection. I was on the inside, but I had no right to be there; and my pleasure was turned into bondage. The joy that I had anticipated was turned into trembling unto me. Some time after I went again, but this time in company with my father. We came by way of the door and entered by ticket, and I gave myself unreservedly to the enjoyment of the exposition. Many people enter the treasure house of God without being sure of their rights there. They are always looking back, they are in fear of detection; the conscience like

a policeman walks in the midst of the treasures of grace, and they are afraid for their souls. Their religion is a new kind of bondage. The old shadow of Puritanism still falls athwart our modern lives. Our religion is sour, unattractive, and funereal. The reason for this is found in an undisciplined conscience, and the cure for it is a fresh appreciation of justifying grace. Justifying grace gives us peace with God and peace with ourselves. Peace becomes our man of war, and guards the heart against all unhealthy tendencies and all unspiritual experiences. Justification makes conscience the servant of love, and frees the spirit to serve the living God.

It is impossible to overestimate the eagerness with which earnest spirits received the Pauline conception of justifying faith. The peace of God, like a great river, made glad the city of Mansoul, and by cleansing it of the poisonous influences of the past, made it a temple of the Holy Ghost. Wherever the doctrine was preached men seemed to hear again the great voice of Jesus calling: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Breaking with an evil past and assured of the love and protection of God, they were enabled to work out their salvation and make their calling and election sure. The atoning work of Christ enabled the believer

to pass through the portals of pardoning love into the Throne Room of the Almighty, confident that none could question his right to be there.

In this manner, Paul answered the first of the questions raised by the growing experience of the church. But the new freedom developed questions concerning moral progress. Some were inclined to believe that faith in Christ relieved them of moral effort; while others were disposed to doubt their salvation so long as sin remained in their mortal bodies. Such questions made a further elaboration of doctrine essential, and opened the way for a consideration of the function of the Christian dynamic in the growing life of the church.

LECTURE VIII

CHRISTIANITY AS A CONSTRUCTIVE POWER

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It was the distinctive glory of Christianity that it could say to the men of the first century: "You are neither under the law of Moses, nor the law of conscience, but through faith have been brought under the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Justifying faith suspended the age-long struggle for salvation by personal effort, and this was what none of the schemes hitherto devised had been able to do. A religion of grace was taking the place of religions of works, whose promises were founded on historic performances. The immediate outcome of this experience was a new sense of freedom.

But how was the new freedom to be understood? Did justifying faith make salvation possible apart from a holy life? If salvation were a free gift, was it necessary to strive after perfection? Christianity was a law-free religion, and to many it appeared to offer peace with God apart from an ethical experience.

Such a misconception was easy for the Jew,

because his religious sanctions were derived from the law of Moses. The only religion that a Jew could understand was a law-bound religion, and it was difficult to resist the conviction that Christianity was immoral simply because it set aside the law. It seemed to remove all legitimate restraints from human nature and to encourage lawlessness and self-indulgence.

Such a misconception was easy for the gentile, because he was familiar with non-moral religions. Religions without moral sanctions were common in the ancient world; the mystery cults then exercising a wide influence in the empire were of this character. They promised blessedness on compliance with ritual requirements. To submit to a ceremonial purification admitted the devotee to spiritual privileges without regard to his moral character. Moreover a light-minded man will always take religion on the easiest terms and seek a maximum of benefit with a minimum expenditure of effort. The mystery religions attracted many because they offered salvation on the easy terms of ritual conformity. But these cults suffered somewhat in popular estimation because of their non-historical character. Cybele, Attis, and Isis turned out to be mythical figures without dynamic authority. It was different with Christianity. This religion was historic and productive of re-

sults in human experience through the Personality of Jesus. The age-long quest for a righting power had successfully ended at the foot of the cross. God's pardoning love was founded on an historic deed of sacrifice which gave man an undisputed status before God. It was easy for undisciplined minds to suppose that faith in this great sacrifice was sufficient. Having suspended the old struggle for peace, it did not seem necessary to take up a new quest for holiness. That such a view was current is apparent from the sixth chapter of Romans: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

But such a notion of Christian experience would not satisfy a serious mind. How, for instance, would it strike a God-fearing gentile? This man had completely broken with native superstitions, and he was not interested in mystery cults because they could not satisfy his craving for moral experience. He had turned to Jewish monotheism because it was the highest and best form of religion that he knew. Still Judaism did not fully satisfy him because it had no dynamic; and he eagerly embraced Christianity, not only because it offered peace with God, but imparted power to life and conduct. It would not be a pleasant

reflection to suppose that the new religion would after all prove as disappointing as a mystery cult. If faith in Christ became an excuse for lawlessness, how could it be the best religion? Judaism, in spite of its limitations, was far better. The truth is, a serious man, be he Jew or gentile, could not accept Christianity on these terms. No religion can permanently hold the faith and loyalty of a serious nature that does not satisfy the need for ethical experience.

The demand, therefore, for a moral experience made a further elaboration of Christian doctrine essential. For no sooner was the believer satisfied as to his status with God, than he wished to know how faith met the problems of the present life. For the believer had a new experience, unquestionably the product of gospel power. Faith not only justified, but created desires and stimulated passions for righteousness. Still the new experience required interpretation. Was it real or fictitious? Granted that faith justified, did it also renew the human disposition? Assuming that the death of the Saviour had settled man's past obligations, what had Christianity to say for the present life? In other words could the new religion set the enfranchised spirit to work in the service of a moral ideal with a reasonable hope of success?

It was such a need that prompted Paul to undertake a further development of doctrine. First he lays down the characteristic Pauline proposition that faith in Christ means union with Christ. The Christian life was a unity; for the sake of clearness it might be viewed in various relations, but in essence it was one. Justification dealt with man's past; it removed the obligation to punishment through the atoning merits of the Saviour, but justifying faith led to a closer union of the believer with the Lord. The faith which justified also united the Christian with the renewing and transforming energies of the Spirit. Forgiveness was the gateway to a new experience. Even as Christ died and rose again, so believers in Christ die unto the old nature, and rise to newness of life. The Christian was a new creature, because he was a new creation.

In the last lecture we described faith as the releasing function of justification, but it is something more than this. Faith unites the soul to Christ. To believe on Christ is to be in Christ. Paul is leading up to the conception of spiritual growth, but he finds it necessary first to speak of the connecting link between forgiveness and growth. That link he calls adoption.

Christ's redemptive work is comprehensively described as reconciliation. But reconciliation means

a change of status or a change of nature. Spiritual growth is a manifestation of a transformed nature; but adoption has to do with reconciliation as status. Justification gives the sinner not only the status of pardon, but also of acquittal of all past transgressions through the merits of the atoning Saviour. But the notion of status may be enlarged so as to include the redeemed sinner in the family of God. This enlarged status is called adoption.

Adoption is that expression of Divine grace which gives the pardoned sinner the status of a son in the Father's family. This conception had a very definite meaning to the early Christian. "The Pauline analogy was founded on one of the most cherished of Roman institutions, fraught with important and widely reaching results both to the adopted person and the father who had received him into his family. A bond was formed which even death could not sever. The adopter could not, even if he would, evade the new relationship, established by the ceremony of adoption in the presence of the appointed witnesses. The adopted person obtained the right to the family inheritance, and so close was the relationship conceived to be, that the tie of blood was no stronger. . . . The object of the Apostle was to awaken men to the full realisation of their glorious privi-

leges, to enable them to comprehend the certainty, the closeness and permanence of that bond which united God to them as their Father, and them to God as His sons; to assure his readers that the covenant which God makes with every believer in Christ Jesus is not a capricious undertaking, liable to be broken at any moment, but a pledge to be observed by Him in all its fulness, because grounded on the eternal Truth and Justice." [1]

Justification narrowly considered seemed to leave the present experience detached from the life of God; but adoption showed how man was brought into the Divine family and given the status of a son. And this met one of the deep longings of the age. For centuries the world had been trying to realise the Fatherhood of God, and the notion had attained a definite meaning for Stoic philosophy. The Stoic, to use Mr. Bevan's phrase, believed in a "Friend behind phenomena." Three centuries before Christ Cleanthes had confessed the Stoic belief:

> "We are thy children, we alone, of all
> On earth's broad ways that wander to and fro,
> Bearing thine image wheresoe'er we go." [2]

Unquestionably the pagan world was dimly aware of the truth, but it was obliged to feel after

[1] Muntz: "Rome, St. Paul and the Early Church," pp. 86–87.

