

I. *The Return to Biblical Orthodoxy*

The date given for the beginning of the demise of liberal theology and for its replacement by Biblical theology is 1933. This may seem the less arbitrary when it is remembered that Karl Barth's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* appeared in the English translation by Clement Hoskyns in 1933. That event signalizes the impact on British theology of both Europe's greatest twentieth century theologian and a great English Biblical scholar. Barth was then described variously as a theologian of crisis, a dialectical theologian, and as the theologian of the Word of God. Barth was a Protestant, while his translator, Hoskyns, was an Anglican High Churchman with a deep attachment to Catholic order. Yet both were inveterate foes of any attempt to subordinate the revelation of the living God to the philosophical, scientific, or cultural demands of the spirit of the age. Each in his way was concerned to reprimarize the Biblical categories.

Barth's Commentary on Romans waged war upon evolutionary conceptions of the Kingdom of God (that favorite example of liberal doctrinal accommodation), claiming: "Whenever men claim to be able to see the Kingdom of God as a growing organism, or—to describe it more suitably—as a growing building, what they see is not the Kingdom of God but the Tower of Babel."² The Divine revelation was not accommodating, nor superficially comforting, but cruelly critical of man's egotism. Hence, thundered Barth, "Religion, when it attacks vigorously, when it is fraught with disturbance, when it is non-aesthetic, non-rhetorical, non-pious, when it is the religion of the 39th Psalm, of Job, and of Luther, and of Kierkegaard, when it is the religion of Paul, bitterly protests against every attempt to make of its grim earnestness some trivial and harmless thing." On the contrary, "Religion is aware that it is in no wise the crown and fulfilment of true humanity; it knows itself rather to be a questionable, disturbing, dangerous thing."³ Barth emphasized, with Sören Kierkegaard,⁴ the infinite qualitative difference between God and man. Hence "the Gospel is not a truth among other truths. Rather it sets a

² *Commentary* . . . , p. 432. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

⁴ The first English book on Kierkegaard was Dr. E. L. Allen's *Kierkegaard, His Life and Thought*. Existentialism was mediated also by Martin Buber's important *I and Thou* which had a profound influence on H. H. Farmer's thought, and also through a recovery of Pascal and Kierkegaard. See Denzil Patrick's *Pascal and Kierkegaard*. The *Life* by Walter Lowrie and his translations and those of his colleagues made Kierkegaard available to the English-speaking world.

CHAPTER V

THE LATER DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGY (1933-1965)

IN THE first thirty years of this century theology, with the exception of the exponents of mysticism and the incarnation-alists, tended to weaken the role of worship in the life of the Church. In fact, the proponents of immanentism and of the social gospel virtually equated religion with social duty. In contrast, the theology of the next thirty years strongly supported the centrality of worship in the corporate life of Christians.

It was certainly the case with the first three of the four trends in theology, though dubiously so for the fourth. Successively, these trends were: the return to a Biblical theology which brought with it a revival of orthodoxy in belief; the new ecclesiology which insisted that the Church, far from being a convenience of organization, was part of the gift of the Gospel; and the search for a distinctively Christian Sociology deriving from the incarnational and sacramental nature of the Church. The fourth, and most recent, trend of theology, Cambridge Radicalism, represents the fusion of Bultmann, Bonhoeffer, Tillich, and Freud as filtered through English minds. In its prophetic and critical emphasis it is likelier to stimulate preaching than sacramentalism, but it is significant that all its exponents are Anglicans (and most are clergymen), and they are likelier to demand the reformation of worship than its abolition. The first three theological trends, however, being clearly based upon the uniqueness of the Christian revelation as proclaimed in Word and Sacrament, manifestly strengthened the Liturgical Movement in our time.

¹ There appears to be no comprehensive published account of the interconfessional development of English theology from 1933. Limited help is, however, provided by the following volumes. A good account of Anglican theology up to 1939 only is Archbishop A. M. Ramsey's *From Gore to Temple*. E. L. Allen provides two useful chapters on British theology up to 1950 in G. Stephens Spinks' *Religion in Britain since 1900*. John W. Grant's *Free Churchmanship in England* provides a good account of British Free Church theology until about 1948. John Macquarrie's *Twentieth Century Religious Thought* is an admirable survey of European philosophical and religious thought, but gives little space to British theology. Daniel D. Williams' *What Present-day Theologians are Thinking* treats British theologians, both Anglican and Free Church, with great insight, but too briefly for our purpose. A valuable study is J. K. Mozley, *Some Tendencies in British Theology, From the Publication of "Lux Mundi" to the Present Day*.

question-mark against all truths.⁵ Like Kierkegaard, too, Barth affirmed that faith was existential commitment, and spoke in paradoxes: "for all it is a leap into the void. And it is possible for all, only because it is equally impossible."⁶

The almost forgotten or, at the least, diluted, Biblical terms of Grace and Sin, Justification, Forgiveness, and Resurrection, were interpreted dynamically by Barth. Sin was defined as "that interchanging of God and man, that exalting of men to divinity and depressing of God to humanity, by which we seek to justify and fortify and establish ourselves."⁷ "Grace, however, is the fact of forgiveness."⁸ Moreover, Grace is not given without a prior judgment of God. Thus "Grace is not grace, if he that receives it is not under judgment. Righteousness is not righteousness if it be not reckoned to the sinner. Life is not life, if it be not life from death. And God is not God, if he be not the End of men."⁹ The sole hope for trapped man is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ: "We have seen the old world as a completely closed circle from which we have no means of escape. But, because we have perceived this, we are able to recognize—in the light of the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead—the power and meaning of the Coming Day: the Day of the New World and of the New Man."¹⁰ Here was the return to a strongly Biblical theology, speaking with the existential concern of a Luther and with the magisterial authority of Calvin. "Theology," claimed Barth, "is *ministerium verbi divini*. It is nothing more or less."¹¹ In Barth's favourite illustration the theologian was like John the Baptist in Grünewald's painting of the Crucifixion, pointing an elongated finger to God the Transcendent in his ineffable majesty. Barth's is a theology of *Krisis* because every human achievement stands under the judgment of God and the Church itself is in constant need of reformation. It is a dialectical theology because it says *Nein* to all attempts to solve human problems apart from God, Creator, Judge, and Redeemer.

Barth's theology did not receive an immediate welcome, and his impact on English theology was never widespread. His paradoxes sounded strange in English ears. His re-assertion of Biblical truth was sometimes misinterpreted as a neo-fundamentalism. His Theology of the Word was thought to be merely the rejuvenescence

⁵ *Commentary* . . . , p. 35.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, preface, p. x. The *Römerbrief*, it is interesting to note, has nine references to Luther, five to Calvin, and nineteen to Dostoevsky, as well as seven to Nietzsche and two to Feuerbach.

of Calvinism, though he did not affirm the doctrine of double predestination, and his later exposition of election has strong universalistic overtones. The more serious objections to his earlier theology, however, were his denial of the validity of any natural theology and hence the restriction of revelation to Holy Scripture, and his apparent denigration of man below the level of responsible personality. Nor was there a serious attempt on the part of his critics to follow the brilliant development of his thought in the lengthy volumes of *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*. But even when Barth's theology was more congenially filtered for English readers through the writings of Emil Brunner, it gave a strong propulsion to the emergence of a Biblical theology in England.

This was provided chiefly by New Testament scholars, of whom the most significant were Sir Edwyn Clement Hoskyns and Professor C. H. Dodd. Both reacted strongly against the futurist eschatology of liberalism which had sometimes been indistinguishable from a future utopia to be brought into being by men. They substituted a "fulfilled" eschatology (the term of Hoskyns) or a "realized" eschatology (in the terminology of Dodd). By this, they meant that the Kingdom of God had been inaugurated by the teaching, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in whom God's new day had dawned.

Hoskyns (1884-1937) had begun a new era in English studies of the New Testament by his brilliant essay, "The Christ of the Synoptic Gospels," in *Essays Catholic and Critical*, edited by E. G. Selwyn (1926). This he followed up with an essay on "Jesus the Messiah" in *Mysterium Christi*, edited by Deissmann and Bell (1930), and *The Riddle of the New Testament* (1931), written in collaboration with F. N. Davey, his pupil at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He also left two posthumously published works: the important study, *The Fourth Gospel*, and the volume of *Cambridge Sermons* (1938).

Hoskyns argued in "The Christ of the Synoptic Gospels" that the Gospels were the sacred writings of the infant Christian community; he employed the technique of "Form criticism" to undo the damage created by historical criticism which, as Schweitzer said, had left the reader with "only a tattered copy of the Gospel of Saint Mark" in his hand. The New Testament Epistles were, on this approach, the records connected with the process of building the religious community, and the Gospels should be read in the light of the Epistles, rather than the other and customary way

round. The Cross and the Resurrection was the double event that gave them shape. The supernatural element was at least as primitive as the moral element, concluded Hoskyns, and hence "exclusiveness . . . may have its origin in the teaching of Jesus rather than in the theology of St. Paul."¹² His conclusions in this study were revolutionary and warrant extensive citation:

"From this reconstruction it will be seen at once that a whole series of contrasts underlies the Synoptic tradition. . . . The contrast is not between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, but between the Christ humiliated and the Christ returning in glory. . . . The contrast is not between a reformed and an unreformed Judaism, but between Judaism and the new supernatural order by which it is at once destroyed and fulfilled: not between the disciples of a Jewish prophet and an ecclesiastically ordered sacramental cultus, but between the disciples of Jesus, who, though translated into the sovereignty of God, are as yet ignorant both of His claims and the significance of their own conversion, and the same disciples, initiated into the mystery of His person and of His life and death, leading the mission to the world, the patriarchs of the new Israel of God. The contrast is not between an ethical teaching and a dreamy eschatology, or between a generous humanitarianism and an emotional religious experience stimulated by mythological beliefs, but between a supernatural order characterized by a radical moral purification involving persistent moral conflict and the endurance of persecution, and a supernatural order in which there is no place either for moral conflict or for persecution."¹³ Clearly the Bible and the Church belonged together and Hoskyns had reinterpreted their relevance with new vigour.

