

BJ  
1251  
.V28

B 664,300

# CHRISTIAN THEISTIC ETHICS

38

BY

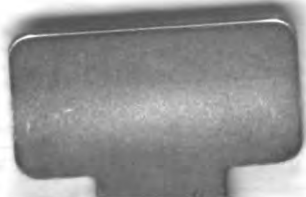
CORNELIUS VAN TIL, Th.M., Ph.D.

PROFESSOR OF APOLOGETICS  
WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
CHESTNUT HILL, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-03-31 01:40 GMT / <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015049219366>  
Public Domain, Google-digitized / [http://www.hathitrust.org/access\\_use#pd-google](http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google)



PROPERTY OF  
*University of  
Michigan  
Libraries*  
1817  
ARTES SCIENTIA VERITAS



CHRISTIAN THEISTIC ETHICS

by

Cornelius Van Til, Th. M. , Ph. D.

Westminster Theological Seminary  
Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pa.

1958

**This syllabus is for class purposes  
only, and is not to be considered as  
a published book.**

BJ  
1251  
.V28



55.309882

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I

METHODS OF ETHICS

I	The Material of Ethics	1
II	The Scope of Christian Ethics	7
III	The Epistemological Presuppositions of Christian Ethics	17
IV	The Metaphysical Presuppositions of Christian Ethics	31

PART II

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS MAN'S SUMMUM BONUM

V	The Summum Bonum Ideally Considered: The Individual	38
VI	The Summum Bonum Ideally Considered: Society	47
VII	The Non-Christian Summum Bonum	55
VIII	The Biblical Summum Bonum in General	68
IX	The Old Testament Summum Bonum	83
X	The New Testament Summum Bonum	95

PART III

THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD AS MAN'S ETHICAL STANDARD

XI	The Standard of Man in Paradise	112
XII	The Redemptive Standard: Old Testament; New Testament	124

## PART I

### METHODS OF ETHICS

#### CHAPTER I

### MATERIAL OF ETHICS

According to general agreement, ethics deals with that aspect of human personality which we designate as the will. This distinguishes ethics from those sciences whose primary concern it is to deal with knowledge or with appreciation. Those sciences which deal chiefly with knowledge are based upon that aspect of man's personality which we call the intellect, while those sciences whose chief purpose it is to deal with appreciation are based upon that aspect of man's personality which we speak of as emotion or feeling.

We do not mean that there is or can be a rigid division between these various kinds of sciences. Ethics cannot be rigidly separated from the other sciences. We should rather say that ethics deals primarily with the will of man and only secondarily with his intellect and his emotions.

What then are the questions that can and must be asked with respect to the will of man? We answer that they are the same questions that can and must be asked, mutatis mutandis, with respect to the intellect and the emotions of man - in short, they are the essentially human questions with a particular accent or emphasis.

These essentially human questions we may conveniently divide into three. In the first place we inquire into the nature of man. What is man? That is the most basic question we can ask about him. In asking this question we look into the foundation of all that we are going to say further. In asking what man is, we ask what his intellect is, what his will is, and what his emotions are. Now this question, when applied to the will, has always been taken up in some form or other in all treatises on ethics. It may be that the question, as such, is not even asked. If so, this only indicates that the writer has taken for granted instead of argued some answer to this question. All that any one can say about the duties or the goal of human endeavor presupposes some theory of the nature of man. It remains, then, a most fundamental question in ethics to ask first of all about the nature of the human will.

In ethical writing this point is usually discussed under the heading of motive. What is the motive that controls the acts of man? What is the most

impelling power that makes a man commit this murder? Was this motive by which he was impelled good or bad? Is this man a man of virtue or is he not a man of virtue? Was virtue born into this man or was it acquired only? Is virtue a habit or an acquisition or perhaps both? If it is inborn, is it then virtuous? If it is exclusively an acquisition how could it get under way? What is this mysterious thing called character? All such questions and many more are taken up in some form under this first main question as to the nature of the human will.

The second question that is and must be asked with respect to the will of man is that of criterion or standard. The asking of this question is involved in the asking of the first question. Ethics seeks to discover whether the will of man is good or bad. But we cannot answer or even ask this question intelligently unless there is a standard by which a man can be judged and in comparison with which he can be said to be either good or bad.

The question of criterion or standard is usually discussed in ethical writing under the head of law, or duty. What should man do? What is he morally obliged to do? What should he omit doing? Such questions as these deal with the scope of man's deeds. Was that deed which I have done wrong or was it right? Are there some things that are good, some that are bad, and also some that are indifferent, or are all deeds either good or bad? Such questions as these deal with the quality of one's deeds. But where will I find the standard that I need for moral judgment? Is it external or is it internal? If external, is it the impersonal law of a universe or the revealed will of a personal God? If internal, is it the voice of my conscience as an individual intuitive principle or is it the vision of a certain end that I have? If an intuitive principle, is such an intuition implanted by God or is it the result of the experience of the race, or perhaps both? Such questions as these are asked under the second division of ethical research.

Finally, the third main question that can and must be asked about the human will is as to the purpose or end of its action. The word purpose, however, is ambiguous. It is sometimes used as identical with motive. Often we say that we have a certain purpose in doing something and mean therewith the same thing as when we say that we had a certain motive in doing something. We say that we excuse a man for some evil done because he had a good purpose in doing it. But in ethical discussion the word purpose is to be considered synonymous with the end toward which or for which something is done, rather than synonymous with the motive that impels one to do that deed. Even so there is a very close relation between the concept of motive and the concept of purpose. We cannot say that a man has a right motive in doing something unless he tries to accomplish the right end with it. We may even find that the purpose of certain deeds lies in their purifying effect on the motive of future deeds of a similar sort or of future deeds in general. The doing of many individual good deeds of kindness will in-

crease the kindness of our disposition. Yet there is always this distinction, that in the case of motive we deal with the condition of the will as it is at the time of the action under consideration, while in the case of purpose we think of a result that follows the deed itself. The motive precedes the deed, while the purpose logically follows the deed.