[2] Hymn to Zeus, Adam's translation.

God in the darkness of superstition. It was not able to realise it in any concrete way, because there was no actual contact of God's grace with human need.

But Christianity was the religion of revelation; it was the unfolding of the mystery of grace. Christ's sacrificial death had revealed the Fatherhood of God, and the intense longing for this filial relation to God had been confirmed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was the witness to the adopting act. He bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. Adoption was a manifestation of divine love: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." [3] In the Christian revelation, the great spirit of the universe, the wished-for "Friend behind phenomena" became the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Justification and adoption are links in a chain of redemptive causes which deal with man's status before God: one acquits him of the guilt of sin, the other admits him into the Divine family.

But the idea of status does not exhaust the gift of love. There is also a vital change of the human disposition. The believer realised that a new power was functioning in life. He had been

[3] I John iii:1.

quickened with Christ and was alive to new relationships. The works of the flesh were being eliminated and new desires were forming in the soul.

How was this experience to be understood? What share had man in its development? Paul answered this question with the doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification describes the constructive function of the Christian dynamic.

Back of growth is the mysterious experience of regeneration. But Paul does not carefully formulate this doctrine, because it was not needed. He was dealing with a people who were tremendously alive, and who were not so anxious to understand how they had been born, as to know how to meet the problems of the expanding life. This enabled the Apostle to pass from a consideration of reconciliation as a change of status, to reconciliation as a change of nature.

Growth creates perplexities for serious minds because it usually sharpens the sense of opposition. Moral effort sooner or later reveals a schism within the soul. There is a law in the mind and a law in the members; there is conflict between the flesh and the spirit.

Plato has described the conflict between flesh and spirit in the myth of the charioteer and the winged horses.[4] One horse is noble, pure and amenable

[4] See Dickinson: "Greek View of Life," pp. 146–149.

to right reason; the other is earthly, sensual and perverse, and the struggle to control creatures, so diverse in disposition, makes up life's moral experience. The ancients could discover no adequate method of reconciling these opposing forces. With all his faith in the power of intelligence, Aristotle is obliged to confess that there is a concupiscent part of the soul that is not subject to reason. The thinking and especially the experience of later ages made this point clear; and Paul's period was keenly aware of human perversity, and equally lacking in power. How, then, would the experience of growth impress a serious nature? Assuming that the grace of God provided for justification, did it also promise power for the realisation of a holy life? Could Divine power control and finally overcome the concupiscent part of the soul? That question had to be answered, since no religion can stand on justification alone; it must also give power to lead a holy life. Could Christianity do this?

For so soon as the believer was assured of his status, he became aware of a new problem. Contact with Christ sharpened the radical difference between good and evil, and made man aware of the tremendous power of the flesh, to resist and even to defeat the holy aspirations of the newly enfranchised spirit.

Paul has a great deal to say of the warfare of flesh and spirit. By flesh he does not mean the material body, but that system of disorderly and self-regarding desires which opposes the reign of spirituality. The carnal mind is enmity against God; it cannot be subject to the will of God. The natural man is under the dominion of flesh, while the spiritual man is under the dominion of spirit. If the spirit is to triumph, the flesh must be put to death. There must be a transformation of the inner disposition. Although the Christian was renewed in the inner life, the problem of growth had to be faced. He must put on Christ in the moral habit and disposition of the mind, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil its lawless desires.

This was a splendid programme, but could it be carried out? The plain fact confronted the believer: contact with Christ intensified the reality of the struggle with evil. The flesh lusted against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and no compromise was possible. We have had occasion in previous lectures to note the fact that the older Stoics made no allowance for human imperfection. They held that a man was either wholly good or wholly bad. Their favorite illustration, as Mr. Bevan has pointed out, was "that a man a foot below the water is in a drowning condition

just as much as a man a mile down." [5] They admitted that a perfect man was a rarity, but they would make no concessions to imperfection, for fear of impairing the moral ideal. Although later Stoics tempered this hard doctrine, the feeling still remained to torment earnest souls. It powerfully affected growing Christians. How was it possible to believe in the soundness of one's salvation so long as sin remained in the mortal body? The Orphics among the Greeks had settled the question by saying that the body was the tomb of the soul; that matter was essentially evil and that the spirit could be delivered only by death. But the Christian could not hold such a view. Evil dwelt in the thoughts and disposition of the mind. The higher a man aimed the more conscious was he of the presence of sin in experience, not because his sins increased in bulk, but because moral effort increased the sensitiveness of the soul. Mere status, then, however glorious, could not meet a need like this. How could a Christian believe his sins were forgiven, so long as evil influenced his conduct?

This feeling made men doubt the adequacy of Christianity, and exposed them to the temptations current in that syncretic age. Many, in those days, could not be satisfied with a simple religion;

[5] "Stoics and Skeptics," p. 71.

they were engaged in various improvements and additions to current faiths, and cults borrowed from each other with impunity. The satisfaction of the devotee appeared to depend on the number and variety of elements taken from other religions. It was natural that Christians should feel the force of this tendency. They would ask: Is not something lacking in the gospel which may be supplied from without? It was such a feeling that tempted the Galatians to mix Moses with Christ. The tendency was also present in the church at Colossæ. Some were inclined to adopt the Orphic notion of the evil of matter; others were interested in the worship of "elemental spirits," and still others were disposed to practise a false asceticism, borrowed for the most part from the Jews; and all were inclined to believe that by the addition of one thing or another they would get a better Christianity.

The tendency to supplement Christ's redemptive work from outside sources is a very stubborn one. It is occasioned usually by the difficulty of believing in a religion of grace rather than of works. It is very difficult to follow the Christian programme, when every advance sharpens the conflict between flesh and spirit, without being tempted to do something of a supplementary character to sustain the meagre resources of faith.

This feeling, so deeply rooted in human nature, accounts for the power of old Jewish practices; it explains the attraction of asceticism in the early church; it gave Roman Catholicism great influence in the Middle Ages, and is responsible in part at least for the confusion in the mind of some theologians, concerning the relation of justification to sanctification. This latter is a vicious mistake, for it practically makes one's faith in justifying grace dependent on one's opinion of moral progress, and is utterly contrary to the Biblical view, as it is destructive of peace.

Paul's answer to the whole contention was that since the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ, Christians were complete in Him. It was impossible on the one hand to accept the antinomian contention that salvation by faith alone inevitably led to lawlessness, since faith in Christ meant union with the life and power of Christ. It was equally impossible on the other hand to ignore the plain fact that the new life was a life of strife. It deepened the notion of sin and sharpened the conflict between flesh and spirit, but the Christian was assured of resources in Christ adequate to meet all problems growing out of the new life of holiness. It was folly then to go outside of Christ, since His grace was sufficient for all practical needs.

According to Paul, justification must be complete before sanctification can begin. They were closely related but essentially distinct functions of grace. Justification was an act, sanctification was a work. In justification God was the sole agent; in sanctification God and man worked together. As Prof. Stearns puts it, "Justification is the setting of the broken bone; it brings the soul into its true relation to God; it has sanctification for its object. Sanctification is the healing, a process wholly different and wholly distinct." [6]

It is important to notice that while perfection of character is the ultimate goal of sanctification, it is not its immediate object. It is doubtful whether in this life a man can form a true estimate of perfection. There is danger in attempting to do so, for fear of suspending the struggle without which perfection is impossible. The immediate object of sanctification is not perfection, but reasonable progress in the divine life. Its aim is not the suspension of struggle, but the avoidance of useless effort. The old effort after perfection was to found salvation on the basis of human merit, or attainment. This was the significance of the quest for safe conduct. But this abortive effort had been set aside by the coming of Christ. Faith in the atoning mercy of the Saviour, by the grace

[6] "Present Day Theology," p. 447.

of justification delivered the soul from past fears and bondage, to serve the living God in the freedom of the spirit. But this new liberty was not deliverance from struggle, but only from the fruitless and unavailing effort to lay a basis of salvation in human merits.