More quietly than Barth, but with equal conviction, Hoskyns was preaching to his Corpus Christi students in Cambridge a Christo-centric faith founded on Christ as the inaugurator of God's new regime. In 1926 and 1927 he proclaimed Christ as the fulfilment of the promises of God. He thought it a woeful misunderstanding to conceive of Christianity as awaiting a catastrophe which will overwhelm the present world and usher in the Kingdom of God. "To be a Christian is, rather, the recognition that the great catastrophe lies in the past, that God has acted and is acting energetically, that righteousness has been attained by men and women and is attainable by us through the grace of God."¹⁴

¹² *Essays Catholic and Critical*, p. 169.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 177-78. ¹⁴ *Cambridge Sermons*, p. 27.

Christian discipleship involves, not dreaming, but "plunging head first into the Christian faith and fellowship, believing that the Ecclesia of God is the visible expression in the world of His love and His mercy."¹⁵

While Hoskyns acknowledged the importance of believing in the role of God in the long history of the human race and in the ordering of Nature, yet "far more important than this is the belief that God acts catastrophically in human affairs, that He works miracles, that men are transformed from sin to righteousness, that prayer calls for an act of God, that it does not merely effect an adaptation to the laws of nature. The God of the Christian religion is a God of miracles."¹⁶ Eschatology, in the view of Hoskyns, exposes, as with a lightning flash, the simplicity of ultimate beliefs, for it "crudely and ruthlessly sweeps away all our little moral busyness, strips us naked of worldly possessions and worldly entanglements, and asks what survives the catastrophe. It is only then that the ultimate moral duties stand alone in their luminous simplicity: Love of God, and Charity to those who, like us, are bereft of that in which they have confidently trusted."¹⁷

The bracing vigour of Barth's and Hoskyns' Biblical theology can be understood only if we recall the background of European totalitarianism (Nazi, Fascist, and Communist), in which human leaders were claiming an allegiance which belongs only to God, and if we also remember that this theology was making a counter-claim for Christ. This is why Hoskyns preached in these words: "The Church and theology know that they can only sing the glory of God over their own graves and at the place where they have died. . . . And can you wonder that those who know this secret tremble when they see scientists, economists, psychologists, Hitlerites, leaders of the Group Movement, Communists, and all those other confident advisers of men marching with flags flying into the abyss where the Church has already stumbled and fallen?— can you wonder that the Church lifts up its tired, weary warning against human *v̄βρως*, arrogance?"¹⁸ Like a prophet Hoskyns gives this final warning: "Once again, my brothers in Christ, may I warn you that, as Christians and as men, you are moving along a path narrow and sharp as the edge of a razor, for on one side of you lies the blasphemy of human idolatry, and on the other side yawns the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 147-48. For two studies of the Biblical revival, see William Neil, *The Rediscovery of the Bible* and J. E. Fison, *The Faith of the Bible*.

chasm of detachment and cynical aloofness. Between the two walked the Christ.¹⁹ Biblical theology was clearly the iron-ration of the Christian soldier for Hoskyns. And this theology of fulfilled eschatology called the Christian from the balcony view of life into the blood and dust of commitment in the arena, as Barth's theology was to summon the German Confessional Church into being at the Synod of Barmen. In each theologian it was clearly a case of "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve!" The trumpets of liberalism had been muted; those of Biblical orthodoxy gave forth no uncertain sound.

What Hoskyns was accomplishing as an Anglican, Professor C. H. Dodd was achieving as a Free Churchman, and he was later to be assisted by the work of T. W. Manson, R. Newton Flew, and Vincent Taylor. Dodd's *Apostolic Preaching* of 1936 distinguished the basic pattern of apostolic preaching as the *heilsgeschichte*, or history of salvation, the proclamation of the mighty acts of God, as contrasted with moral instruction. The early Christian sermon was *kerygma*, a proclaiming of the Gospel, as contrasted with topical or hortatory preaching which "is teaching, or exhortation (*paraklesis*), or it is what they called *Homilia*, that is, the more or less informal discussion of various aspects of Christian life and thought, addressed to a congregation already established in the faith."²⁰ The primitive Church was both the creation and the verification of the proclamation of the mighty acts of God: "The primitive Church, in proclaiming its Gospel to the world, offered its own fellowship and experience as the realization of the Gospel. That is the essence of the matter."²¹ Thus the Church was created by the proclamation that Jesus Christ crucified was the Messiah of God, as vindicated by the Resurrection, and the Spirit-filled Community—the new Israel of God—in His Name now offered to baptize all who repented of their sins and desired to share their worship and witness to God's new age. Here, again, was a Biblical theology which stressed the interdependence of the Gospel and the Church.

What the New Testament scholars were teaching was soon reflected in the thought of the theologians. A notable restatement of the faith in terms of orthodoxy, on the part of a former distinguished liberal, was Dr. Nathaniel Micklem's *What is the Faith?* (1936). He argued that the Faith is not to be defined by ration-

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

²⁰ *Apostolic Preaching*, p. 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

alism for "the Christian faith is what it is, not what any modern rationalist may like to think it ought to be."²² Nor is the Faith to be defined in terms of experience, for this assumes "the Christian faith is what I happen to believe."²³ The Incarnation is pivotal, for it is "the recognition that, in Jesus Christ, God has in some way condescended to our low estate and come amongst us."²⁴ The Trinity is the "only all-comprehensive Christian dogma."²⁵ He maintained that Protestants should realize that the Blessed Virgin "might be regarded as the patron saint of the Protestant Confession," as the prototype of humble faith.²⁶ After a discussion of Adoptianist and Kenoticist Christological doctrines, Dr. Micklem decided in favour of the classical Chalcedonian doctrine of the two natures, human and divine. It is also significant that this theological reevaluation by a Congregationalist included, as its eleventh chapter, a consideration of "The Church Catholic and Apostolic." Two other events in the life of Dr. Micklem provide surprising evidence of the power of orthodoxy in a Nonconformist theologian. The first is that Dr. Micklem, as Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, regularly lectured on the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas from the Latin text, and the second, that he was invited by Dr. William Temple, when the latter was Archbishop of Canterbury, to write a Lenten book, which was issued as *The Doctrine of our Redemption*.

It might be supposed that the Free Churches would be readier than Anglicans to devote themselves to the study of a genuinely Biblical theology, since their roots were in the Reformation according to the Word of God, whereas the Anglicans since the days of the Venerable Hooker had insisted that their authority was the three-fold cord of Scripture, Tradition, and right Reason. This supposition would, however, be untrue. Not only the work of Hoskyns, but also the important Biblical and theological studies of Father A. G. Hebert²⁷ of Kelham and of Father Lionel Thornton of the Community of the Resurrection,²⁸ are a standing refutation of this view. In fact, the theological faculties at Oxford and Cambridge included many unusually competent Anglican Biblical

²² *What is the Faith?*, pp. 31-32.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

²⁷ Notably his typological study, *The Throne of David and Fundamentalism and the Church of God*.

²⁸ Notably the series of studies which includes *The Common Life in the Body of Christ, Revelation and the Modern World, The Dominion of Christ, and Christ and the Church*.

scholars, among whom would have to be included Dr. J. A. T. Robinson,²⁹ before he became Bishop of Woolwich.

The return to orthodoxy took many forms, all witnessing to the inadequacy of liberalism's attempt to accommodate revelation and churchmanship to contemporary culture. The Roman Catholics, after the expulsion of Modernism from their midst, naturally turned for inspiration to the massive synthesis of philosophy and revelation of St. Thomas Aquinas. In this they were supported by the *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XII and the *Doctoris Angelici* of Pius X, as well as by the *Studiorum Duem* of Pius XI (1923), confirming the primacy of that Doctor of the Church for Christian theology. Maritain and Gilson, the leading French neo-Thomists, concerned themselves with the tragic disunity of modern society which they diagnosed as due to a lack of direction through the divorce of the natural from the supernatural. Their slogan was, in effect, "Back to Thomas Aquinas and from Thomas forward." Widely read in England, they believed that philosophy and art, as well as social justice, had flourished best and could only flourish as the allies of religion. They believed that the Christian faith, with the backing of the Roman Catholic Church, alone provided a world-view in which all these cultural and social activities now atomized could be united, a collectivist ethics such as the times called for, and a source for progress. In England the leading neo-Thomist was the historian Christopher Dawson. But neo-Thomism also appealed to certain Anglican philosophers, notably Austin Farrer and E. L. Mascall, though each was a theologian of considerable independence.

The English Methodists returned to Biblical orthodoxy in part by the rediscovery of Luther's Gospel of Grace, and appropriately so, for John Wesley's heart was strangely warmed by the proclamation of justification by faith through grace when an unknown person read out Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans in the Aldersgate Society Meeting on what is now regarded as the Methodist Red-letter Day. Luther's stance *coram Deo* was finely recovered in Philip S. Watson's *Let God be God*, as also in Gordon Rupp's *The Righteousness of God*, and a theocentric theology expelled any lingering traces of anthropocentricism among the younger Methodist theologians.