In ethical writing this question of the purpose of man's deed is usually discussed under the heading of the highest good - summum bonum. What is it that the individual and the race should strive for? Should the goal of man's life be beyond man as an individual, or is it something for the individual alone? If it is beyond the individual, is it in his fellowman, or is it in God? Is morality independent of religion, or is there a dependence? If there is a dependence, is religion dependent upon morality or is morality dependent upon religion? On the other hand, if the goal of man is in the individual himself, is it something external to the individual or is it something internal to the individual? Is it happiness that should be man's highest goal, or is it goodness? Should man seek for rewards, or should he be good whether or not there is a reward attached to his goodness? Is goodness perhaps its own reward? If it is, then what is goodness? Is it inherent in the nature of man, so that he is able of himself to do it? If it is inherent in the nature of man, then is it really goodness and not merely nature? If it is not inherent in man, then can it be its own reward? Will not evil overcome the good and destroy goodness itself so that it cannot be its own reward? All these and more are the questions that come under the general heading of the summum bonum or the end of ethics.

All ethics then deals with these three questions: (a) What is the motive of human action? (b) What is the standard of human action? (c) What is the end or purpose of human action?

The point now to be considered is whether it is of any great significance that these three questions be treated in the order stated. It may be argued that we cannot speak of the nature of the will at all unless we measure the actions of that will by the end toward which it directs its efforts. This is true, but it is equally true that we cannot speak of the end to which the will of man should direct its effort till we know what the will is. Similarly we may say that we cannot speak of the nature of the will unless we know according to what sort of standard it should act. But again the reverse of this is true. We cannot speak of the standard of the will unless we know the nature of the will. We see then that the three questions asked in ethics are subdivisions of one more comprehensive question. For this reason, we believe the only significance that can be attached to the point which of these subdivisions should be considered first is a methodological one. It is not necessarily indicative of any divergence of viewpoint, then, if one writer chooses to begin at one point and another writer chooses to begin at another point.

The method we shall follow in this course is to take first the matter of man's chief end, then the matter of the law or standard, and finally the matter of the motive. We wish to consider first the goal that God had set for the will of man. We may compare this with the destination of a journey. Secondly, we shall consider the standard which God has set for the will of man. We may compare that with the road along which man is to make his journey. In the third place we shall consider the motive of man as it should be according to the will of God. We may compare this with the actual attitude of man as he makes the journey.

We propose then to make a sort of Pilgrim's Progress affair of our discussion. The celestial city toward which our ethical pilgrim will wend his way is the kingdom of God. We speak of this as the object of ethics. The standard or chart of our pilgrim is the will of God. Walking along it, as along a road, our pilgrim is to reach the celestial city. The motive or compelling power which is to be the force that will move our pilgrim along the road to the celestial city is the will to do the will of God. We speak of this as the motive in ethics.

A Christian writer on ethics will naturally have to write according to the genius of Christianity while a non-Christian writer on ethics will naturally have to write in accordance with the genius of non-Christian philosophy. But it will be maintained that the genius of non-Christian, or at least of non-orthodox, thought is that it is free and unbound in its ethical investigation. On the other hand, it will be maintained that the genius of Christian, or at least orthodox Christian, thought is that it is bound to an absolute and extraneous authority. In the following chapters we shall return to this question. At present we are interested in it only in so far as to observe that as Christians we accept our bondage - if bondage it be, willingly. We have accepted Christianity as an interpretation of life for reasons we deem sufficient. Among these reasons for the acceptance of Christianity is the Christian interpretation of ethics itself. Hence, we do not feel bound, and maintain that we are not bound except as we feel that we should be bound.

But men will say that this is only a psychological abnormality and that we cannot really face any problems and therefore cannot really offer any solutions. The current viewpoint is that problems can arise in the history of human action only when unconsciously acquired habits of action no longer suffice for the situation in which men are placed. It is only when new wine has to be poured into old bottles that ferment sets in, and men begin to think about the nature of morality. So it is said that in the case of the Greeks there were accepted moral codes which were not questioned till Athens grew into the head of an empire and the Sophists brought about a general restlessness. "Then," said Muirhead, "a condition of doubt, uncertainty, and general perplexity was created, out of which in due time arose, under the influence of Socrates, the first sketch of science of mor-

ality'' (1). But such a claim rests upon the assumption of the truth of the non-Christian position. If Christianity is true, genuine problems can arise even if he is willingly subordinate to God in all his thinking. Not only that, but if Christianity is true, it is only in it that man can really face any problem at all. If Christianity be true the possibility of the asking of any questions about anything whether it be ethical or something else, depends upon the presupposition of God as an absolute. To this point we shall return again and again.

Should we then make a distinction between philosophical and theological ethics and say that we, as Christians, are interested in theological ethics while non-Christians are interested in philosophical ethics? To put the matter in this way would be very misleading to say the least. There is a Christian philosophy as well as a non-Christian philosophy. There is a non-Christian theology as well as a Christian theology. So there is a non-Christian philosophical and a non-Christian theological ethics. Again there is a Christian philosophical and a Christian theological ethics. And the line of cleavage should be deepest between that which is Christian and that which is non-Christian. Neither Christian philosophical ethics nor Christian theological ethics can forget at any time just what the requirements of Christianity are for its science. These requirements are that man must interpret in accordance with the interpretation of God.

For Christians the difference between theological and philosophical ethics can be no more than one of emphasis. Both have to interpret the moral life in all of its manifestation in the light of Scripture. We propose, therefore, self-consciously to ignore the distinction and to speak of philosophico-theological ethics, or rather simply Christian ethics. This procedure is justifiable the more so because the main purpose of the course is apologetical. It is meant to set forth and vindicate some of the main concepts of the Christian view of man's goal, standard and motive of action.