Paul vigorously describes the new experience. Sometimes it is a race, at other times a boxing match; still again it is called a battle, and in one place it is a wrestling match with formidable powers of darkness. It was always strenuous. The growing Christian could never say that he had attained, or was already perfect. The best he could say was that he was pressing on. In this warfare our weapons were not carnal. Power to succeed in this realm must come from spiritual relationships. The believer was encouraged by the further revelation of sanctifying power issuing from the free gift of salvation. The grace that bestowed the status of a son was also given to ensure the experience of a son by the progressive transformation of man's nature. The active agent in this new experience is the Holy Spirit of God; He is the leader of the regenerate nature in its warfare on the flesh. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

The growing Christian would be intensely interested in the teaching about the Holy Spirit,

and Paul naturally devotes a great deal of attention to the subject. The Spirit is the witness with our spirits that we are children of God. He is the earnest of the purchased possession; the interpreter of the unexpressed longings of the growing soul; the seal of the Father's love and the guarantee of a completed salvation. He regenerates, renews, quickens, guides and informs the soul in its progress towards the divine ideal. Man's co-operation is needed, but power issues from the divine energy imparted through faith. The active agent charged with the responsible task of developing the divine experience in the life of man is the "Holy" Spirit, the Spirit of righteousness and of love. He is also the "Spirit of Christ," manifesting the same attitude and disposition towards man as was experienced in Christ. As such He was no stranger or outsider, but an active participant in the great work of salvation.

We cannot overestimate the tremendous significance of this revelation for the first Christian century. Belief in the activity of spirits was practically universal in those days, but it was not always an encouraging belief. There were many reasons for the notion. For one thing it was very old, and had been inherited by the Romans from Greece and the Orient. It was especially influential in the first century because of the grow-

ing belief even among pagans in the moral significance of God. When the conscience sleeps it is easy to bring the gods down to the ordinary level of human life and make them in man's likeness; but when conscience awakes it turns round on inherited beliefs and modifies them in the interest of a purer conception of Deity. As the idea of God is moralised and spiritualised, He becomes remote and inaccessible to man. The feeling of the aloofness of God was common in the first century. It was almost universally believed that any communication with Deity depended on mediators of one sort or another. This led to the notion of intermediate gods or elemental spirits. "Great was the multitude of this heavenly host, interpreters between God and man; 'thrice ten thousand are they upon the fruitful earth, immortal, ministers of Zeus,' healers of the sick, revealers of what is dark, aiding the craftsman, companions of the wayfarer." [7] Plutarch said that it could be proved "on the testimony of wise and ancient witnesses that there were natures, as it were on the frontiers of the gods and men, that admit mortal passions and inevitable changes, whom we may rightly, after the custom of our fathers, consider to be dæmons, and so calling them, worship

[7] Dill: "Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius," pp. 429–430.

them." [8] And Plutarch was stating the general belief of the time. These dæmons "serve two purposes in religious philosophy. They safeguard the Absolute and the higher gods from contact with matter, and they relieve the Author of Good from responsibility for evil. At the same time they supply the means of that relation to the divine which is essential for man's higher life." [9]

Opinion differed as to the nature of these intermediate spirits. Some were of the same essence as God Himself; others had mixed natures, partly divine and partly human. Plutarch said "that they were godlike in power and intelligence, but human in liability to the passions engendered by the flesh." [10]

It was inevitable that such views should develop into the notion of a tyranny of malignant spirits, "tainted with the evil of the lower world." In order to reconcile the old myths with prevailing ethical conceptions of deity, the doctrine of the familiar spirit was devised. The gods were believed to be good, but they were often as in the case of Zeus misrepresented by their familiar spirits. Such notions led, of course, to a spread of

[8] Quoted by Glover: "Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire," pp. 96–97.
[9] Glover: Op. Cit., p. 97.
[10] Quoted by Dill: Op. Cit., p. 431.

superstition, to a dread of gods and dæmons of the most degrading influence. The favour of good dæmons could be gained by observing the ritual requirements of the mystery religions, but there was no sure way of obtaining the good will of evil dæmons. This gross superstition roused the noble scorn of Lucretius in the preceding century, but the dread of elemental spirits was even more common in Paul's time. The universe was filled with capricious beings; even the Most High God might have a familiar spirit, capable of misrepresenting Him.

It is easy to imagine the eagerness of a people, long familiar with the dread of elemental spirits, in receiving the Pauline revelation of the Holy Spirit. God Himself was present in the believer's life. The Historic Christ had brought man into living contact with the Lord of Glory, and the Great Spirit of the Universe had come down from His inaccessible heights to dwell in sympathetic relation with the children of men.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the active agent in the growth of the Christian met the second pressing need of the times. The first need Paul had met with the doctrine of justifying faith. The second need was met with the assurance of reasonable progress in the divine life, in spite of indwelling sin and the prolonged struggle with

the flesh. But a third and final question would be raised: What of the future? Is Christianity capable of bringing man to the goal of his hopes? Was there a stage beyond sanctification? God had begun a good work in man, did He intend to complete it?

This question was raised in part by the growth of the Christian, and in part also by the increasing complications of life in this world.

The outstanding fact of the new experience was the fact of dependence. The Christian knew that his experience was an effect. He was what he was by the grace of God. He was just as dependent on grace for progress in holiness as he had been in the first instance upon pardoning love. He could not boast of his spiritual attainment, because the goal of perfection receded as he approached it. It was a flying goal, and the best he could say was that he was pressing on. But sooner or later he had to face the question of attainment. Progress could not be indefinitely prolonged: would he then reach the goal? He was sure if he did, it would be by the grace of God. This made him intensely anxious to know whether there was a Divine plan comprehensive enough to meet all requirements back of his faith and life. He wanted a larger concept of religion; one that would embrace the several aspects of experience.

Paul had been revealing the several links in the chain of redemptive causes. But the believer wanted to see the whole chain, its beginning and end. He saw justification, adoption and sanctification; was there not a further link of glorification still to be revealed? He asked this question because his experience had reached the stage where unity in the several processes of his life was essential to abiding peace.

An additional influence in this direction was the increasing complications of life in this world. Christians were beginning to attract the unfavourable attention of society. The profession was becoming dangerous not only to leaders but also to followers. The disciples were realising the increasing cost of living with Christ. The early Christians universally believed that Christ would return during their lifetime, and their hopes at the outset were fixed on this blessed expectation. But as time passed it appeared as if they were to be disappointed. Some were growing lax, others had fallen away, and some were growing sceptical and saying: "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." [11] Above all the menace of Nero's evil reign was becoming portentous, and the future

[11] II Peter iii:4.

held the promise of persecution and death for many.

It is interesting to note that the Roman Christians did not suggest that Christ save them from such a future. They were willing to endure hardship and even suffer death for Christ's sake. Undoubtedly many who read Paul's great epistle suffered under Nero. But they knew the weakness of the flesh, and had no confidence in themselves. How would they behave in the flames? What would be their attitude when they saw the lions in the arena? How could they stand against the opposition of the Roman world? They dare not trust themselves, but could they trust God? That depended on His plan for their life. Would His grace hold them true as they passed through the fires, and in spite of unworthiness bring them to the goal of their hopes?