Among both Congregationalists and Baptists there was a return

to their Calvinist heritage. This "Genevan revival"³⁰ of the Reformed tradition was strong in Congregationalism because the liberalism against which it reacted had been extreme in this denomination. The leaders of this new trend were Dr. Nathaniel Micklem (formerly Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford), Dr. J. S. Whale (formerly President of Cheshunt College, Cambridge), and the late Bernard Manning, Senior Tutor of Jesus College, Cambridge.

Dr. Micklem, as Chairman of the Friends of Reunion, was particularly successful in mediating to the Free Churches the devotional heritage of the Universal Church, and appropriately was the editor of *Christian Worship*³¹ (1936), while his *A Book of Personal Religion* (1938) showed the continuity of the evangelical tradition in devotion in Bunyan, Calvin, Doddridge, John Newton, Isaac Watts, John Knox, Richard Baxter, and Matthew Henry. Dr. Whale stressed the links of Congregationalism with the Continental Reformed tradition in his chapter on ecclesiology in *Christian Doctrine* (1941), and more fully in *The Protestant Tradition* (1955) which is an admirable assessal of Luther's rediscovery of the Gospel and Calvin's recovery of Churchmanship and discipline. B. L. Manning exhibited the continuity of the Reformed tradition in English Nonconformity with great distinction, in his *Essays in Orthodox Dissent* (1939), in which he showed conclusively that Nonconformists were orthodox in doctrine but dissenters only in churchmanship, refusing any Erastianism that would have compromised their freedom to obey the Gospel. He also wrote *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts* (1942) to demonstrate that the Free Churches sang their orthodox divinity, even if they did not recite it in creeds or confessions. All three insisted in season and out of season that Genevan churchmanship was founded upon the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, which were not to be divided, any more than Gospel and Church were to be divided. This is superbly expressed in Dr. Whale's ecclesiology:

"Christians have never known the Church as a society of man's contriving, and expression of human idealism like a mutual improvement society or a club for recreation, fellowship and goodwill, with the minister of the Word and Sacraments as its competent and salaried secretary. Christians know the Church evangelical and catholic as the sacred gift of God, which no merely naturalistic or evolutionary categories can explain; it is a wonderful and sacred

²⁹ The term of John W. Grant in *Free Churchmanship in England*, p. 330.

³¹ This book is considered in Chap. x *infra*.

mystery, the great company of the elect of God stretching beyond the sight of any man across the centuries and the continents; the host of the living God sharing His very life in all places and in all ages, on earth and in heaven; the Church which God loved, Christ purchased, and the Holy Ghost sanctified, and which Christ will present to Himself a glorious Church.³²

The new insights in Reformed theology and churchmanship were popularized in a series of "Forward Books" under the general editorship of Dr. John Marsh, as well as in the regular meetings of the Congregational "Church Order" Group. Other Congregational theologians who took their Genevan heritage with the utmost seriousness were Principals H. F. Lovell Cocks, H. Cunliffe-Jones, and John Huxtable, and two younger scholars, Daniel T. Jenkins³³ and W. A. Whitehouse.

Among the Baptists, Principals H. Wheeler Robinson, the distinguished Old Testament scholar, and A. C. Underwood, and Dr. Ernest A. Payne,³⁴ were also protagonists of an orthodox theology combined with Genevan churchmanship. R. C. Walton represented the same trend in the younger generation in *The Gathered Community* (1946). Neville Clark,³⁵ a young Baptist minister, devoted himself to the task of mediating the Catholic tradition in worship to his denomination.

It was not too much to say that the return to Biblical orthodoxy in England meant the recovery of the Church's soul. The authority of the Biblical revelation, which was both doctrine and life, replaced the uncertainties of human ideals and experiences. The Bible became the source, not the confirmation of religious experience. Theology stressed the objectivity of the Divine deeds for the salvation of the human race. Man learned that the tragedy of his inner civil war was not due to mere ignorance so much as to a Titanism that was the product of human arrogance and self-sufficiency, manifested in rebellion. In the humility of faith, learned after the Divine judgment in history and in the self, God's grace proved effectual for his renovation. His maturation in Christian faith and witness was accomplished in worship, through the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. His view of life was no longer to be that of

³² *What is a Living Church?*, p. 28f.

³³ See *The Nature of Catholicity, Tradition and the Spirit, and Congregationalism*.

³⁴ See his *The Fellowship of Believers* and *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England*.

³⁵ See *The Call to Worship*.

the bystander, but one of commitment in Christ's mystical Body the Church. Biblical theologians had learned in T. S. Eliot's words that "the way forward is the way back."³⁶

A proof of the important impact of the return to orthodoxy in doctrine was that it was far from being the concern only of professional theologians or ministers of religion. This movement caught the imagination of lay apologists for Christianity, among them some of the most distinguished literary figures of the day.

G. K. Chesterton gained a widespread hearing for the traditional Christian faith in his witty essays in *Orthodoxy* and *Heretics*, while *The Everlasting Man* was a devastating polemic against the evolutionary concept which formed the credo of the secularist. Dorothy L. Sayers wrote an intriguing exposition and defence of orthodoxy in her brilliant pamphlet, *The Greatest Drama ever Staged*, and expounded Christian morality in another entitled *The Other Six Deadly Sins*. Her longer book, *The Mind of the Maker*, was an admirable study of the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and of Creation, illustrated from the consideration of artistic creativity. Her *Zeal of Thy House*, written for the Canterbury Festival, was a convincing account of the nature of pride. Her radio cycle, *The Man born to be King* (1953), which is presented by the British Broadcasting Corporation annually, may well be considered the most successful public presentation of the relevance of the Christian drama of salvation in our time.

Another exceedingly successful apologist and Oxford don, also a lecturer in English literature, was Clive Staples Lewis. His most successful broadcast talks were published as *Mere Christianity*, while *The Problem of Pain* and *Miracles* provided answers to the major problems of belief. *The Screwtape Letters* are an exceedingly ingenious imaginative attempt to show the subtlety and demonic nature of evil. Charles Williams, though less well known, was a poet and novelist whose work was a manifestation of traditional theological insights, and whose Oxford lectures on Milton were hammer blows against secularism. He succeeded in making the Christian virtue of chastity exciting,³⁷ and he also wrote a most perceptive history of the Christian Church, in terms of the attractions of orthodoxy and heresy, entitled *The Descent of the Dove* (1949).

³⁶ *The Four Quartets: The Dry Salvages*, III, line 6.

³⁷ See his essay on *Comus*, republished as the introduction to the World's Classics edition of *The English Poems of John Milton*.

The most impressive of the poets, Thomas Stearns Eliot, became a convinced Anglo-Catholic, and his theological insights were subtly expressed in *Ash Wednesday*, the *Ariel Poems*, and more directly in the play, *Murder in the Cathedral*, and in his apologetics, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939). He presented Christianity by indirection in the plays, *The Family Reunion* and *The Cocktail Party*. Where Eliot led, other poets have followed—W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Norman Nicholson, Edwin Muir,⁸⁸ and Anne Ridler—in appropriating the Christian symbols in their verse.

All these rediscovered the enchantment of orthodoxy and the wonder of the historic Christian faith, communicating it in essays, myths, drama, and poetry.

2. *The Rediscovery of the Church*

The "Back to the Gospel" movement also turned out to be a "Back to the Church" movement. While the Church of England had rediscovered the apostolicity and catholicity of the Church in the Oxford Movement, it did not become fully aware of the worldwide scandal of disunity until its representatives participated in the Ecumenical Movement of the twentieth century, when the "Bridge Church" discovered that its mixed Protestant-Catholic heritage expressed in miniature the whole tension of a Christendom in schism. For the Free Churches which had customarily elevated the Gospel only to depreciate the Church, as a merely convenient organization readily adaptable to the differing demands of different centuries or cultures, the sense of the Church as itself a gift of God, along with the Gospel, was a new and at first a painful discovery.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of contemporary Church life is that the "Protestant" Churches are emphasizing that they really share in the Catholic character of the Body of Christ; and the "Catholic" Churches are finding that they must stress aspects of faith and worship for which Protestants stand.⁸⁹ But this situation has not merely happened, it has been prepared for by the cooperation of Protestants and Orthodox in the World Council of Churches, which was inaugurated at Amsterdam in 1948, and by the unpredictable liberal trends in the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholics. Much prejudice on each side of the ecclesiastical divide

⁸⁸ Muir deserves to be much better known. See *Collected Poems: 1921-1958* (1960), especially "The Transfiguration" and "The Killing."

⁸⁹ Daniel D. Williams, *What Present-Day Theologians are Thinking*, p. 152.

had to be overcome before the present *rapprochement* was reached. Moreover, on the Protestant side there were several conflicting conceptions of the nature of the Church. Some held the Pietist view that the true Church consisted of sincerely warmed hearts. Some held so strongly to the Calvinist view of the Church as the invisible number of the elect, and were so critical of the Catholic equation of the Kingdom of God with the Church, that they denied the need of a visible Church, exhibiting an apostolic continuity and a Catholic unity. Others, again, insisted on the local autonomy of the local congregation, as they stressed the importance of "gathered churches."