But to vindicate the Christian view of ethics one cannot avoid the differences between Roman Catholic and Protestant ethics. One cannot even avoid the difference between Reformed and non-Reformed or evangelical ethics. As a Roman Catholic theology is a deformation of a true Christian theology, so its ethics is a deformation of a truly Christian ethics. And in a lesser degree this holds true for evangelical as over against Reformed ethics. Reformed ethics is the only fully Christian ethics, and as such is most defensible against non-Christian views.

We propose then to give the Reformed interpretation of the ethical life. We believe that to be the consistently biblical and the consistently Christian interpretation of the ethical problem. And the reason for calling the course Christian Ethics, not Reformed Ethics, does not lie in the fact that we wish to catch anyone unawares by the title. The reason is rather

that we take it for granted that at a Reformed seminary a Reformed interpretation will be given to everything that is taught. The reason for the existence of a Reformed seminary is simply the conviction on the part of the founders and supporters that Calvinism is Christianity come to its own.

#### Reference for Chapter I

1. J. H. Muirhead: The Elements of Ethics, 1892, p. 10.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SCOPE OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

We now ask where Christian ethics expects to find the material with which to discuss the questions that are asked in ethical inquiry. Non-Christian ethics naturally seeks its answers in the experience of the human race. Does Christian ethics have anywhere else to go?

The answer that comes naturally to mind is that in the person of the Christ there has been a unique experience that can somehow be set up as a standard for other human beings. Accordingly there have been many books written on such subjects as "The Ethics of Jesus." The purpose of such books is to show that Christian ethics does not differentiate itself from other ethics by leaving the common ground of human experience, but that it differentiates itself from other ethics by dealing with a special case of human experience as an ideal. We shall deal briefly with three such books in order to test the adequacy of such an approach.

The first book we wish to look at is that of Henry Churchill King, The Ethics of Jesus. The significant thing about this book is that it illustrates very effectively that every one who seeks an Ethic of Jesus and identifies that with Christian ethics finds nothing that is really specific at all.

The reason for this lies at hand. Those who are most anxious to deal with the ethics of Jesus usually apply the methods of higher criticism to Scripture in order to discover what Jesus has really said on ethical matters. So King, for example, seeks to find rock bottom by taking his final resting point on Schmiedel's "Foundation Pillars," and Burkitt's "doubly attested sayings." By thus accepting the results of higher criticism, King finds only that which he could find, that is, a Jesus who has been stripped of all that is unique. True, Jesus might still be considered a wise man, and in this sense might be called unique, but he could in no sense be called the Son of God. If Jesus is to be considered as the Son of God we must accept his authority with respect to the Scripture and cannot play fast and loose with it as criticism does.

The net result, then, of the average writer on the "Ethics of Jesus" can be predicted in advance. He will find in Jesus some particularly attractive form of statement with respect to the object, the standard, and the motive of ethics, but he will find no absolute summum bonum, no absolute standard, and no absolute motive placed before men. It will of course invariably be found that Jesus said a great deal about love, but it will be taken for granted that man can by his own unaided ability love as he should. There



will be no intimation that without the atoning blood of Calvary man cannot truly love God and his neighbor. In particular we may be sure that there will be no absolute authority given to Christ. Speaking of the matter of authority King says, "It (that is, Jesus' ethical teaching) is not to get its support from authority or labored argument; at the most He gives His hearers only a series of insights, and He insists most solemnly that no possible contempt of Himself can compare in seriousness with unfaithfulness to one's own best vision" (1). It is quite natural that if criticism has first cut out of the gospels all that is obnoxious to the natural man, nothing that is out of accord with the best insights of the natural man will be found to proceed from the mouth of Jesus.

We do not intend to enter upon the question of the New Testament evidence with respect to the question of the Messianic consciousness (2). We believe that on this ground alone it can be definitely and fairly established that according to the best evidence available Jesus thought of himself as the only begotten Son of God. If this is true, then the whole "Ethics of Jesus" literature drops away into uselessness. In that case Jesus is not merely one among many to whose advice and ideas we can, if we choose, listen. In that case Jesus must necessarily speak with authority that is absolute.

What we are more concerned to point out is that from a philosophical point of view too the "Ethics of Jesus" literature is unsound. That this is so may be observed if we think for a moment of the implications involved in the idea that Jesus should for some reason be singled out as a moral teacher. The question that must be asked at once is, What kind of moral teacher was Jesus? There have been many moral teachers in the past. It may be answered that his peculiarity lay in the fact that he lived what he taught, and thus made his teaching more actual than other teachers have done. This is no doubt true, but does not touch the main question involved. The question must inevitably lead on to a further question, namely, that of Jesus' absolute divinity. It will not do to assume that somehow one person among the millions of men that have lived is somehow able to live the perfect life. Granted that he did, then it would follow that all men are by nature able to live the perfect life if only they make up their minds to do so and if they live in favorable circumstances. And with this assumption we are once more clearly upon non-theistic ground. Moreover, if we merely assume that Jesus as one human being among others lived the perfect life, we also assume that it is not necessary for man to be told by the medium of special revelation what sin is. We then assume that we are in ourselves able to judge of the nature of sin. Now the point in question is whether we are able to be our own standard with respect to the moral life or whether we are not. It will not do, then, especially if we are proposing to investigate the moral question with an open mind, to begin at the outset with the assumption that it cannot possibly be true that man must be told what the nature of his moral delinquency is.

What we actually find, then, is that those who have written the "Ethics of Jesus" literature have not been able to obtain any ethics from him that is essentially higher than the ethics they might have obtained from non-Christian writers.