That was an urgent question. Stoics like Seneca tried to answer it with a conception of Providence very like fatalism, but it was a hard old creed, and few could abide it. But the God and Father of Jesus Christ was not the rigid deity of the Stoic philosophy. He had loved them in the past and He loved them in the present, but would He love them unto the end? Was it not natural then to ask for further explanations of the Divine purpose that would enable them to be

more than conquerors in the coming persecution?

This question was urgent because of the tragedy of the Jewish nation. If God had a plan, had it not been revealed in the history of the Jew? But the law had failed to save the Jew, and his nation had been rejected. Did this imply the failure of God's plan, or was there something more to be said?

It was this need, issuing from the mature Christian experience, and the complications of life that prompted Paul to formulate the doctrine of the Divine purpose. The very word "predestination" bristles with difficulties, and it is unlikely that one could answer all objections made to it. We must frankly admit the presence of a deep mystery in the ways of God with men. A philosophy of Providence is impossible since the finite mind can never fully comprehend the Infinite. But it is evident to any one familiar with the relation of Christian teaching to the life of those times, that the doctrine of election was taught for a very practical purpose. It was not meant for babes in Christ, but for strong men. It would have been an enigma to the Corinthians, but it was as plain as a pike staff to the Romans, simply because they had reached a stage where light on the Divine purpose was essential to further progress.

The doctrine of election, so far from being a

perplexing mystery, is a plain and necessary element in spiritual education. It is a doctrine for the maturer stages of faith, but if I am right in accounting for the conditions which made the doctrine essential, I think it can be shown to have great utility for a growing intelligence, for it prepares the believer for successfully overcoming the temptations which issue from the deeper phases of Christian experience.

The doctrine of election is the revelation of the plan behind the believer's life. It is the principle that co-ordinates the plan of salvation. It is the final cause of redemption. In this book, I have consistently maintained the causal significance of Christianity; I have asked you to consider doctrine in part at least as descriptive of function. If this be true, we may regard election as the explanation of the purpose that gives meaning and cohesion to the Christian dynamic which functions through faith in the interests of a complete salvation.

Paul develops the discussion along several lines. First he shows that the law and gospel are not two different plans of salvation, but two phases of one and the same plan. So far from failing to fulfil its Divine mission, the law was a complete success. It had accurately diagnosed the world's spiritual malady, and by revealing the

positive and negative aspects of sin, had established a need for redemption. Furthermore, through its types and symbols, it had efficiently served as an attendance officer to bring the world to Christ. Christ was the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believed. Paul knew from his own experience that the law was efficient. It had not failed; what it had done was to establish the fact that the race could be saved on no other terms than those of free grace.

The law was given to a chosen nation; that was an advantage; but the covenant which God made with the Jew was not based on the law but on the agreement with Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant was based on faith rather than works. Israel was elect unto certain privileges, but they did not confer the blessing of a personal election. That depended on other conditions entirely. The nation's failure did not imply the failure of God's plan; on the contrary, it proved, as Prof. Stevens truly observes, that there was "an election within the election." [12]

This more intimate phase of election was indicated by the calling of the gentiles. It unfolded the mystery of God, hitherto a Divine secret, but now made manifest in the universality of the gospel offer; but within this general call, there was an

[12] "The Theology of the New Testament," p. 381.

effectual calling. Mature Christians knew something of this, for, says Paul, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to His purpose." [13] It was impossible to believe that God would begin such an experience as they enjoyed, and then allow it to fail in the face of the very complications that it raised.

From an assured position in experience Paul proceeds to develop the doctrine of the Divine purpose. Christians are predestinated to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. The plan behind the life is indicated in the successive links of a causal chain: whom He called, He justified, whom He justified, He sanctified, and whom He sanctified He will also glorify.[14]

What more can we want than this? No doubt there is still much to be said from the point of view of the theologian, the seeker for a complete system; but for the growing Christian whose aim is to understand in some measure the implications of his experience, nothing further than this is needed, since this is about all Paul told the Romans about it.

But some one will say: If you assert the efficiency of the Divine Will in all the processes of

[13] Romans viii:28.
[14] Romans viii:30.

salvation, do you not relieve the believer of moral effort? The answer is plainly no, simply because the only practical evidence of a Divine purpose in individual life is reasonable progress towards holiness. But this progress need not be consciously continuous. As a matter of fact, many do lose it temporarily; they seem to fall from grace, but if God begins a work of grace in man's soul, He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. If a child disobeys his father and falls down the steps, he does not fall out of the house; because his body is bruised, he does not cease to be his father's child. And if it be objected, How about falling out of the window? my answer is that there are no windows in this house; it opens only on the eternal glories of that great upper world where God waits the home coming of His children.

The mystery of the Divine purpose is the mystery of a love so wise and comprehensive as to meet all the requirements of a growing experience, and to give positive assurance that in spite of the complications of this present evil world the believer shall arrive at the goal of his hopes. Justifying faith is the title deed to salvation, and election is the abstract of that title, which traces our right to it straight back to the source of all good.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?"

writes the great Apostle, as he sees in vision those earnest Roman faces. He knew the strain that would shortly come on their faith; he knew the mighty temptations to yield in the face of persecution; he knew how the arch fear would grip those brave hearts when they saw the cords and the stakes, the lions and the arena. These people wanted assurance that they would not fail; they passionately wished to endure without flinching the last struggle with the world; and he knew moreover that they were intelligent enough to understand his meaning: so he did not hesitate to tell them that behind their experience, working through all the stages of the new life, was the great purpose of God; and in words of immortal beauty he gathers up the possibilities of the situation and affirms a truth which reasonable faith will confirm, that through all the phases of our earthly pilgrimage there is being realised an unchangeable plan, a plan grounded in love and sustained by a power adequate to fulfil its promises and complete its undertakings.

The Christian life is rooted and grounded in the Divine Energy. When God comes into a man's life, He comes to stay. That life begins, grows and ends in God; and behind its hopes and its fears, its longings and desires, stands the his-

toric Personality of Jesus Christ, who lived and died and rose again that He might deliver us from this present evil world, and present us faultless in the Throne Room of the Eternal God.

CONCLUSION

LECTURE IX

THE FINALITY OF CHRISTIANITY

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It is time to sum up our results. The study of the background has shown the urgency of the religious problem in the time when Christianity began its westward movement; it has also indicated the kind of religion the age was prepared to accept.

The desire for a right relation with God was the distinctive need of the first Christian century; and while the quest for safe conduct had suggested a moral ideal, it had been unable to furnish power for its realisation. The moral passion of the age was running far in advance of its conscious capacities, and it was this that gave the Apostles their peculiar opportunity, for Christianity was the religion of power. Its power was manifested in the resurrection of Jesus and the creation of the Christian community; and when the intelligence of the first Christians made a rational interpretation of the power necessary, Paul met the need by teaching doctrines. Doctrines are descriptive of function; they show that God has come into human history with a special redemp-

tive purpose in view. Not only did Christianity provide an answer to the original question of safe conduct in its great doctrine of justifying faith, but it also furnished assurance of reasonable progress in holiness, and through the great conception of electing love promised to bring the believer to the goal of his hopes. The net result of the Christian propaganda was to establish the new religion on an historical basis in contact with the growing intellectual and spiritual requirements of the age.

Undoubtedly Christianity had a very practical significance for those early centuries. How great it was may be inferred from Fowler's brilliant study of Roman religious experience. Describing the originality of the new religion, when compared with competitive forces working in its early environment, he says: "The love of Christ is the entirely new power that has come into the world; not merely as a new type of morality, but as 'a divine influence transfiguring human nature in a universal love.' The passion of St. Paul's appeal lies in the consecration of every detail of it by reference to the life and death of his Master, and the great contrast is for him not as with the Stoics, between the universal law of nature and those who rebel against it; not as with Lucretius, between the blind victims of *"religio"* and the indefatigable

student of the *rerum natura;* not, as in the *Æneid,* between the man who bows to the decrees of fate, destiny, God, or whatever we choose to call it, and the wilful rebel, victim of his own passions; not, as in the Roman state and family, between the man who performs religious duties, and the man who wilfully neglects them—between *pius* and *impius;* but between the universal law of love, focussed and concentrated in the love of Christ, and the sleep, the darkness, and the death of a world that will not recognise it." [1]

The contrast is not relative, but absolute. It does not lie in the selection of one among several equally available methods of salvation; but in a comparison of a series of efforts whose futility was clearly realised, and a dynamic, functioning in history, and actually capable of transforming life into the image of the Divine Master.