Inevitably the question arises: What were the forces which compelled the Protestants in general and Free Churchmen in particular to return to a more Catholic understanding of the Church? Undoubtedly, the primary influence was the ecumenical experience itself. The Free Churches, conscious of the scandal of reunion, had been engaged in closing their own ranks. In 1907 the Bible Christians, the Methodist New Connexion, and the United Methodist Free Church were all united. In 1932 the Primitive, the United, and the Wesleyan Methodist denominations were merged to form the Methodist Church. In 1929 the United Free Church joined the established Church of Scotland. Even more significant for the re-understanding of the nature and task of the Church of Christ were trans-denominational unions, such as the establishment of the United Church of Canada by the union of the Methodists, the Congregationalists, and a substantial number of the Presbyterians. Even more remarkable was the creation of the United Church of South India, after thirty years of maturation, which combined Anglicans, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians. Furthermore, the Anglican Church was making tentative approaches to the Free Churches, as in the famous Lambeth Quadrilateral proposals of 1920, and to the Roman Catholic Church at the Malines Conversations of 1921 and 1926. All these mergers, attempted or concluded, concentrated attention on the essential character of the Christian Church, and led to discussion of the *esse*, the *bene esse*, and latterly, the *plene esse* of the Church. Moreover, in such a volume as *The Ministry and the Sacraments* edited by Dunkerley and Headlam (1937), representatives of different traditions were learning how much they held in common on even the thorniest issues.

A second factor tending towards the rediscovery of the Church

was the conclusion of "Form criticism" that the attempt to reach a "Jesus of History" behind the primitive traditions was quite impossible, since the Gospels and the Epistles are missionary literature, not biography. On this view no distinction was possible between the words and actions of Jesus himself and what was produced by the faith of the Apostolic Church. Hoskyns, as we have seen, insisted that the Gospels must be viewed through the lens of the Epistles. A more radical form critic, Professor R. H. Lightfoot of Oxford, concluded: "For all the inestimable value of the Gospels, they yield us little more than a whisper of his voice; we trace in them but the outskirts of his ways. Only when we see him hereafter in his fulness shall we know him also as he was on earth."⁴⁰ If there would have been no Church apart from the Gospel, there would clearly be no Gospels apart from the Church. Therefore, Church and Gospel could not be separated.

Old Testament scholarship was also pointing in the same direction, as Dr. H. Wheeler Robinson and others drew attention to the importance of the concept of "corporate personality" for the Hebrews. According to Professor T. W. Manson, the "Son of Man" is a corporate figure. The Old Testament knew almost nothing of solitary religion, but only of God's covenanted people, or, in days of widespread apostasy, of the "faithful remnant." These were the Old Testament analogues of "the Body of Christ."

In the third place, the political lesson of the need for community was being bitterly learned in these years, as the conflict with totalitarianism let the democracies realize that freedom must be matened with social responsibility, and that any sound interpretation of freedom is based upon tradition and order. The very anxieties of the times called for an authoritative system of belief, a faith communally believed for which to live and to die, if necessary. The very defence of a civilization in time of war demands that its spiritual values shall be made plain, and this undoubtedly spurred the passing of the Butler Education Act of 1944, one of the provisions of which was to provide religious education in all the State-aided schools in Great Britain.

The most considerable attempt on the Anglican side to justify a Catholic form of Church order as required by the Gospel itself was Dr. A. M. Ramsey's *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*. Its underlying conviction was "that the meaning of the Christian Church becomes most clear when it is studied in terms of the

⁴⁰ *History and Interpretation of the Gospels*, p. 225.

Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ."⁴¹ The conclusion was reached that "the structure of the Catholic Church has great significance in the Gospel of God, and that Apostolic succession is important on account of its *evangelical* meaning."⁴² Ramsey declared that in the conception of the Church, not as an institution, but as the Body constituted by Christ's Passion and Resurrection, he hoped to see the reconciliation of the Catholic conception of an institution with Creeds, Sacraments, and Episcopacy (which seems legalistic) with the Protestant concept of a gift of the Gospel and justification by faith (which seems individualistic).

Ramsey utterly repudiated individual experience as an adequate norm for the Church, for "the faithful Christian will not draw attention to himself, as an interesting specimen of life in Christ, but dying to all interest in himself and his 'experience' he will focus attention upon the redeeming acts of Christ in history."⁴³ To insist upon the authority of an individual experience is to commit a double fault—to deny the adequacy of Christ's deeds and to isolate one's self from the redemptive community of the Church. "In later language, the Church is called 'Apostolic' (sent by the one Redeemer in the flesh), and 'Catholic' (living one universal life); and both notes of the Church are essential to its existence as expressing the Lord's death and resurrection, wherein its 'Holiness' consists."⁴⁴

The importance of the apostles, in Dr. Ramsey's view, is that they represent unity and continuity, "being sent by our Lord who Himself was sent by the Father, and declaring, in effect, 'He came, He died, He rose, we are sent and the Body is One.'"⁴⁵ "Apostolic succession" is understood in three ways. The succession of bishop to bishop secured a continuity of Christian teaching and tradition in every see. The bishops also succeeded the apostles in the sense that they performed the apostolic functions of preaching, ruling, and ordaining, and this is summed up by the bishop celebrating at the Eucharist, and interceding for his flock and family. Finally, "apostolic succession" is further used to signify "that grace is handed down from the Apostles through each generation of Bishops by the laying on of hands."⁴⁶ In the present the bishop sets forth the Gospel of God as the guardian of teaching, as performing the apostolic functions, and as "an organ in the one Body's continuous life in grace."⁴⁷

⁴¹ *The Gospel . . .*, p. vi.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. vii.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Denying the distinction made by Heiler in *Das Gebet*, which divides prayer into prophetic and mystical, Dr. Ramsey insists that in the New Testament prayer is *liturgical*. "It is the sharing by men in the one action of Christ, through their dying to their own egotisms as they are joined in the one Body with His death and resurrection."⁴⁸ The Liturgy, as the Ministry and the Creeds, all point to the Gospel and the Church.

The rest of the volume is a penetrating re-examination of Christian history, culminating in the conclusion: "Hence while Catholicism must face the issues of the Gospel and examine itself as to its Pelagianism, Protestantism must ask whether, after all, the historic Church order has not something to do with the Gospel of God. It will not deny its own experience, nor the power of its own ministries; it needs to own, in common with all Christendom the need for one Apostolate, as the organ of unity and continuity, to be made universal for all Christians. At present we are all incomplete: 'In him ye are all made full.'"⁴⁹

The ecumenical approach is all the more impressive because in the final chapter, "*Ecclesia Anglicana*," Dr. Ramsey criticizes three ways in which some Anglicans have obscured the Catholic meaning of Church Order, by the "Three Branch" theory which claims unity but rationalizes schism; by an Erastianism which regards the Church of England as the moral organ of the nation; and by the clericalist view of some Anglo-Catholics who have conceived the ministry as a channel of grace isolated from the life of the Body. This was an impressive Biblical and theological treatment of its theme, deserving of thorough consideration.

The most systematic analysis from the Free Church side of the meaning of Catholicity was the book of Daniel Jenkins, *The Nature of Catholicity* (1942). Jenkins recognizes that there must be both unity and continuity in the life of the Church, but he believes that the Church's Catholicity or wholeness is its fidelity to God's present, active and demanding Word in Jesus Christ. The foundation of the Church is Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Bible bears witness to the Word. The Bible is, indeed, the Church's book, but it holds before the Church that which stands over it in judgment and mercy, God's redemptive grace. It is not necessary for bishops to be guardians of the apostolic testimony, for "the Apostles themselves took care to ensure that we should

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

be left in no doubt as to the nature of their testimony. They left us the Holy Scriptures."⁵⁰

Jenkins does recognize, however, without any lessening of the authority of the Scriptures, that the creeds and traditions of the Catholic Church are also necessary: "the very fact that the Scriptures need exegesis demands such an authority and we can refuse to recognize it only by refusing to admit that the Spirit has been at work in the Church before us, that is, that the Church of our Fathers has been a true Church and our own Baptism a true Baptism."⁵¹ That there is a need for an apostolic ministry is not contested, but only that apostolicity can be guaranteed by any form of ministry. It is contended that it is the Gospel, as mediated and confirmed by the Holy Spirit, which guarantees the continuous life and therefore the unity of the Church, and therefore it cannot be authenticated by anything extraneous to itself.

Free Churchmen were urged to "take episcopacy into their system" by Archbishop Fisher in a Cambridge sermon of 1946, and many of them might be prepared to do so, since for reasons of history and geography this is the likeliest form of Church Order to win the approval of most of Christendom in a fully united Church. Some would concede that episcopacy is an excellent way of fulfilling the necessary function of *episcopo* or oversight in the Church. But since there have been heretical bishops and *episcopi vagantes* in history, they could not put their hands on their hearts and state that episcopacy has always guaranteed, to the faithful, continuity in apostolic faith and practice. How can it then be regarded as of the *esse* of the Church of Christ? B. L. Manning expressed this conviction with characteristic pungency: "It is with salvation by bishops, not government by bishops that we quarrel."⁵² For our purpose, to note that Free Churchmen were seriously considering the necessity of the Church as a gift along with the Gospel itself is perhaps more important than to be disturbed about the differences in the continuing debate on the essential form of Church order.