\*\*\*\*\*

The second man we wish to discuss briefly is Charles Augustus Briggs. He gives in some ways a more satisfactory survey of the ethical saying of Jesus than King, since he does not take as extreme a position with respect to higher criticism as does King. But this helps the matter very little indeed. At first glance one would think that Briggs is much more conservative than King. Yet what difference does it really make whether one takes a few more or a few less passages of Jesus so long as in all of them it is assumed that Jesus is not essentially divine but is merely speaking as one human being to other human beings? Briggs, as well as King, has separated the ethical teaching of Jesus from the question of the person of Jesus. Both have taken for granted the pagan position that truth is truth in itself, and that Jesus only looks up to it. So also they have taken for granted that goodness is goodness in itself and does not proceed from the person of Christ as a standard. It is true that Briggs would hold that Jesus has perhaps embodied a larger measure of goodness in his life than any other man. But this does not remove him from the non-Christian position in his theory of ethics. The central question is whether Jesus spoke as the Son of God with absolute authority and therefore also as the source of goodness so that no one can be morally good unless it be upon the finished work of Christ.

That Briggs does not regard Jesus as the Son of God and as the true Messiah may be seen from his interpretation of Jesus' temptations. We discuss only the one in which Jesus answered Satan that man shall not live by bread alone. Of this answer Briggs says: "Jesus thus recognizes for Himself and for His disciples that the Word of God is food for the soul, and that this is ever to be ethically higher than the satisfaction of the hunger of the body. It is a yielding to temptation when the hunger of the soul is neglected in order to satisfy the hunger of the body. There are times when the soul should be so absorbed in feeding upon the Word of God that the hunger of the body will not be experienced, or if experienced, will be altogether neglected" (3). It is thus that Briggs puts Jesus in every important respect on the level with his disciples. True, he does say that Jesus' temptation qualified him particularly for his messianic task. But this means no more than that Jesus was a human individual and therefore had a distinct task to perform. In this sense any one's particular preparation would be unique. The nature of Jesus' preparation was, according to Briggs, no more than a learning to put the hunger of the soul above the hunger of the body and in this respect all his disciples must follow him. Now it is true that all the disciples of Jesus should put the hunger of the soul above the hunger of the

body, but it is not true that this was the meaning of the temptation for Jesus if Christianity is to be taken in any higher than a purely naturalistic sense. If Christianity is true, the temptation of Jesus by Satan was the effort on the part of Satan to keep Christ from walking the via dolorosa to the cross. Such a temptation could come to no other human being because no other being could walk the via dolorosa and if he could, Satan would be glad to see him go, since it would do no harm to his kingdom at all.

What we are concerned to note, then, is not the absurdity of the notion that Jesus should teach his disciples the desirability and even the absolute necessity of ascetic periods to the extent of forty days of hunger. It would reduce the person of Jesus to that of a moral fanatic, without giving him the benefit of a great national cause to work for, such as, for example, Gandhi had. What we are rather concerned to note is that in his interpretation of Jesus' temptation Briggs has taken the whole of the non-Christian position for granted. The basic contention of Christianity with respect to the person of Christ is that he is the Son of God. If this is true, then it follows that we cannot take the experiences of Jesus and assume that they could all be experienced by ourselves, if circumstances required. Others may die on the cross, but their death would have no substitutionary significance for men in general. Others might be tempted to escape the cross, but a yielding to such a temptation would not cast untold millions into hell. Yet Briggs has not even related the temptation of Jesus to his cross. Before he ever got that far he had already leveled down the difference between Jesus and other men. He simply took for granted that the ethics of Jesus has nothing to do with his cross or even with the uniqueness of his divine sonship (4).

This point brings out the general procedure of modernists so well that we stop to consider still further the results of such a beginning for the crises in the moral life. Surely an important crisis in the moral life as interpreted by Jesus is that of conversion or turning away from sin. Speaking of the forgiveness of sins Briggs says: "The way in which sin is to be forgiven, covered over and obliterated, is by returning to God" (5). Speaking of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus he adds: "This internal change through the divine Spirit, is a change of mind, is a change of life such as is elsewhere designated by repentance and faith" (6). We see from such quotations as these that Briggs thinks it quite possible for the natural man to convert and to regenerate himself. Or rather, we should say that, according to Briggs, man does not need to be regenerated at all in order to lead the truly moral life. He identifies regeneration with conversion and then puts the power of conversion within man himself. He does indeed refer to "the divine Spirit" but he nowhere teaches that the divine Spirit takes the things of Christ and applies them unto us. According to Briggs the cross of Christ has nothing directly to do with our ethical life.

It is on this naturalistic basis too that Briggs makes his distinction between the "law of love" and the "liberty of love." According to Briggs,

Jesus teaches definitely in the Sermon on the Mount that his disciples may do more than they have to do. They ought naturally to be good. That is the law of love. But they need not go the second mile. This is the liberty of love. In other words Briggs plainly teaches that man can of his own accord do the morally right. He could do even more than he needs to do if only he has the encouragement. All this is simply non-Christian thought. And all this is taken for granted as being the specific teaching of Jesus. Yet what we are now most concerned to note is that all this is naturally involved in the "Ethics of Jesus" literature. Naturalism lies at the basis of it all.

We see then that what might at first appear as a mere limitation of scope has in actuality turned out to be a denial of Christian ethics altogether. There is on this ground no reason why the ethics of Jesus, as usually spoken of, should not be woven into the fabric of general ethics and be made a chapter in the histories of ethical theories as they are usually given. Or we may say that the ethics of Jesus might be given a place at best among the types of ethical theories as they are systematically presented (7).

\*\*\*\*\*

The third man whose work on "The Ethics of Jesus" we wish to consider briefly is James Stalker. He is more conservative than either King or Briggs. Yet it soon becomes clear that he too falls under the same criticism that we have given of both King and Briggs, namely, that that which seems to be nothing more than a limitation in scope turns out to be a reduction in standard as well.

That Stalker does not regard Christ as the second person of the Trinity whose word is therefore absolute, appears at once from the fact that he constantly speaks of the originality of Jesus (8). Speaking of Jesus' relation to the Old Testament teachers he says: "All their doctrine on this subject Jesus accepts, sympathizing with it from the bottom of His heart." Now certainly the men of the Old Testament were but forerunners of Christ and spoke his words as plenipotentiaries sent by him. If an ambassador from the United States speaks in the name of the President at London, and if afterwards the President himself goes to London, one cannot say that the President accepts the word of the ambassador. Similarly, to say that Jesus agreed with the men of the Old Testament, when it is not qualified, means that the writers of the Old Testament were independent of Jesus in what they said.