Admitting the truth of this contention, the question may be asked: What has this to do with the modern world? Can we base our faith on the historic Christ, or shall we expect a higher conception to develop? In other words, is Christianity final, or do we look for another religion?

This is an important question, and its answer in part will depend on one's attitude towards re-

[1] "The Religious Experience of the Roman People," p. 467.

ligious experience. A man's attitude towards the claims of Jesus Christ will have an important bearing on the interpretation of the Christian tradition. There is an incommunicable element in religious experience that determines one's view of religious truth. The personal equation will often take a leading part in historical interpretations.

Granting this, however, the question as to the finality of Christianity has a meaning for the intelligence. It can be thought about, investigated, and certain features of the problem will very likely prove decisive. I believe that if one is disposed to be a Christian, one may turn to the problem as it lies in the field of history and reach a satisfactory conclusion on the main point; namely, that Christianity in its historic significance proves itself to be the final religion, and that we need look for no higher, since none other is needed.

The truth of this proposition will become evident if, after indicating what man's fundamental religious needs are and showing that the success of Christianity in the early centuries was due to the fact that it adequately met those needs, it can be proved that the modern man has not changed in respect of his religious necessities, that he is in no important aspect of experience different from the men of past ages. If man's religious needs are the same to-day as they were when

Christianity began its westward movement, and if Christianity met the needs of the man of the first century, there is no reason to suppose that it cannot meet the needs of the man of the twentieth century.

Our first inquiry then is to determine what man's fundamental religious needs are. Why is man a religious being? Why is it, that whether we view him in a primitive aspect, or in a highly civilised state, there are inevitable resemblances of spiritual desires and aspirations?

This question may be answered in two ways; either by an analysis of the religious consciousness, or by an interpretation of the religious consciousness as it manifests itself on the field of history. This latter is the better way, and the value of our study of the various phases of the quest for safe conduct lies in the fact that the quest indicates what man's spiritual requirements are. When man's need of God is so urgent as to compel him to seek right relations with Him, we may easily discover the permanent elements of his religious consciousness. The quest for safe conduct indicates that these elements are four: First, a sense of dependence on a higher power; second, a feeling of not being in right relation to this higher power; third, a desire to overcome this feeling by means of sacrifices and religious rites; and

fourth, a feeling that nothing short of a human life in God can adequately satisfy man's desire for right relation, which tempts him to make God in his own image.

First there is present in religious experience the sense of dependence on a higher power. It does not matter whether the power is thought of as a person, or impersonal force; whether it be conceived under a polytheistic or monotheistic form; the essential point is that the sense of dependence is back of every religious aspiration. It was the sense of dependence that led primitive man to make the gods in a human likeness, in order that he might be at home in the world. It was the sense of dependence that prompted the primitive religious endeavour.

But religious effort develops moral experience, and its ultimate effect is an increase of moral sensibility that introduces a disturbing element into the religious consciousness: a sense of not being in right relation to the power manifest in nature. This is not a sense of sin, or even of wrong doing, but rather of dislocation and alienation. The sense of dependence draws man towards God, but the sense of alienation drives man from Him. It fills him with a feeling of unrest and insecurity in the presence of the mysterious Spirit who inhabits the universe. He is no longer at home in the world,

and he becomes aware of a need of getting through it with credit. He becomes a seeker for safe conduct. The original desire of primitive man for God becomes clear and explicit; in other words it seeks to find an effective way of getting into right relation with God, and this develops a third element in the religious consciousness.

As the moral sense turns round upon inherited traditions it makes the problem of safe conduct a personal one; it develops a need for effective methods of propitiating the great Spirit of the universe, and this feeling expresses itself in sacrifices, rituals, efforts to make atonement—in short, in historical manifestations of various kinds. From this primitive passion for an effective relation with God came purifications, ethical struggles, and religious observances, all of which sought to answer the question: How can a man get right with God? This passion was responsible for the prodigal expenditure of time and life in the age-long endeavour to find peace with God. It was back of the noblest ethical speculations of antiquity; but as the moral sense continued to develop, the feeling of alienation increased; and the need of a better knowledge of God developed a fourth element in the religious consciousness: a passion for a human life in God. This desire was not the cause of polytheism, but it was undoubtedly

a contributing influence. The notion of an absolute and infinite God was, as we have seen, a very painful one, when unaided by a Divine revelation. It almost made the problem of right relation insoluble, because it put God out of touch with experience. It is easy then to understand why primitive man broke up the idea of infinity into a number of parts. By associating them for a season with what was near, local and familiar, he seemed to bring God closer to human need. The tendency to make God in the human likeness was the final outworking of the religious impulse; but it was inevitable that the growing moral sense should introduce a disturbing element into this relation in spite of intense efforts to the contrary. Man was left in uncertainty, because there were always unknown elements, and uncomprehended relationships; he seemed to dwell on the frontier of an unseen world, and the human spirit, in the absence of severe ethical restraints, and sometimes in spite of them, was tempted to people this unknown region with the creations of its disordered imagination. It was a fruitful source of superstition. The Greeks confessed this sense of inadequacy in the Athenian altar to "Unknown Gods." Lucretius regarded the whole movement as an expression of degrading superstition; and the first Christian century felt the potent spell

of the unknown in its fear of dæmons and its tyranny of elemental spirits.

But in spite of its vagaries, the passion was the expression of spiritual need. Man needed to find a human likeness in God, if his relation to Him was to prove effective. It was a craving for an incarnation. Man wanted a Deity whose advent was not a chance visit, but a permanent coming into the experience and life of the world.

These four elements: the sense of dependence, the sense of alienation, the passion to atone for wrongdoing, and the craving for a human expression of Deity, make up the religious consciousness of mankind, and were strikingly expressed in the quest for safe conduct, which was the distinguishing feature of religious experience at the time of the westward movement of Christianity.

The direct consequence of that age-long quest was to intensify the need for a virtue-making power, and to make the question of a right relation with God paramount. The problem was how to translate *"gnosis"* into *"dunamis,"* knowledge into power and precept into performance. The best thinkers of the age agreed that human nature could not furnish a moral dynamic. Lucretius and Seneca would have accepted Paul's diagnosis: "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not." Man could not

rise above this position, because he was more or less aware that religious experience as a purely naturalistic affair was in its final stage of evolution. Any further improvement must come from a fresh manifestation of God in human history.

Thoughtful men of Paul's age were keenly aware of dependence but they had little confidence in the familiar methods of adjusting the human spirit to the requirements of the Eternal. And the characteristic longing of the time was for an appearance in historic form of a personal adjuster. This feeling became acute in the last century of the republic. It was stimulated by the failure of the ancient political sanctions, and the outbreak of anarchy and civil strife developed a passion for a strong man who could set the world right. This passion for a personal force finally took the form of the worship of the reigning Emperor; but its intensity is apparent in Virgil's Messianic eclogue. The monotheistic drift of the times tended to give a spiritual character to this aspiration. Men were looking for "the Still, Strong Man of the soul's need." That is why Paul's age was interested in a religion of power.

How then did Christianity adjust itself to the requirements of the religious consciousness? The uppermost need of the times was for a righting power with God. This is clear from that check-

ered history of human experience, that ceaseless conflict of moral passion and human perversity, so impressively described in the literature of the period. This need made a religion of redemption desirable above everything else. Man wanted a healer and a Saviour, rather than a diagnostician and a reformer. Above all he wanted assurance that God Himself had come in direct contact with human need. Nothing short of an historic manifestation could satisfy the desire for a human life in God. Man did not want a chance visit; he wanted God to come to stay. What then had Christianity to say to this imperious need?