Nonetheless, the Anglican claims have forced the Free Churches to consider both the Biblical nature of the Church and the nature of Church order. Dr. R. Newton Flew and Rupert Davies, at the request of Archbishop Fisher, prepared an interesting and valuable report on *The Catholicity of Protestantism* (1950). They insisted,

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁵² *Church Union: The Next Step for Congregationalists*, p. 6.

after a close study of Luther and Calvin, that "it should now be sufficiently clear that belief in the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is integral to the faith of Protestantism. We believe that incorporation into the Church of Christ, the new Israel of God, is not an optional extra which can be dispensed with by those who possess a high degree of spirituality but takes place in the very act of personal faith in Christ."⁵³

The crux of the problem of the essential form of Church order is reached in the sixth chapter on "The Ministry and the Sacraments." Here they refer to the Anglican claim, as reasserted in the work *The Apostolic Ministry* edited by Bishop K. E. Kirk, that the "essential ministry" is the Apostolic Ministry, represented by the episcopate in the apostolical succession, as distinguished from all other ministry which is "dependent." They are satisfied that Professor T. W. Manson, the English Presbyterian scholar, has refuted the validity of this distinction between essential and dependent ministry. His words are: "There is one 'essential' ministry, the only ministry that is unchallengeably essential. That is the ministry which the Lord Jesus Christ opened in Galilee after John the Baptist had been put in prison, the ministry which He carried on in Galilee and Judaea, the ministry which He continues to this day in and through the Church, which is His Body. . . . It is in virtue of this presence that it is possible to call the Church the Body of Christ."⁵⁴

Thus, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the ministry of the Apostles themselves is derivative and dependent. The Apostles were in no sense the "plenipotentiaries" (much play was made by Dr. Kirk's associates with the term *shaliach*,⁵⁵ translated "plenipotentiary"); Christ is God's plenipotentiary and the Holy Spirit sent by Christ is His plenipotentiary. Flew and Davies conclude: "To speak of anyone else, or any body of men, as the plenipotentiary of Christ is not only false but blasphemous; for it is virtually to deny, or at least to discount, the continuous activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church."⁵⁶

Hitherto consideration has been limited to the more problematical aspects of the doctrine of the Church; it is now appropriate

⁵³ P. 91.

⁵⁴ Bishop R. R. Williams in *Authority in the Apostolic Age*, p. 139, wrote: "It is hard to believe that the very basis of the Church's life—the 'Essential Ministry,' as Kirk calls it—can be established only by a prolonged and finally ambiguous argument among Rabbinic and Patristic scholars."

⁵⁵ *The Catholicity of Protestantism*, p. 105.

to turn to the more positive aspects as exemplified in the studies of a Free Churchman, Dr. Newton Flew, and of an Anglican, Dr. F. W. Dillistone.

Newton Flew's important study was entitled *Jesus and His Church, A Study of the Idea of the Ecclesia in the New Testament* (1938, second edition, 1943). Five main arguments are supplied for the assertion that Jesus intended to found a Church.⁵⁷ Jesus directed His preaching to the re-constitution of Israel in view of the advent of God's rule, and the "little flock" which He addresses is the New Israel. The ethical teaching of Jesus can be rightly understood only as directed to this nucleus of the New Israel, and as involving a promise of God's power to enable the disciples to translate the teaching into life; thus the ethical teaching points forward to the gift of the Holy Spirit promised for the Last Days. The very concept of Messiahship, especially as employed by Jesus, implies the gathering of a New Community. The terms "Gospel" or "Word" or "Mystery" employed in the preaching of Jesus refer to the entity which is constitutive of the New Community. (Those who receive the divine "Word" know it as "good news"; for those who reject it, it is a "Mystery" not yet revealed; and the "Gospel" includes the idea of the New Covenant to be established with the newly constituted People of God.) Finally, the Mission of the New Community is declared when Jesus sends forth His disciples. Thus, Flew establishes that the New Community, Ecclesia, or Church, was an original part of the Gospel, and lays to rest the older view that Paul was the real founder of the Church who complicated and institutionalized the "simple" ethical teaching of a Galilean prophet.

Moreover, the Sacraments are seen by Flew to be essential ordinances of the Church. He maintains that there were three decisive moments in the actions of Christ in constituting the Ecclesia. These were: the calling and instruction of the disciples; commissioning them to proclaim the good news that the new era had dawned in both word and deed; and, at the Last Supper, the institution of the new covenant with the disciples as representing the New People of God.

Flew arrives at four conclusions about the nature of the Church. "1. It is God's own creation. . . . The Ecclesia of God is the People of God, with a continuous life which goes back through the history

⁵⁷ These are conveniently summarized in the second edition on p. 14 of the Introduction.

of Israel . . . to Abraham . . . to the purpose of God before the world began."⁵⁸ "In the second place, the Word of God which called the Church into being has been verified in human experience. . . . The Church . . . has been constituted through the work of the Incarnate Word of God, by sharing in the Spirit, the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments."⁵⁹ Finally, "the principle of authority in the New Testament Church is closely connected with the Word."⁶⁰ His point here is that the Apostles were such only as they were eyewitnesses of the Word and witnesses to the Resurrection, and the implication follows that, important as Church order is, it is not as important as the faith.

Among Free Churchmen the acceptance of the authority of a historical Gospel has led to a renewed consideration of the authority of the Church, as God's on-going community of redemption. The Sacraments are no longer regarded as moving spiritual experiences, but as seals of the covenant of promise. The ministry is not a means of self-expression for spiritual philosophers or social reformers, but it is acknowledged unequivocally as "of the Word and Sacraments."⁶¹

One of the most helpful ecumenical attempts to see the complementary character of the differences between Catholic and Protestant conceptions of the Church is F. W. Dillistone's *The Structure of the Divine Society* (1951). In an exceedingly fresh and clear-sighted survey of church history Dillistone isolates six main types of Christian community. The first three of them are Catholic conceptions: the monastic, the imperial, and the organic. The next three are Protestant: the covenantal, the contractual, and the sectarian. Both the monastic and the sectarian types are regarded as tangential to the main concern. The imperial and the contractual concepts are criticized as too static, in that they have become prematurely rigid in their historical formation. The organic and covenantal types, however, are more dynamic, and bear within themselves a vital principle for the on-going life of the Church. Dillistone regards them as the essential types of Catholic and Protestant churchmanship.

The organic conception of the Catholics stresses the common life of Christians in the Body of Christ. It emphasizes the social character of existence. We are born into a family and nation and

⁵⁸ *Jesus and His Church* . . . , p. 181.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁶¹ J. W. Grant, *Free Churchmanship in England, 1870-1940*, p. 397.

from these given relationships we receive the very possibility of personal identity and worth. So it is with our Christian life, for the Sacraments in Catholicism hallow the various stages of our life and are essentially social in character. The covenantal conception of Protestants emphasizes those relations into which we enter voluntarily through personal commitments to God and to one another as we look forward to some common purpose in the future. The organic concept implies that Christians are born, and the covenantal concept that Christians are made. Dillistone believes that both are valid analogies for interpreting the nature of the Church, and that the Christian Church can incorporate and reconcile them. The importance of his study is, indeed, to have recognized that these competitive concepts are ultimately complementary. He believes that "Heirs of the Covenant in One Body" is the most apt expression for the complementary view, since this unites the organic-ontological element with the covenantal-eschatological emphasis.⁶²

The thorough-going consideration of the nature of the Church in various reports of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, in which British representatives took part, and of the detailed contributions of individual Churchmen of different ecclesiastical traditions in England, is impossible within this limited space. But enough has been said to indicate that this is a very lively part of contemporary theological conversation, likely to become livelier with the new Catholic-Protestant dialogue. It is of the greatest importance that, despite continuing problems in the sphere of Church order, a considerable consensus has been arrived at between the once mutually suspicious Anglican and Free Church traditions, and this has been made possible by the return to a Biblical theology and by the ecumenical enterprise. On both sides of the divide, it is now recognized that the Church, far from being the club of the religious minded, or the moral uplift department of the nation, or the *ecclesioela* of the pietists, is the Body of Christ, founded by the Messiah through His sacrificial Death and Resurrection and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is commonly acknowledged that its life is fed by the Word and the Sacraments, and that its two-fold function is "to glorify God

⁶² This bald summary does not do justice to the complexity and criticisms of Dr. Dillistone's important monograph. A fuller study of Anglican ecclesiology would also have to consider the contributions of Lionel Thornton and E. L. Mascall on the High Church side and the work of F. J. Taylor and others on the Evangelical side. Brief reference to Abbot Christopher Butler's ecclesiology has been made in Chap. VII *infra*.

in adoration and sacrificial service.⁶³ It is also confessed that the Church must be Apostolic, continuing in the teaching and practice of the Apostles (though there are differences about the nature of the "Apostolic succession"), that it must be Holy, and there is a longing such as has not been felt for centuries that its Catholicity may be made visible and that thus may be fulfilled Christ's High-Priestly Prayer *ut omnes unum sint*.

No further proof of the new consensus on ecclesiology is needed than to cite the following statement from the Report, *Doctrine in the Church of England* (1938), with the assurance that it would be entirely acceptable to all the English Free Churches. The instrumental definition (on p. 112) reads: "The Church exists to worship God made known in Christ, and bears His commission in this world to bear witness to His Gospel, to bring all mankind within the membership, range, and fellowship of the redeemed Society, and to gain for the principles involved in the Gospel application to the conditions of human life from time to time."

This rediscovery of the necessity of the Church has, it need hardly be said, helped to strengthen the conviction of the crucial importance of worship, liturgical and sacramental.

3. *Towards a Christian Sociology*

The third trend during the most recent period of theology has been an attempt, chiefly on the part of High Church Anglicans, to elaborate a distinctively Christian Sociology. Since this is the concern of a very limited group of theologians it warrants only the briefest consideration, especially as the most recent developments of the welfare state in Britain have taken much of the momentum from the movement for the expression of social justice in British society.