And that it is this that Stalker really means appears from the fact that he goes on to speak of Jesus' relationship to the Greeks in the same way. Stalker argues as though Jesus perhaps did not speak of some of the virtues the Greeks spoke most of because he was not acquainted with them (9). Now it may be that Jesus never read Aristotle's Nicomachean ethics. Yet it is certainly true that as the second person of the Trinity he was the

Logos of creation. As the Logos of creation it was through him only that the Greeks could make their speculations. In this respect then we may say that as the second person of the Trinity Christ had heard of the Greek virtues before the Greeks had heard of them. In other words, it was because in the pactum salutis that Christ took it upon himself to save the world, which would fall into sin and try in vain through its own ethics and its own virtues to save itself, that he now put forth his righteousness as the foundation of the virtues of those that should be in him. The whole question of Jesus' being acquainted with or not being acquainted with Greek ethics is therefore entirely beside the point. Jesus did not try to build a second story upon a foundation already laid. He laid a new foundation. This new foundation he began to lay by sending his servants, the prophets, ahead of him. This foundation he did not personally finish laying. He finished it through his servants the apostles. And it was upon this new foundation that he rebuilt every virtue.

Stalker has nothing of all this in his book. He knows of no Jesus who had so comprehensive a plan and purpose. He knows only of a Jesus who "missed being the king of the Jews, in order that He might be the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords" (10). Stalker knows only of a Jesus who like one blind "was led by a way which he knew not." If one thinks of Jesus in this way it is no wonder that one should sum up the revelation of Jesus to his "predecessors" by saying: "Whilst, however, thus incorporating with His own teaching all noble conceptions of human conduct and character already in the world, He went far beyond them" (11). Jesus did, to be sure, go far beyond other men primarily because he was before them. "Before Abraham was I am" is of as great significance in ethics as it is in doctrine.

In consonance with this leveling of Jesus' personality to that of the merely human is the practical limitation of the ethical teaching of Jesus to this life. Interpreting the beatitude "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" Stalker says: "This, at any rate, is a promise that those who are fighting on the side of righteousness shall not lack the footing they require to deliver their blows, and that those whose hearts are set on the extension of the kingdom of God shall have room and verge enough in a world of which God is the Author and Governor" (12). And even where Stalker does refer to a life beyond he says that the thing we will be judged on is the character we have become. And all of this is said without so much as mentioning that we cannot be acceptable in the sight of God unless the blood of Christ has been shed for us. Stalker too has reduced Christian ethics to one ethical theory among many.

\*\*\*\*\*

But apart from the most obnoxious point that we have discussed, namely, that the "Ethics of Jesus" literature is essentially non-Christian, it is objectionable from the point of view of the scope of Christian ethics.

There could be no true ethics of Jesus without a consideration of his divine person and work, and the work was not most fully explained by Jesus himself. It was most fully set forth by his apostles, and specifically by Paul. According to orthodox theology these apostles were clothed with authority to set forth this significance of Jesus' person and work by Jesus himself. Accordingly, the "Ethics of Paul" is nothing but the ethics of Jesus. We do not, of course, object to speaking of or writing of the Ethics of Paul or the Ethics of Jesus, just as we do not object to speaking or writing of the Pauline theology. Yet it should be carefully noted that when we distinguish between the ethics of Jesus and the ethics of Paul the only meaning such a distinction can carry, if we wish to be true to the Christian interpretation, is that by the ethics of Jesus we signify that part of Christian ethics of which Jesus spoke while he was on earth, while with the ethics of Paul we mean that part of the ethics of Jesus which Jesus taught after he had gone to heaven. Both parts belong to the one great system of ethics which we generally speak of as Christian Ethics.

### Christian Ethics

The same difficulties spoken of with respect to the "Ethics of Jesus" literature appear even if the term Christian Ethics is used. So Newman Smyth gives his large work the title: "Christian Ethics." Yet he too takes for granted that all that need be meant by that phrase is that which others speak of as the ethics of Jesus. He does indeed, at a certain point in his argument, bring out that one cannot really and finally separate ethics from metaphysics and that therefore a theism is presupposed in any discussion of Christian ethics. Yet he also takes for granted that theism is presupposed in other systems of ethics. To him it seems to be possible to have various systems of ethics based upon theism. Now this is true in the sense that Lutheran and Reformed Ethics are both based upon theism. Or it may be true in the sense that Roman Catholicism and Protestant ethics are based upon theism. But these differences are very small indeed in comparison with the difference between the naturalism and supernaturalism of non-Christianity and Christianity respectively. To speak of theism as being presupposed by both Christians and non-Christians is to think of a theism so attenuated that it can give support to neither. It is to think of a bare theism.

Thus we are led to the realization that even the term "Christian Ethics" is not wholly satisfactory unless we mean by it no more than a subdivision of the term Christian-theistic Ethics. It is perfectly legitimate to deal with specifically Christian ethics just as it is perfectly legitimate to speak of the Christian church meaning therewith the church of the new covenant. But just as we should constantly realize that we really mean the church of all ages, which God is gathering by his Word and Spirit from all nations and tribes, so we ought also to realize that when we speak of Chris-

tian ethics we speak of a subdivision of Christian-theistic ethics which includes the ethical principles that should control the people of God through all ages.

### Old Testament and New Testament Ethics

For the same reason we should also keep in mind that when we speak of Old Testament ethics and New Testament ethics we refer to a difference in the stage of development of the revelational principle that lies at the heart of Christian-theistic ethics and of nothing more. From the non-Christian point of view there is not only a great difference, but a contrast between Old Testament and New Testament ethics. Now we do indeed recognize a great difference between the two. But even this difference is not the same difference that the non-Christian thinks he sees. For us the difference is merely that of stages of the development of the same redemptive principle. For non-Christians there is really no redemptive principle anywhere in the world. Hence, according to them, there can be no connection between any stages in such a redemptive principle. Hence they must disallow any real connection between Old and New Testament ethics. They may, to be sure, allow that there are certain similarities. These similarities will, however, have to be explained on the ground of nothing more fundamental than that of the peculiar genius of the Jews for righteousness, or for some other religious and moral characteristics which Jesus and Paul, Jews as they were, naturally inherited.