If we have given a just account of the elements in man's religious consciousness, it ought not to be difficult to show how adequately the new religion satisfied them.

In the first place the need for a conception of God on Whom one might depend was met by the revelation of Divine Fatherhood. For centuries men had been trying to formulate this doctrine; the Stoics were especially zealous in this direction, but they could never be assured of it. What they really wanted was a conception of fatherhood based on redemption rather than on providence, and this, speculation could not furnish since an historic answer was required. No philosophic theory of God can satisfy human need; that can

be met only by an historical revelation: an actual manifestation in human experience, and this was precisely what the Christian gospel offered. It revealed Divine Fatherhood based on redemptive power and sanctioned by historic performance. And this glorious revelation was sustained at every point by the dynamic Personality of Jesus Christ. The great Spirit of the Universe, the fundamental parent source, was manifested as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Christ's manifestation was the historic proof of the Divine love. His Presence was evidence of the fact that God was approachable and trustworthy.

The revelation of Fatherhood through Christ brought out the second and third features of Christianity in respect of man's fundamental religious needs. On the one hand the gospel explained the nature of the world's trouble; on the other hand it provided a way of reconciliation.

The Christian doctrine of sin properly diagnosed the world's spiritual distress, yet so far from producing discouragement, as lesser investigations usually did, it always made the diagnosis in connection with the offer of pardon. The sacrificial death of the Saviour was the basis for faith in the righting power of God. Salvation was not suspended on a bare word of forgiveness, but was made as realistic in its redemptive aspect, as was

the sense of sin and need; because behind pardoning love was the historic deed of the cross, and the issue of this was a justifying grace which gave the sinner a status with the Most High God which none could dispute. The cross of Christ forever settled the question of adjustment. It was the end of the quest for safe conduct.

But God's grace did something more than this. Not only did it justify the sinner but it also adopted him into the Divine family; and through the renewing and transforming energies of the Holy Spirit made progress in holiness possible, even in the face of the opposition of the flesh, and the increasing complications of life. And back of the several stages of this experience was the Divine purpose, which convinced man that God had come into human life to stay.

And this satisfied the fourth element of spiritual desire, namely the hunger for a human life in God. The incarnation of God in Christ proved the truth of the gospel; it was evidence that the Eternal God had come into man's life as an abiding power; and the experience of the first century, the creation of the Christian community—the purity of its life and fidelity of its testimony under manifold trials and temptations—shows better than anything in that age, the effectiveness of the new religion. Christianity began in history,

it made history, and it promised historic fruits in the future. All that had been dimly discerned or consciously realised of human need in the age-long quest for safe conduct was adequately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The coming of the Saviour was a fresh beginning in the history of the race.

Christ is related to man's spiritual needs as food is to appetite. Truly He is the bread of life. All that was needed to estabish a new life, or a new creation as Paul called it, was to bring man's spiritual appetites into relation with Jesus. This was accomplished in the first century, and developed an experience which neither the demands of intelligence nor the growing opposition of the world could falsify or destroy. So far then as the first century was concerned, viewed as having desires and passions that were common to preceding centuries, Christianity was adequate, and as such was the final religion.

And it is the final religion for us, unless it can be shown that the spiritual needs of mankind have changed since those days. If the religion of the New Testament was adequate for the first century, it is adequate for the twentieth century, unless it can be proved that man's religious requirements have been altered by the progress of civilisation.

There is a general impression manifest in

modern opinion and behaviour that would lead one to suppose that man's spiritual requirements are different from those of the past ages; and that if it cannot be maintained that the modern man has outgrown Christianity, at least it can be said that he can afford to reject or modify much that was of value to past centuries. Two things, however, must be distinguished: The attitude towards the fundamental historical significance of Christianity is one thing; the attitude towards theological interpretations and systems of later centuries is quite another thing. Every thoughtful man must interpret truth in terms that he can understand. Every age has its own way of thinking about ultimate questions; and the disposition to think of Christianity in present day concepts need not necessarily lead to the rejection of, or indifference to, fundamental historical revelations. Few men are capable of holding a complete system of religious truth; the best most of them can do is to have a few first class convictions on essential points; and assuredly we cannot make the understanding and acceptance of great theological systems the condition of a valid faith in the historic facts of Christianity.

But unfortunately the modern man imagines that because he can neither understand nor hold complete and systematic views of religion, he must

necessarily reject or be indifferent to the fundamental historic significance of Christianity as it is revealed in the New Testament. He becomes a religious impressionist, selecting what he likes and rejecting what he dislikes, and justifies this course, when he thinks of it at all, on the ground that somehow he has attained to such a pitch of development that he no longer needs the stabilising influence of the great past; and this tendency is the result of the peculiar temperament of the modern world.

For the past four hundred years the world has been steadily drifting away from a spiritual view of life. The renaissance has been the decisive factor in modern civilisation. The revival of learning has had a larger influence on modern opinion than the Protestant reformation; in fact the union of the Protestant principle of the right of private judgment with the freedom of the renaissance is responsible for present day indifference to all forms of authority; for the popular contempt of the great past, and particularly for the vitiated notion of truth which identifies reality with consequences, and makes every man the arbiter of his own destiny. The unregulated individualism of the modern world is a symptom of a deeper thing—of an altered conception of values.

This altered conception of values is directly

traceable to the age of humanism. The renaissance was the rebirth of man. It was man's fresh discovery of himself, it was also his fresh discovery of this world. The past centuries had for the most part been God-centred; succeeding centuries have very largely been man-centred. Religion was the all but exclusive interest of the world before the revival of learning; it cannot be maintained that it has been the predominant interest since. Before the renaissance man's chief concern was safe conduct. He did not feel altogether comfortable in this world; there were elements in his experience that reminded him that he was a stranger and a pilgrim, and the interests of the soul were paramount. Since the renaissance man has succeeded in making himself fairly well at home in this world. Prior to the revival of learning man was dominated by the Hebrew ideal of religious exclusiveness: religion was his chief concern, and his business not so much to be at home in the world as to get through it with credit; the era since the renaissance has been dominated by the Greek spirit of humanism. In the former case the ideal of the chief good was one and simple: to enjoy the favour of God was the supreme good; in the latter case the ideal of the chief good is once more composite. Religion was still important, but other things such as science, art, litera-

ture, philosophy, politics, worldly position, in one word civilisation, were equally important. In the first instance the world was dominated by the Hebrew ideal of the safe life; in the second instance by the Greek ideal of the complete life.

The element of wonder which in past ages used to illuminate the religious experience, has for more than four hundred years increasingly centred itself on man: on his doings and misdoings, his inventions and discoveries; his achievements and attainments; until it may be said of the modern what Carlyle said of the Greek, that "he is far more at home in Zion than he has any right to be."

The modern man has become so accustomed to the development and enjoyment of the material estate that he has forgotten his real relation to it. He is in reality a tenant, but he acts as if he owned it. His tenancy is limited at that, and in spite of his deep satisfaction with this present world, he is just as much a stranger and pilgrim as were his ancestors, only he does not know it—yet. To one who takes a long view of life there is something profoundly pathetic in the present day complacency. One hundred years hence all that will be left of this proud complex of material possession and restless desire, so far as we are concerned,

will be a number of spiritual entities we call souls face to face with the eternal God.