The concern to establish a Christian Sociology is no recent phenomenon in the Church of England, which can proudly lay claim to have considered this need as far back as 1848, when F. D. Maurice, Charles Ludlow, and Charles Kingsley cooperated to found the Christian Socialist Movement.⁶⁴ This was done as a result of their conviction that unsocial Christians and un-Christian Socialists were equally dangerous in that year of revolutions in Europe and the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels. The same tradition, based upon the Incarnation and

⁶³ Leonard Hodgson, *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order*, p. 233.

⁶⁴ See M. B. Reckitt, *Maurice to Temple*.

its sacramental implications for human society, was taken from the founding Broad Churchmen by the Anglo-Catholics, in the persons of Stewart Headlam, Charles Gore, and Conrad Noel, and a legion of priests in slum parishes who proved to be the protectors of the poor. Its importance in the present century was signaled by the leadership given to the movement by William Temple, successively Bishop of Manchester, Archbishop of York, and Archbishop of Canterbury, who wrote the most popular presentation of its theme in a paperback entitled, *Christianity and Social Order* (1942).⁶⁵

It was Temple's chairmanship of the 1924 Conference on Politics, Economics, and Citizenship (C.O.P.E.C.) in Birmingham, which convinced him of the importance of ecumenical consideration of the reconstruction of society through the social thinking and witness of Christians. In the summer of 1937 Temple was inevitably the leader in the Oxford Life and Work Conference on "Church, Community and State." His most dramatic role, however, was played at the Malvern Anglican Conference of 1941, when England was subject to ruthless bombing, and there was much consideration of the "social reconstruction" which should follow this war in which sacrifices were democratically equal. Papers were to be read by members of the "Christendom group"⁶⁶ who, in general, accepted the highly sacramental theology of W. G. Peck and his friends. They included the impressive names of Dorothy L. Sayers, Maurice Reckitt, T. S. Eliot, Middleton Murry, Donald M. Mackinnon, H. A. Hodges, and V. A. Demant.

The most inflammatory papers were, however, given by Sir Richard Acland and Kenneth Ingram. Acland argued that the common ownership of the means of production was a fundamental principle, which received considerable support, and the headlines of the newspapers in England and the United States asserted that the Archbishop and his advisers had capitulated to socialism. In fact, however, Temple got the Conference to agree only that the ultimate private ownership of the resources of the community may be a stumbling-block to a just society.⁶⁷ The purpose of emphasizing Temple's leadership in this field is simply to demonstrate

⁶⁵ A brief summary of this book is provided in Chapter VI. More than 150,000 copies had been sold by 1958 (Joseph Fletcher, *William Temple, Twentieth Century Christian*, p. 282).

⁶⁶ See M. B. Reckitt, ed., *Prospect for Christendom*, V. A. Demant, *The Religious Prospect* and W. G. Peck, *An Outline of Christian Sociology*. See also Mahérry, 1941, *Proceedings of the Archbishop of York's Conference*.

⁶⁷ Fletcher, *William Temple* . . . , pp. 276-79.

that an important body of Anglican thinkers were attempting under his guidance to elaborate a Christian sociology.

What, then, is meant by a Christian sociology? Peck, Demant, and Reckitt have been greatly concerned to develop principles for the Christian interpretation of man in society, and of these the Incarnation is most central. This was made the basis of all Christian evaluation of culture. The foundation of this view is that in Jesus Christ the divine and human natures are united in one person, and Christ represents men before God and incorporates them into a new society of which He is the Head. Thus, in the Incarnation are united the personal and the social principles, which are essential to a true human society. All the positive values of culture are derived from the incarnational principle and judged by it. Art, philosophy, and the socio-political order are all potential values to be incorporated in the new life in Christ.

The Incarnation is, however, to be understood in the light of Christ's Passion, Atonement, and Resurrection. In this way all human values are exposed to the light of the perfect love which judges, forgives and redeems. The redemptive deed of Christ transforms all the partial values of temporal existence by bringing them into a new order of life whose principle is the Divine love in all its depth and inclusiveness.

It could be argued that this approach lacks the definiteness of the Roman Catholic ethical guidance, but it might be retorted that the flexibility possible in the Anglican approach avoids legalism and is free to employ middle axioms and temporary solutions without supposing that they are final. It is clear that no single Christian social philosophy can be derived from this Anglican standpoint, but it provides a dynamic synthesis of faith and human thought. In fact, Anglican social thinkers urge the necessity for both economists and sociologists to supply the scientific data upon which Christian evaluations are founded. These judgments tend to favour a society which combines the maximum of personal freedom compatible with responsible sharing. Generally speaking, Anglican moralists have supported the attempt to find collective solutions for the problems of social security, health, labour conditions, and participation in the decisions of industry and government. As Daniel D. Williams has remarked: "We may appreciate something of the theological integrity and profundity of this school by noting how the doctrine of the Trinity is brought into a new

relevance for social problems."⁶⁸ The Trinity, in their view, is the Divine Society of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which in its own depth understands the mystery of giving and receiving.

In contrast to the liberal "social gospel" teaching of the first two decades of the century, which laid great stress on the "Kingdom of God" as its central concept, the "Christendom group" finds its historical anchorage in the Incarnation, which it makes the paradigm of Divine love and the basis for the sacramental ordering of society. It is, therefore, prepared to see in the Eucharist the pattern for a reconstructed order of society, in which the interdependence of the human society is recognized in its dependence upon God, from whom it receives its human and divine life, a life to be shared.⁶⁹

4. *The Thought of the Christian Radicals of Cambridge*

The latest development in English theology is the most iconoclastic and therefore the most difficult to evaluate.⁷⁰ It is all the more important, therefore, that it should be expounded as far as possible in the words of its proponents, who are less a school than a group of individual theologians in conversation with each other as Cambridge University dons or ex-dons. They are deeply disturbed by the ineffectualness of official Christianity in England, which seems to their view respectable, supine, intellectually irrelevant, and apparently complacent. They are anxious to fracture this stereotype and to present a new image of Christianity, involving a radical recasting of the theology, the piety, and the moral attitudes of the Church.

The new "Christian radicalism"⁷¹ has chiefly found expression

⁶⁸ *What Present-day Theologians are Thinking*, p. 95.

⁶⁹ No further explanation of these ideas is necessary in view of the social implications of the Eucharist, as expressed by Temple and Dix, which are considered in Chap. IX.

⁷⁰ Professor E. L. Mascall has provided a pointed critique of *Soundings* in his *Up and Down in Adria*, and Dr. A. M. Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a short evaluation of Bishop John A. T. Robinson's *Honest to God* in *Image Old and New*. While the issues raised by the Cambridge radicals have hit the newspaper headlines, they are by no means alone in these concerns or approaches in Britain. Professor R. Gregor Smith provided a pioneer attempt to domesticate Bonhoeffer's thought in *The New Man: Christianity and Man's Coming of Age* and the Rev. Daniel T. Jenkins essayed a similar task, with cautionary qualifications, in *Beyond Religion*. For the Bultmannian approach reference may be made to Professor John Macquarrie's *The Scope of Demythologizing*. Professor Alan Richardson (now Dean of York) and three Nottingham University colleagues have also prepared a brief critique of the movement, *Four Anchors from the Stern*. See also Erik R. Routley, *The Man for Others*, for a more sympathetic approach.

⁷¹ The term is used by the Rev. David L. Edwards, co-editor with Bishop

in three very recent and unconventional volumes. One, *Honest to God* (1963) is a general and fairly popular account of the re-formulation of Christian faith and life necessary to commend Christianity to the thoughtful agnostic of today and is the work of Dr. John A. T. Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich and former Dean of Clare College, Cambridge. The other two, both of which were edited by Dr. A. R. Vidler, Dean of King's College and former Editor of *Theology*, are *Soundings* (1963) and *Objections to Christian Belief*.⁷²

Bishop Robinson of Woolwich is convinced "that there is a growing gulf between the traditional orthodox supranaturalism in which our Faith has been framed and the categories which the 'lay' world (for want of a better term) finds meaningful today."⁷³ His book is the effort to bridge that gulf. Although this became a best-seller and something of a *succès de scandale*, he ended his introduction with the words: "The one thing of which I am fairly sure is that, in retrospect, it will be seen to have erred in not being nearly radical enough."⁷⁴ Dr. Alec Vidler introduces *Soundings* with the declaration, "We can best serve the cause of truth and of the Church by candidly confessing where our perplexities lie, and not by making claims which, so far as we can see, theologians are not at present in a position to justify . . . it is a time for making soundings, not charts or maps."⁷⁵ Here then is an exceedingly realistic assessal of the place of Christianity in an age of increasing secularism. Here, too, is an honest, self-critical, tentative and modest essay in re-translating the essentials of Christian belief and practice in a way that will make them relevant in the technocratic age.

How is it proposed to recast the traditional structure of theology? Here the first great problem is to find a modern equivalent for the Divine transcendence that does not involve an antiquated cosmology. Robinson inveighs against the survival in theology of a physical conception of a pre-Copernican God "up there" in the sky or a metaphysical idea of a post-Copernican God "out there." In his view an image employing the metaphor of "depth" is better than the customary one of "height" since the latter suggests

Robinson of the *Honest to God Debate*, who writes (p. 21): "If I had to put a label on this movement . . . I would call it Christian radicalism."

⁷² Originally delivered as four open lectures in Cambridge University in February, 1963. The American edition (J. B. Lippincott and Company, Philadelphia and New York), on which I am dependent, appeared in 1964.