What we mean, then, by the scope of Christian-theistic ethics is not that we are merely tracing certain historical antecedents of the ethics of Jesus or the ethics of Paul when we go to the Old Testament. What we mean is that it is our conviction that the Old and the New Testaments together contain the special revelation of God to the sinner, without which we could have no ethical interpretation at all. We must state the teaching of the whole Bible in order to have a true interpretation of the ethical life. So then we should rather speak of Christian-theistic ethics than of the ethics of the Old and the ethics of the New Testament.

### Biblical Ethics

But it will now be asked whether it is not well, then, to speak of biblical ethics, since it is from the Bible as a whole that we must gain our interpretation. It must be granted at once that when we speak of biblical ethics we do in a large measure avoid the difficulties that we encounter in the other appellations. No one who is interested in the propagation of some form of non-Christian ethics will maintain that there is essentially one principle of ethics running through both the Old and the New Testaments. Yet the term biblical ethics is likely to be interpreted too narrowly. It calls very

particular attention to the fact that Christian-theistic ethics is redemptive to the core. It also calls attention to the fact that it is only in the Scriptures that we can find the material for the interpretation of Christian-theistic ethics. Yet what we are interested in bringing out at once is that in Christian-theistic ethics we deal with an interpretation that leaves out of consideration nothing that can have any bearing upon the moral life. It uses all the results of all the sciences in its interpretation of the ethical life. True, it interprets these results themselves in the light of Scripture, but that is because Scripture has a definite place in the organism of Christian-theistic thought as a whole. In order then to bring out as fully as we can the all-inclusive scope of the subject with which we deal and in order to avoid, as far as possible, the misunderstanding that we are dealing with our subject in any but a truly Christian way, we prefer to speak of Christian-theistic ethics.

We may not always use this term. We may sometimes speak of Christian ethics. But this will be merely for the sake of brevity unless it is specifically noted that we refer to the ethics of the new dispensation in particular.

#### Revealed Ethics and Natural Ethics

In conclusion we would point out that just as we prefer the name Christian-theistic to the name biblical ethics, so we also prefer the name Christian-theistic ethics to the name revealed ethics. One does, however, constantly meet with the distinction between revealed and natural theology. And corresponding to this distinction there are such titles as "The Ethics of the Gospel" and "The Ethics of Nature."

The distinction between revealed and natural theology as ordinarily understood readily gives rise to a misunderstanding. It seems to indicate that man, though he is a sinner, can have certain true knowledge of God from nature but that for higher things he requires revelation. This is incorrect. It is true that we should make our theology and our ethics wide enough to include man's moral relationship to the whole universe. But it is not true that any ethical question that deals with man's place in nature can be interpreted rightly without the light of Scripture.

For these reasons we prefer the name Christian-theistic ethics. It is as wide in scope as we need to take our subject. It leaves no ethical question of any human being out of its purview. On the other hand it calls attention to the indissoluble union between Christianity and theism, between the ethics of nature and the ethics of the gospel. It brings into harmony the Old and the New Testament. It will have nothing to do with a false antithesis between Paul and Christ or with any other false antitheses. Christian-theistic ethics deals with man's summum bonum, man's standard of living,



and with man's ethical motive, and obtains its light on all these problems from the Scriptures.

### References for Chapter II

1. Henry Churchill King: The Ethics of Jesus, p. 80.
2. Cf. Geerhardus Vos: The Self-disclosure of Jesus.
3. Charles Augustus Briggs: The Ethical Teaching of Jesus, p. 36.
4. Cf. on the temptations of Jesus, the notes on New Testament Biblical Theology, by Vos.
5. Briggs: Op. Cit., p. 68.
6. Briggs: Op. Cit., p. 69.
7. Cf. James Martineau: Types of Ethical Theory.
8. J. Stalker: The Ethics of Jesus, pp. 35, 41, 64, etc.
9. Idem, p. 65.
10. Idem, p. 50.
11. Idem, p. 65.
12. Idem, p. 34.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

We have found that Christian ethics does not differ from other ethics in that it seeks to answer any different questions than other ethical theories do, but that it differs from other ethical theories in that it answers these questions differently. We have also found that Christian ethics does not differ from other ethical theories in that it is more limited than they. On the contrary, it is as comprehensive in its sweep as any ethical theory could be. The difference is therefore basically one of approach.

We wish therefore to consider first the presuppositions of Christian ethics. It is, in the last analysis, these basic presuppositions that make all the difference between Christian and non-Christian ethics. It was a non-Christian epistemology and metaphysics that made the men who wrote on the "Ethics of Jesus" give the answers that they gave to the ethical questions that they discussed. So too it is the epistemological and the metaphysical presuppositions of Christianity that make us give the answers that we give to the ethical questions that we discuss. Accordingly, we shall in the present chapter speak of the epistemological and in the following chapter of metaphysical presuppositions of Christian ethics.

#### Christian Consciousness

In the case of non-Christian ethics, it is in the last analysis the "moral consciousness" of man from which the information is sought in answer to the ethical questions discussed in Chapter One. That this is so may not be immediately apparent. There are schools of ethical philosophy which maintain that the ethical good is totally independent of moral consciousness to begin with. According to them it is the business of the moral consciousness of man merely to recognize what is good and then set itself in action toward the realization of it. From Plato to Kant there have been those who have insisted on the "objectivity" of morality. They would accordingly disagree if we classified them with those who have set the moral consciousness of man as the only final source of information on things moral.