The present age differs in many important particulars from past ages, but the difference is not so great as some suppose. In science and invention, in the exploitation and development of the material estate, and in the cultivation of its productive resources the age excels all past times. But it cannot be maintained that our intellectual and moral progress has kept pace with material development. Our distinctive achievements belong to the externals of life; they do not materially alter the inner constitution of mankind. The things that make for the cultivation of the mind and spirit are inherited from the past. We still go to Greece for the best philosophy; to Rome for our laws, and to the renaissance for our artistic and literary ideals; and apart from scientific and material achievements, everything we have of religion, culture, and civilisation came from the past. The modern world is penny-wise-and-pound-foolish. It ranks the achievements of civilisation above the transforming power of true religion, because its interest is chiefly in this world. But civilisation is not the same thing as progress. Civilisation deals with the externals of life, but no more alters the inner constitution of human nature than clothes can transform character. Still the modern

man imagines that because he is successful in the control of material forces, he must have outgrown the needs of past ages; and nowhere is this delusion more common than in current opinions on religion.

Socrates used to say of the craftsmen of his day that "they did as a rule know something about their own trades, but unfortunately on the strength of this bit of knowledge, they fancied that they knew a great many other things of which they were ignorant, such, for instance, as how to govern an empire." [2] And many a modern thinks that because he can make a tin can better than his neighbour, he is capable of settling the affairs of the universe. The church today is suffering from lay exploitation; from the irresponsible attentions of many whose only claim to notice is that they have made a success in a material direction. Such men never suspect their fallibility; neither do they question their attitude towards religion. They act as if somehow their fundamental spiritual needs were different from those of past ages, and endeavour to begin the religious experience *de novo,* without the regulative influence of the great past. The age is suffering from what Hugh Black calls "unregulated idealism." It is passionate, hopeful,

[2] Burnet: "Greek Philosophy from Thales to Plato," p. 136.

enthusiastic—fine qualities in any age; but it is singularly lacking in straightforward common sense views of human nature. This peculiar temperament usually issues in a demand, if not for a new religion, at least for a Christianity modified to suit the requirements of an augmented sense of personal importance. The old-fashioned man was content to remain subordinate to God; the man of the present day desires an equal partnership. With one religion means the service of God by man; with the other the service of man by God. And the difference at bottom is one of values. One derives his notion of value from his relation to God; the other values God in relation to human enterprises.

But there is another side to this question. Present day society is becoming aware of instability in spiritual matters. The century that has excelled past ages in the realisation of material desires, is distinguished by a soul discomfort that is almost as acute as that of the first century. There is a feeling of unrest abroad. The discontents of today are not those of poverty but of prosperity. The discontents of prosperity are spiritual. Many are becoming aware of the futility of success, of the emptiness of material possessions; full barns do not always make peaceful minds; and there is a soul hunger abroad which nothing tangible

seems to satisfy. The truth is the modern world is beginning to feel the need for safe conduct. A dim sense of a pilgrimage is coming in to disturb material contentment, and the modern man is not so much at home in the world as he used to be.

This unrest, offspring of spiritual distress, although vague and inchoate, is still insistent in its attitude towards certain things. For many years the modern man has been very impatient with theology; it is now evident that he is beginning to be dissatisfied with philosophy; else how account for the popularity of such anti-intellectual notions as those of Eucken, Bergson and William James? How shall we explain the vogue of conceptions which set aside the intellect in favour of blind instinct or make the sole test of truth a conformity with immediate desires, except on the assumption that the modern man is beginning to realise the need for peace, and is in a special hurry to get it?

And in the wild riot of religious congresses, mass movements, sociological pilgrimages, vice crusades and revivals which have distinguished the modern world in recent years, two things are clear: the modern man is very indifferent to guiding principles, and tremendously in love with power.

The religious experience of the average man is for the most part made up of impressions and impulses, more or less influenced by mass move-

ments, the meaning of which he does not understand, simply because he will not take the time to think them out. Up to recent times he did not believe it necessary; but signs are not wanting to show that he is beginning to think seriously about them. He is as impatient as ever with abstract explanations, but he would like plain answers to such questions as God, the soul and immortality; and in so far as he is conscious of having definite needs, he would like to know something of Jesus Christ and the way of salvation. In the main he lacks convictions, but at least he knows the need and the desirability of power.

The want of power in the higher phases of experience is the most characteristic sign of the times. Man's conspicuous successes in a material direction have served to convince him of the lack of power in the domain of the spirit. He sees power functioning in visible efficiency and in world civilisation. It is the magic word in business. And he demands it in religion because it is in spiritual matters that he feels the lack of it. He often looks for it in the wrong place; he is more interested in quantitative manifestations than in invisible and spiritual expressions. Still the impressive feature of the present situation is that many are in quest of spiritual power: some from egoistic and others from altruistic motives.

The egoistic manifestation is seen in the syncretic tendency which mixes historical Christianity with other elements: such for example as Christian Science and the New Thought cults. Man's complex needs tempt him to look for complex remedies. As much as he desires simplicity he finds it difficult to trust it in the religious world. This is a revival in a somewhat different form of the old ascetic impulse. In ancient times many sought to escape the opposition of the world by selfish seclusion, "far from the madding crowd"; in these days many try to escape the reality of life, by fleeing to these syncretic cults, and by surrounding themselves with a cloud of misty conceptions, think themselves free of the world's distress. But this is a passing phase. There is no enduring power in the unreality of mental anæsthesia. No religious enterprise founded on selfishness can last, and when conscience awakes it will make short work of these futile delusions.

The altruistic quest for power is manifest in the social passion of the time. This is a noble enterprise, inspired by a desire to humanise social relations and moralise the forces that are responsible for much of present day misery. So far from being selfish, the social passion is the expression of self-sacrifice, and is worthy of all commendation. Only it frequently makes the mistake

of dealing with effects rather than causes; is too much interested in a study of symptoms and not enough concerned with remedies. Undoubtedly the social passion is a by-product of Christianity, but at present it has all the defects of a movement led by novices, rich in idealism, but poor in ideas; and serious minds are beginning to realise that there is something wrong with the social programme. In spite of the best intentions it remains a programme; it lacks power, and many are becoming aware of the need of a personal relation to Jesus Christ, as the sole condition of success in the social enterprise. The social needs of the age offer a very fruitful field for work, but the social passion is not a dynamic. That must be looked for in another region entirely.

Where shall man look for power? What can give him a dynamic relationship with the eternal God? Obviously he cannot hope to get it from modern philosophy, for apart from such frankly anti-intellectual attempts as those of Bergson and Eucken, there is little left but speculations concerning the problem of knowledge, and the capacities or limitations of the mind. Present day philosophy rarely touches the problem of reality, save in the interests of an unstable materialism. And even though it attempt to deal with reality

in a spiritual way, it is never concrete; it is always above the comprehension of the plain man.

And if one turn to ancient systems, which, of course, means Greek philosophy, one will learn as Burnet truly observes that "Greek philosophy is based on the faith that reality is divine, and that the one thing needful is for the soul, which is akin to the divine, to enter into communion with it. It was in truth an effort to satisfy what we call the religious instinct." [3] In other words Greek philosophy will teach us that our needs are spiritual, but the fact that the quest for safe conduct led into a blind alley is a demonstration of the futility of philosophy to satisfy them. Philosophy is a good mental discipline but it cannot set us right on such a question; its best service is to convince us that we have gone wrong. Philosophy is a barometer, and man needs a compass. It can warn us of weather changes, but it cannot direct our course. The Greeks went as far as possible in the direction of God; modern philosophy has not advanced a step beyond them; and it is probably too late in the day to expect any help from this source.

One can get even less help from science, for science is exclusively interested in phenomena; it has no jurisdiction over the religious aspect of

[3] Op. Cit., p. 12.

life, because it cannot enter, as science, into the noumenal world. At best we must agree with Paulsen when he says that "whatever temple science may build there will always need to be hard by a Gothic chapel for wounded souls." [4]

Man's wounded spirit is in quest of this Gothic chapel. He will not find it in the domain of science; neither will he long trust himself to the half-and-half schemes that go by the name of "vitalism," "creative evolution," or "pragmatism"; and there seems nothing left but to re-examine his fundamental spiritual requirements and see if after all he cannot find an adequate solution in historic Christianity.