⁷³ *Honest to God*, p. 8.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷⁵ *Soundings*, p. ix.

remoteness, superficiality, and the lack of profound concern. He is persuaded by modern psychological usage and by the philosophical theology of Paul Tillich that the categories of "ultimate concern" and the "Ground of Being" are preferable.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Robinson is convinced that the traditional arguments for the existence of God presuppose that God is an object to be arrived at when man's search or argument is concluded. That, however, would be to conceive of God as a being among beings instead of Being-in-itself, which is the very pre-condition of the search.⁷⁷ The Ground of Being is further defined as Love: "Belief in God is the trust, the well-nigh incredible trust, that to give oneself to the uttermost in love is not to be confounded, but to be accepted; that Love is the ground of our being to which ultimately we 'come home.'"⁷⁸ Furthermore, God is to be met, not by withdrawal from the world, but "in unconditional concern 'for the other' *seen through to its ultimate depths*."⁷⁹ The Rev. G. F. Woods in his "The Idea of the Transcendent,"⁸⁰ in presenting a learned philosophical argument, arrives at a similar solution, contending that this essential concept in relation to God is arrived at analogically and is better conceived in personal than in impersonal analogies.

An equally radical attempt at "demythologizing" in theology is applied to the Chalcedonian Christology which affirms that Christ is the union of two natures, divine and human, in the one person. Robinson argues that this implies that God's Son is an intruder into humanity, since "it conjures up the idea of a divine substance being plunged into flesh and coated with it like chocolate or silver plating."⁸¹ He prefers the image of Christ as a window showing God at work,⁸² and asserts that Jesus "reveals God by being utterly transparent to him, precisely as he is nothing 'in himself.'"⁸³ The Rev. Hugh W. Montefiore in "Towards a Christology for Today"⁸⁴ finds three difficulties in the Chalcedonian Christology. The Definition assumes that Godhead and manhood are fully known, that they are comparable natures to be juxtaposed, and disregards the functional and dynamic terms in which Jesus spoke of himself. The paradox of grace, which assures man that he is accepted and loved as he is because of God's identification with man in Jesus and by Jesus' loving acceptance of the worst that man can do to him, is the best analogy whereby we can conceive of the union

⁷⁶ *Honest to God*, p. 23.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Chap. 2.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁷⁹ *Honest to God*, p. 61.

⁸⁰ Chap. 3 of *Soundings*.

⁸¹ *Honest to God*, p. 67.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁸⁴ Chap. 7 of *Soundings*.

of the divine and human in Jesus. The Rev. J. S. Bezzant in "Intellectual Objections"⁸⁵ claims that the traditional doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation are assailed because we do not know a complete human nature which is not a person and Christ is said to combine two natures in his single personality, while the term "person" is unacceptable in reference to the Trinity for it is an entity "which is neither noun nor adjective."⁸⁶

Traditional explanations of the Atonement also come under considerable fire. Professor D. M. Mackinnon in "Moral Objections"⁸⁷ objects to the sadistic implication of the penal substitutionary theory, and the fact that this has sometimes led to a daughter's hope of marriage and personal fulfillment being wrongly "sacrificed" to her aged parents on the analogy of following the Cross. The Rev. Professor G. W. H. Lampe in "The Atonement: Law and Love"⁸⁸ similarly criticizes all legalistic conceptions of the Atonement that stress man's attempts to make himself acceptable in God's sight, as a misunderstanding of the Gospel which rightly stresses God's love for men at their worst and their most unacceptable. J. S. Bezzant simply states that the substitutionary concept of Christ's Atonement offends the moral sensibilities of today.

What, then, is to be affirmed as the modern equivalent? Bishop Robinson, taking a leaf from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book, thinks of the redemptive act of Christ as the work of "The Man for others" who challenges men "to participation in the sufferings of God in the life of the world."⁸⁹ For the Rev. H. A. Williams in "Theology and Self-Awareness"⁹⁰ the principle of Incarnation is essentially the principle of involvement.⁹¹ The practical implications of this revised creed are stated by the Rev. J. S. Bezzant: "I think it is entirely reasonable for any man who studies the spirit of the facing of life as Christ faced it, and his recorded teaching, to decide that by him he will stand through life, death or eternity rather than join in a possible triumph of evil over him."⁹²

These attempts to refashion traditional theology have, of course, come under heavy fire, and this criticism should be considered before going on to review the proposed radical revisions of the

⁸⁵ Chap. 4 of *Objections to Christian Belief*.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁸⁷ Chap. 1 of *Objections to Christian Belief*.

⁸⁸ Chap. 8 of *Soundings*.

⁸⁹ Cited *Honest to God*, p. 82, from Bethge, ed., Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* (2nd edn., 1956), p. 166.

⁹⁰ Chap. 4 of *Soundings*.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁹² *Objections to Christian Belief*, p. 110.

traditional Christian ethic. Archbishop Ramsey believes that Bishop Robinson's preference of the "depth" image is open to the charge that it hardly does justice to the central element of grace in the Gospel, and he asks: "If there is ultimate reality which is love and personal, does not the initiative come not from us but from thence?"⁹³ Dr. R. P. C. Hanson believes that transcendence is not adequately interpreted, insisting that for the Bible transcendence is not "metaphysical abstraction or separation, but control."⁹⁴ The Rev. Professor H. E. W. Turner is doubtful whether the Atonement can be satisfactorily defined in terms of the acceptance of the unacceptable, since it recalls the old subjectivist interpretation of Justification by Faith "or a Lutheranism run to seed." He insists that the "full formula of 'Justification by Grace through Faith' includes precisely what Tillich and Robinson leave out" and thus there is missing "the powerful action of God in Christ which is the ground . . . of the transforming and liberating experience which Tillich describes."⁹⁵

The second major concern of the Cambridge radicals is to rescue Christian ethics from a perfectionistic escape from the world or from a legalism which caricatures the Christian way as "life-denying rather than life-affirming or life-enhancing."⁹⁶ Furthermore, it is exceedingly difficult to appeal with confidence to the three historic authorities which formed the grounds for Christian moral choice: the Bible, a system of theological ethics, and the Natural Law.⁹⁷ Dr. Robinson is particularly severe on the old supernaturalist ethics which spoke magisterially of the "sanction of Sinai" or "the clear teaching of our Lord."⁹⁸ The Sermon on the Mount, he insists, is not a new Leviticus; rather it provides "illustrations of what love may at any moment require of anyone."⁹⁹ He favours a "radical 'ethic of the situation,' with nothing prescribed—except love,"¹⁰⁰ but emphasizes that this will make the most searching demands on the depth and integrity of one's concern for the other on the analogy of the "utterly unselfregarding *agape* of Christ."¹⁰¹

This "new morality" is, in fact, an attempt to return to the morality of the New Testament, with its command of love, and to

⁹³ *Image Old and New*, p. 8.

⁹⁴ *The Honest to God Debate*, pp. 108-09.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁹⁶ D. M. Mackinnon in *Objections to Christian Belief*, p. 15.

⁹⁷ See the careful analysis of these difficulties in G. F. Woods' "The Grounds of Christian Moral Judgments" in *Soundings*, pp. 196ff.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

St. Augustine's *dilige et quod vis fac*. It will require a revaluation of the conservative ecclesiastical attitude to divorce and remarriage. Mackinnon believes that many of these second unions "have been more abundantly justified by their fruits than the frequently tragic human distress they have replaced."¹⁰²

The most radical interpreter of the new morality is the Rev. H. A. Williams, who believes from his studies in psycho-analysis that much conventional Christian morality is a Pharisaic masquerade and a mockery.¹⁰³ On this view, if love is self-giving much of what Christians have called virtue is only cowardice. *Per contra*, much apparent immorality may be genuine self-giving. Williams suggests that the prostitute with the golden heart in the Greek film, *Never on Sunday*, who restores confidence to a troubled young sailor by her physical union with him, performs "an act of charity which proclaims the glory of God."¹⁰⁴

The third area in which a radical reformation is called for is in the institutional life and especially in the cultus of the Church. Here there is considerable difference of opinion, ranging from some theological revisions desirable in the Book of Common Prayer, which are listed by Professor John Burnaby, to the Rev. H. A. Williams's wholesale condemnation of it as "our incomparably unchristian Liturgy."¹⁰⁵

It is clear, however, that theological revision of the Prayer Book is required by some of the Cambridge radicals. Professor Burnaby claims that many of the Psalms used in the Liturgy are of the type of *klage-lied* complaints and expostulations which are dominated "by a temper which even the most reckless allegorizing can scarcely baptize into Christianity."¹⁰⁶ He finds that the confession of sins seems "inspired rather by fear of God's implacable justice than by sorrow for the wounding of Divine love."¹⁰⁷ He is not less critical of the sentences ("Man that is born of woman . . .") in the Order for the Burial of the Dead which accompany the committal to the grave—he considers them an offence against the Gospel. Yet he believes that the sacrament of Communion rectifies many theolog-

¹⁰² *Objections to Christian Belief*, p. 14, where he adds, ironically, that "it is impossible to escape the impression that, to certain sorts of clergy, the effective exclusion from sacramental communion of divorced persons who have remarried is the highest form of the Church's moral witness."

¹⁰³ See his "Theology and Self-Awareness" in *Soundings*, Chap. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81. Mr. Williams uses extreme instances and citations. See also *ibid.*, p. 82, and the Blake citation in *Objections to Christian Belief*, p. 51.