In answer to this and in justification of our classification we would say that we fully recognize that there is a great difference between those who advocate the "subjectivity" of morality and those who maintain what they term the "objectivity" of morality. We may compare these two types of moral interpretation among non-Christian writers on ethics with the two divisions that we find in philosophy, namely, pragmatism and idealism. Though these two types of philosophy differ among themselves, that differ-

ence falls into oblivion when their common characteristics are brought to light. And it is about this common characteristic that we are now concerned. This common characteristic is that according to them all, thought, human and divine, if divine thought there be, is essentially of one type.

By that we mean that according to both the idealist and the pragmatic mind it is impossible to speak intelligently of man's thought as being analogical of God's thought. Human thought may be surrounded by a universe which is independent of itself, but the environment which surrounds it is still impersonal. By that we do not mean that according to idealism and pragmatism there are no other persons in the universe besides man. Some hold that there is a personal God and that there are higher intelligences that have in the past been designated as angels. But what we mean is that according to both idealism and pragmatism this God, if he exists, and these intelligences, if they exist, are themselves surrounded by an impersonal environment. The point is that if the most ultimate environment that surrounds man is impersonal it is in the last analysis the task of the consciousness of man to determine the nature of that impersonal environment. It is in this way that the "objective" morality of the idealist is at bottom as "subjective" as the "subjective" morality of the pragmatist.

When we put the matter in this way neither the idealist nor the pragmatist has reason to complain. Both of them are equally anxious to disown the opposite of the position we have outlined. If one should ask an idealist whether he would care to maintain that it is God who must speak first to the moral consciousness of man before the moral consciousness of man can say anything about moral matters, he would be quick to say no. It is a most fundamental aspect of idealist epistemology that all dualism must be avoided, dualism in epistemology as well as dualism in metaphysics. Now idealism would consider the idea that God's "moral consciousness," if we may speak of God in this way, should be the absolute and original standard of the moral consciousness of man as an evidence of unpardonable dualism. And as for the pragmatist it is too obvious to need comment that he would reject the Christian view.

We are not now concerned to defend the Christian-theistic epistemology in opposition to non-Christian epistemology. We are at present concerned to set briefly the main points of difference between the Christian and the non-Christian epistemology in clear-cut opposition against one another, in order to point out that the ethics of the non-Christian will have to be in accordance with his non-Christian epistemology, and that the ethics of the Christian will have to be in accordance with his epistemology. We are concerned, moreover, to indicate that the nature of the opposition in the ethical field will be similar to the nature of the opposition in the field of epistemology. In both cases there is a basic difference in the interpretation of the human consciousness.

## The Nature of the Difference Between Christian and Non-Christian Epistemology

Just what then, we ask, is the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian interpretation of the moral consciousness as far as its being a source of the answer to ethical inquiry is concerned? The most comprehensive way in which this difference can be intimated is by saying that according to non-Christian thought the moral consciousness of man is the ultimate source of information, while according to Christian thought the moral consciousness is no more than the immediate or proximate source of information on ethical problems. For Christian ethics the self-contained God, the ontological trinity, is the ultimate reference point in all ethical as well as in all other questions. For non-Christian ethics the autonomous moral consciousness of man is the ultimate reference point in all ethical as well as in all other questions.

God as absolute personality is the ultimate category of interpretation for man in every aspect of his being. Every attribute of God will, in the nature of the case, be reflected primarily in every other attribute of God. There will be mutual and complete exhaustiveness in the relationship of the three persons of the trinity. Consequently no one of the persons of the trinity can be said to be correlative in its being, to anything that exists beyond the Godhead. If then man is created, it must be that he is absolutely dependent upon his relationship to God for the meaning of his existence in its every aspect. If this is true, it means that the good is good for man because it has been set as good for man by God. This is usually expressed by saying that the good is good because God says it is good. As such it is contrasted with non-Christian thought which says that the good exists in its right and that God strives for this good which exists in its right. We should remember, however, that when as theists we say that our thought may be contrasted to non-Christian thought on the moral question by saying that we hold that the good is good because God says so, and the non-theist says that the good is good in its own right, we do not artificially separate the will of God from the nature of God. What we mean is that the will of God expresses the nature of God. It is the nature as well as the will of God that is ultimately good. Yet since this nature of God is personal there is no sense in which we can say that the good exists in its own right.

With these considerations as a background we can think of man as he first appeared upon the face of the earth. It follows logically that he appeared upon the earth as a perfect though finite replica of this Godhead. We do not intend to say anything in detail about this here, since what we have to say in detail about this matter comes under the head of the motive of ethics. Yet it is necessary here to point out that the original perfection of man in every respect, and in particular in the moral respect, is implied in the conception of God which lies at the foundation of the whole structure of Christian thought.

The reason for this is briefly as follows: There cannot be any evil in God. This is involved in the very idea of God as an absolute person. If there were evil in his being God could not be absolute. If there were evil in his being there would be a mutual cancellation instead of a mutual complementation of the attributes of God. Absolute negation and absolute affirmation would cancel one another. Plato saw that somehow the Good had to be supreme if there was to be intelligible predication, but he could not get rid of the "mud and hair and filth" in the ideal world. Christianity has no "mud and hair and filth" in its ideal world. Satan is not as old as God, but was a creature of God and sinned as a creature of God.

Now if there cannot be any evil in God it would be quite impossible to think that he should create man as evil. Again this is true not only because we abhor the idea of attributing such a deed to God, but because it would be a contradiction of his being to do so. Thus we hold that man appeared originally with a perfect moral consciousness. It is this that the Genesis narrative tells us.

The difference between Christian ethics and non-Christian ethics has not been made perfectly clear at this point unless we dwell on the fact that even in its original perfect condition the moral consciousness of man was derivative and not the ultimate source of information as to what is good. Man was in the nature of the case finite. Hence his moral consciousness too was finite, and as such had to live by revelation. Man's moral thought as well as the other aspects of his thought had to be receptively reconstructive.