The religious needs of the modern man differ in no important particular from those of past generations. Under all the mutations of life and variations of culture he remains just man. There has been no essential change in the inner constitution of man. He has the same imperious sense of dependence on the power manifest in the universe; the same feeling of not being in right relation to this power; the same dominant passion to find a righting power in some form of ethical struggle, and the same intense longing for a human life in God, which characterised past ages. If we frankly admit these things we shall be able to see how

[4] "Ethics," p. 162.

man's fundamental religious needs are satisfied by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The modern passion for power in life ought to enable us to understand the originality of Christianity. It is the religion of power, of historic events and spiritual performances, because it reveals the truth that God Himself has entered man's experience with a special redemptive purpose in view. Jesus Christ is a supernatural Person, whose power is shown in the creation of a new life and the evolution of a community of representative persons; and this power, working through the gospel, becomes intelligible when we understand some of its functions. Herein lies, I think, the immediate significance of Christian doctrine. Undoubtedly the doctrines of Christianity are revelations of objective truth, but they are also descriptions of function; they tell us how the divine power is working in individual experience.

What is needed is a better understanding of the functional significance of Christian power. How does the power of Christ connect with human desire? The connection is made by faith. Christianity is the religion of grace, because it suspends the futile struggle to attain salvation on the basis of human merit and freely bestows it through the merits of Jesus Christ. The gift of salvation is communicated to the individual

through faith. Where there is faith there is power. Faith is the whole nature of man coming into contact with the whole nature of God. Faith in Christ means union with the life and power of Christ. There are three elements in it.

First there is the element of intellectual receptivity: a willingness to assent to religious truth on testimony of others. Of course we are obliged to receive our information concerning the Saviour from others. In part it comes from the revelation of the New Testament, and in part from the force imparted to this revelation by the life and example of Christians. The facts of Christianity are of such a nature as powerfully to impress a receptive mind with their truth and importance.

But all these facts centre in a Person. The facts and truths of religion exist in order to the revelation of a Personal Saviour; and from intellectual receptivity there develops the disposition to trust oneself to the power of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to contemplate His perfect life, to consider the unique character of His moral consciousness, and, above all, to open the soul to the healing power of His sacrificial death, without feeling that here in human history is the end of all spiritual quests. The sense of alienation from God, the feeling of confusion about our relations to the Infinite and Eternal, end with our accept-

ance of Jesus Christ. We love persons, we trust persons, and we believe in persons. Christianity is the religion of a Person, and trust is the putting of the life with all its past, present and future needs into the hands of the Son of God.

But there inevitably arises from the disposition to trust a third element, a willingness to accept the authority of Christ as the law of life and conduct. Faith is the consent of the will to Christ as Master and Lord. It is the deliberate acceptance of His personal dominion over life; and the natural expression, of course, is obedience. The man of faith does not stop with imitating Christ; he obeys Him, and he believes in His authority for the sake of those aspects of His personality, which man cannot imitate.

These elements of belief, trust and obedience are always present in the act of faith; but they are not necessarily distinct in operation. Faith itself is one and simple; it unites man's fundamental needs to the purpose of God in Christ in such a way as to make the divine power effective in the individual experience.

And it is from this point of view that we can realise the finality of Christianity. Man consciously or unconsciously believes in power; the modern world appreciates power in all directions, notably in the spiritual realm. But power is

causal; it works in history and produces events. The supreme evidence of divine power in this world lies in the historic significance of Jesus Christ; that power is communicated through faith in the gospel, and works itself out in vivid expressions of peace, purity and freedom in individual life. What more then can we want of finality than this? If our needs are the same as those of past ages, and the gospel is the same historically, what more can we require than a revival of faith in this historic dynamic?

The supreme need of the time is a disposition to believe in Jesus Christ. The only practical way of testing the efficiency of Christianity is to try it. If we defer belief until we have scientific certainty of the truth of all its propositions, we shall of course remain unbelievers. If, on the contrary, however, we recognise the fact that Christianity appeals to the whole man, not simply to his intelligence but also to the heart and the will, then we shall be disposed to act as if it were true, and the result will be the conviction that it is true. The real question, after all, is as Browning puts it:

" 'What think ye of Christ,' friend? when all's done and said.
Like you this Christianity or not?
It may be false, but will you wish it true?
Has it your vote to be so, if it can?" [5]

[5] "Bishop Blougram's Apology."

The New Testament is full of such appeals. Faith begins with the willingness to venture on Christ's bare word. Consent with the will and you will be able to assent with the mind. Truth and obedience walk together, and the fruit of both is trust. The man who is willing to act as if historic Christianity were true will be able eventually to appeal to the facts of his life against whatever objections of a speculative kind that may be urged against it, because the disposition to obey Christ always enlarges the experience that faith begins. Religious experience has two sides; it is partly human and partly divine. The human aspect is concerned with facts, beliefs, and actions, with developed principles and convictions. The divine aspect has to do with a regenerating dynamic, working into our lives, beneath the threshold of consciousness, certain spiritual potencies. The problem of religious growth turns on how religious beliefs are to be related to these sub-conscious potencies in such a way as to develop them into conscious activities. We make this important connection through faith. We assent to certain religious truths, we begin religious experience by consenting to act on them, and obedience calls up the divinely given potencies from below the threshold of consciousness, and they become conscious

energies expressing themselves in character and behaviour.

Such is the simple but effective way one may become experimentally acquainted with the Divine Reality which has been the object of every religious quest, and which in the dynamic Personality of Jesus Christ has adequately and finally made known its redemptive significance to a world in need of peace.

The conclusion to which I wish this book to point concerns itself with the present duty of the Christian Church. That duty I conceive to be a very simple one. The modern church has many opportunities of directing and controlling the by-products of Christianity; it is important that it endeavour to understand what these opportunities are and do its full share in their realisation; but it must not allow itself to be diverted from its main business; neither must it permit this age to forget what that business is. The fundamental duty of the Church is an adequate presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Unquestionably an adequate presentation would include its application to the social problems of the age; but there is a deeper aspect, fundamental to all the rest. I mean its dynamic significance. The present age is intensely interested in power; it sees power working in visible ways. It will eagerly believe

in spiritual power when it finds the church actively engaged in a passionate advocacy of the claims of Jesus Christ. The time is sick of judges and amiable religious philosophers, and is eager for the voice of the advocate. The gospel must be preached with a tremendous confidence in its efficiency and finality, but in order to do this we must know what the gospel is. Especially must we appreciate its causal significance. The church must instruct its members in the functional aspect of doctrines; it must explain the operation of the Christian dynamic in such a way as to put behind the faith of the individual the courage of rich and deep conviction. Our business in this life is not simply to hold or enjoy a faith, but to propagate a faith; and faith can be propagated only when it is supported by ideas. The ideas of faith are expressed in its doctrines, the functional interpretations of the historic power in which faith centres. Ideas are the hooks of faith which attach themselves to the world's intelligence; they are the barbs of faith which goad the world towards a spiritual experience. We need a revival of the sort of radical thinking that goes down to the roots; and the deeper one goes into human history the profounder grows the conviction of the reality of Christianity. The weakness of present day religion lies in superficial opinions; its

real strength is in deep convictions; but deep convictions are impossible without root thinking, and root thinking is radical thinking in the best sense of that term.

Christianity was conceived in the open—the thing was not done in a corner—and the church has nothing to fear from honest investigation. On the contrary, it must answer the characteristic demand of the age for evidence of its dynamic significance, and that answer I believe lies in an adequate presentation of historic Christianity.

The twentieth century is as ready for a gospel of power as the first century was; and when we advocate that gospel with the intellectual vigour, passionate conviction and constructive energy which characterised that age; when we can give convincing evidence of its power in our own experience; above all, when we can prove the loyalty of our lives to the Lord of Glory by an enthusiastic personal service of the world's spiritual needs, we shall again see the Christian Dynamic functioning in history, as it did when first it illuminated the darkness and transformed the life of the ancient world.

INDEX

INDEX

A

B

D

E

F

N

O

P

Q

R

S