¹⁰⁵ See H. A. Williams, "Unchristian Liturgy," in *Theology* (October, 1958), pp. 401-04.

¹⁰⁶ *Soundings*, p. 236.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

cal errors, since "the significance of the sacrament is to represent and realize that oneness of life into which the taking of our nature by the Son of God, its bearing through cross and resurrection into the heavenly places, and the coming of the Holy Spirit to be its strength and stay have brought the Creator and his creatures."¹⁰⁸ Clearly Professor Burnaby has a minimal revision in mind.

Although expressed with moderation, Bishop Robinson's views on worship are more revolutionary in their reinterpretation. He is greatly concerned for a "worldly holiness" which will express the holiness in the communal relationships of life. The real function of worship is "to make us sensitive to these depths [meeting Christ in common relationships]; to focus, sharpen and deepen our response to the world and to other people beyond the point of proximate concern (of liking, self-interest, limited commitment, etc.) to ultimate concern; to purify and correct our loves in the light of Christ's love; and in him to find the grace and power to be the reconciled and reconciling community."¹⁰⁹

It seems that he wishes to apply an ethical test to worship, and thus to minimize its importance as mediating a sense of the glory of God, as instructional in faith, and creative of loyalty to God and to his Church. What he says is: "The test of worship is how far it makes us *more sensitive* to the 'beyond in our midst,' to the Christ in the hungry, the naked, the homeless, and the prisoner."¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, Robinson advocates the abolition of worship no more than he advocates the abolition of bishops. He is, in fact, urging that even the reforming of worship will be inadequate unless the correlation of the sanctuary with society is made far more explicit. He deplores an unholy escapism, a withdrawal into another world of the spirit, which is often perpetuated by liturgical worship, even of the most dignified or aesthetic type.

He protests with all his command of language against the idea that "the sacramental moments of communion with God are to be expected in the periods of withdrawal, which, like the camel's water, are to see one through the deserts of the day that must otherwise drain one dry."¹¹¹ He even wonders, while recognizing that there must be a rhythm of engagement and disengagement in any active life, "whether Christian prayer . . . is not to be *defined* in terms of penetration through the world to God rather than withdrawal from the world to God."¹¹² It can be expressed most vividly

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹⁰⁹ *Honest to God*, pp. 87-88.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

as "preparing in the telephone to meet our God"—that is, to be always open to personal invasion knowing that "persons matter," aware that in our unconditional concern for them we encounter Christ. Such an approach may expose liturgical worship to the most radical revision, provide a prophetic relevance in preaching, and establish a two-way traffic between the Church and the world, as well as encourage much extra-liturgical experimentation in worship and evangelism that would be more natural and less contrived than the present expressions of these perennial tasks of the Christian Community.

All this re-structuring of theology, ethics, and worship, will demand another reformation of the Church of England. Many certainties will have to be given up which were confidently asserted to have been demanded by Christ or the Christian tradition.¹¹³ It is, indeed, a more chastened and charitable Church of England which Dr. Vidler envisions when he speaks of the possibility of a more comprehensive ecclesiastical settlement, which will attempt to satisfy the spiritual, moral, and psychological needs which the state is not competent to meet, and which will "stimulate and defend all those agencies—however little ecclesiastical or ecclesiastical they may be—that minister to the freedom and fullness of man's spiritual life." He concludes his essay on "Religion and the National Church" with a question-mark: "For the Church of England the great question is whether it can be transformed into such a church or is doomed to sink into the position of a religious denomination?"¹¹⁴ No Church, whether established or disestablished, is likely to gain the loyalty of twentieth century men unless it sees itself in the role not of a master, but of a servant. That clearly is the way the Cambridge Christian radicals visualize the task of the contemporary Community of Christ.

5. Conclusion

As we view the development of theology in England from 1900 to 1965 it may appear to be cyclical rather than linear. For, in the most striking way, the Cambridge radicals are reasserting many of the objections to orthodoxy that Liberal Protestants made at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century. The parallels can be found in the stressing of immanence rather than of transcendence in the doctrine of God, and in the necessity for the Church to be deeply engaged in the struggle for social justice. Dr.

¹¹³ See *Soundings*, pp. 138-39.

¹¹⁴ *Soundings*, p. 263.

Alec Vidler has rightly paid a belated tribute to the earlier liberals: "Christians in the twentieth century, who on the whole have been less adventurous than the nineteenth century 'liberals' whom they affect to have surpassed, have still much to learn from them."¹¹⁵ These parallels, however, if alone considered significant, would fail to do justice to the genuine innovations on the theological scene which are distinctive of twentieth century theology in England.

Never has English theology been less insular than in the twentieth century. While it has its own distinctive pragmatism, consonant with the British temper, and in contrast with the more purely theoretical emphasis of non-existential types of theology in Germany, it has been receptive to important foreign influences. German, Scandinavian, French, and American theologians have been read with appreciation. For the point to be appreciated it is necessary only to mention the names of Harnack, Schweitzer, Barth, Otto, Brunner, Bultmann, Bonhoeffer, Kierkegaard, Söderblom, Brilioth, Nygren, Cullmann, the two Niebuhrs, and Paul Tillich. In the process of domestication some of these theological viewpoints lost their sharp and occasionally extreme edges, but the point is that they were taken with very great seriousness and they proved fertile.

In the second place, theology in England has never been so ecumenical as in the present century. This, too, helped to break its insularity, a historic characteristic of English theology, though never of Scottish, which has maintained its links with the Continental Reformed Churches. Thus theology, hammered out in encounter between representatives of different traditions of churchmanship, and published in the form of symposia, has provided a consensus on many major issues that was quite impossible in the nineteenth century.

The third characteristic of the twentieth century in theology, which is true for many other countries besides Britain, is that there is a new-found correlation of Bible, Church, and Liturgy. This is the most significant as well as the most startling phenomenon of the age. It is as if the prodigal intellectual sons who had gone into the far country of culture, and had been dissatisfied with the husks of religious philosophy or the mush of syncretism, returned to appreciate the theocentric faith of the Bible. In rediscovering the Bible, they found it to be the Book of the People of God, and they

¹¹⁵ *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, pp. 270-71.

learned that their intellectual and critical study of it needed to be nourished by devotion through worship. Whatever the explanation, it became clear that Bible, Church, and Liturgy are three witnesses to the re-creating Word of God, Jesus Christ, and that they belong together.

This has been the century when Christian worship has come into its own, although not without a struggle against the supporters of the "social gospel" who found God better served in the slums than in the sanctuary, or the cultivators of "spontaneity" who would have made their own experience the substitute for the richness of Liturgy's testimony to God through twenty centuries as mediated through many cultures and a variety of theologies. There is no question but that the Liturgical Movement has strengthened theology in the service of the Church, and, through drawing out the social implications of the Liturgy, in service to the world. The importance of the organic conception of the Church and of the social sacraments of its life has never been better understood, nor has the instructional and prophetic practice of preaching and the need for a covenanted commitment to Christ been better appreciated. And, equally important, the sense that both Liturgy and witness require the full participation of the laity is recognized in Catholic and Protestant circles as never before. Not least in importance is the dialogue between Catholic and Protestant which has replaced the shouting across a vast abyss of misunderstanding, and which has been made easier by the "new look" and, indeed, new spirit of Roman Catholicism made evident in the Second Vatican Council. In a period when Christian theology has been subject to powerful intellectual attacks and when almost every Christian Communion in England has declined in numbers and influence these are signs of hope in a crepuscular future.

CHAPTER VI

TRENDS AND TYPES OF PREACHING¹

IF THE Victorian preacher ascended a pulpit as a crown prince his throne, the modern preacher quietly enters it as if it were a witness-box. The era of spellbinders is over. Christianity is the faith of a minority group in contemporary England.

The modern sermon is twice as quiet and half as long as the Victorian pulpit discourse. This can be explained partly by the restriction of the function of the modern pulpit to the communication of the Divine will for men, which eliminates the duty to provide adult education and entertainment in the pulpit; it is also partly explicable from the concision and colloquial directness of speech encouraged by the example of radio and television communication. The tone of the modern sermon, too, is conversational and confidential. Disraeli's approach to Queen Victoria, not Gladstone's, has won the day in pulpit as in Parliament, with the notable exceptions of Sir Winston Churchill's noble war-time eloquence and the verbal jousts between him and Aneurin Bevan.

1. *Changes during the Century*

In the era of the "New Theology"² ministers tended to act as if they were social prophets, alternating between compassion and indignant denunciation. In consequence their preaching often owed more to Socialism than to the sacred Scripture. In the succeeding period there was a revulsion from liberalism to neo-orthodoxy.³ No longer was the Church a social settlement, but a colony of heaven. The Kingdom of God was reconceived, not as a future utopia towards which all decent men and women were striving, but as the rule of God, inaugurated by the Apostolic preaching and in the breaking of bread. This gave a distinctive and elevated status to the preacher, as he became again the herald of God's good news, the announcer of the mighty acts of God accomplishing human salvation. But the preacher also recognized that the Word of God was mediated by the Sacraments, so that he did not become too proud.

¹ Those who desire a much fuller treatment of this topic are referred to my *Varieties of English Preaching, 1900-1960* (S. C. M. Press, London, and Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1963) of which, by the kind permission of the publishers, this chapter is substantially a condensation.

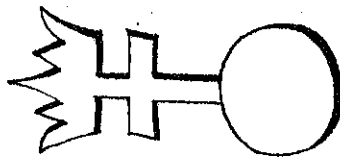
² See Chap. IV *supra*.

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PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1965