This then is the most basic and fundamental difference between Christian and non-Christian epistemology, as far as it has a direct bearing upon questions of ethics, that in the case of non-Christian thought, man's moral activity is thought of as at once creatively constructive, while in Christian thought, man's moral activity is thought of as being receptively reconstructive. According to non-Christian thought there is no absolute moral personality to whom man is responsible and from whom he has received his conception of the good, while according to Christian thought God is the infinite moral personality who reveals to man the true nature of morality.

It is necessary, however, to think of this revelation of God to man as originally internal as well as external. Man found in his own makeup, in his own moral nature, an understanding of and a love for that which is good. His own nature was revelational of the will of God. But while thus revelational of the will of God, man's nature, even in paradise, was never meant to function by itself. It was at once supplemented by the supernatural, external and positive expression of God's will as its correlative. Only thus can we see how basic is the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian view of the moral nature of man in relation to ethical questions.

## Evil

The second point of difference that must be included in our general antithesis stated above concerns the question of the influence of sin on the moral consciousness of man. We cannot begin to give a survey here of all the biblical material that bears on this question. Nor is this necessary. The main point is clear enough. Just as sin has blinded the intellect of man so it has corrupted the will of man. This is often spoken of as the hardening of man's heart. Paul says that the natural man is at enmity against God. The natural man cannot will to do God's will. He cannot even know what the good is. The sinner worships the creature rather than the Creator. He has set all the moral standards topsy-turvy.

Now this doctrine of the total depravity of man makes it perfectly plain that the moral consciousness of man as he is today cannot be the source of information about what is good or about what is the standard of the good or about what is the true nature of the will which is to strive for the good. It would surely seem plain enough that men have to choose on this point between the Christian and the non-Christian position.

It is this point particularly that makes it necessary for the Christian to maintain without any apology and without any concession that it is Scripture, and Scripture only, in the light of which all moral questions must be answered. Scripture as an external revelation became necessary because of the sin of man. No man living can even put the moral problem as he ought to put it, or ask the moral questions as he ought to ask them unless he does so in the light of Scripture. Man cannot of himself truly face the moral question, let alone answer it.

Man's moral consciousness then as it is today is (a) finite, and (b) sinful. If it were only finite and not sinful we could go to the moral consciousness of man for our information. Even then, however, we should have to remember that we could go there not because the moral consciousness would be able either to ask or to answer the moral question correctly in its own power alone, but because its own activity would be in fruitful contact with God from whom the questions and the answers would ultimately come. But now that man is sinful as well as finite we cannot go to that moral consciousness at all unless that moral consciousness be regenerated.

It is true that the non-regenerate consciousness of man cannot entirely keep under the requirements of God that speak to it through its own constitution. Thus God's will is heard through it in spite of it. Hence the natural man excuses or accuses himself for his ethical action. But for the main point now under consideration this point may be ignored. For to the extent that man is not restrained by God's common grace from living out his sinful principle, the natural man makes his own moral consciousness the ultimate standard of moral action.

## The Regenerated Consciousness

What then of the regenerated moral consciousness? In the first place the regenerated consciousness is in principle reinstated to its former place. This implies that we can go to it because we could originally go to it for our answers. This is of basic importance, for it furnishes the point of contact between Christian and non-Christian ethics. As Christians we do not maintain that man's moral consciousness cannot under any circumstances and in any sense serve as a point of reference. But man's moral consciousness must be regenerated in order to serve as a reference point. Moreover the regenerated consciousness is still finite. It must still live by revelation as it originally lived by revelation. It can never become an ultimate information bureau. Finally, the regenerated moral consciousness is changed in principle only, and therefore often errs. Consequently it must constantly seek to test itself by Scripture. More than that, the regenerated consciousness does not in itself fabricate any answers to the moral questions. It receives them and reworks them. Now if this receiving, in so far as it implies an activity of the mind, be called the function of the moral consciousness, we may speak of it as a source of information. The regenerated moral consciousness which constantly nourishes itself upon the Scripture is as the plenipotentiary who knows fairly well what his authority desires.

So then we have before us the Christian and the non-Christian conception of the moral consciousness of man. Summing up the matter we may say (a) that there once was a moral consciousness that was perfect and could act as a source, but only as a proximate source, of information on moral questions; (b) that there are now two types of moral consciousness which agree on no ethical answer and on no ethical question, namely, the non-regenerate and the regenerate consciousness; (c) that the non-regenerate consciousness denies while the regenerate consciousness affirms that the moral verdict of any man must be tested by Scripture because of the sin of man.

### Difficulties

According to the Christian position, then, the moral consciousness must be simply and without any qualification subordinate to Scripture. But this position involves certain difficulties that we must now consider. The first and most important difficulty appears when it is asked: "To what is the authority of the Bible addressed?" (1). It is by the implication of the question alone that Newman Smyth thinks he has overthrown the position we have outlined above. Since his position is typical of the modern viewpoint in general, we may with profit consider it. Smyth thinks that by asking us to what the Bible addresses itself he has cornered us. Of course, he implies, no one can deny that the Bible itself, in the nature of the case, ap-

peals to the moral consciousness of man. The Bible throughout follows the method of Isaiah when he said, "Come let us reason together." Now plainly if we seek to reason with someone we appeal in the last analysis to the consciousness of the person whom we seek to persuade. It is thus that Smyth argues.

What would he answer then to the question of the relative priority of the Scripture and the moral consciousness? He tries to give both of these equal authority, or at least he tries to give to each a measure of authority. "Yet we have granted that each has truth and authority" (2). He soon realizes that this division of authority is untenable. "Obviously, as already observed, we cannot admit two independent rules, two final authorities. We cannot hold that both the Bible and the Christian consciousness are courts of final appeal" (3). Now since Smyth deems the solution that the Scriptures alone are normative an "easy solution" which, "like most easy solutions of profound spiritual problems, needs to be followed but a little way before it will be seen to plunge into difficulties and to lose itself in hopeless confusions," he ought to point out to us that his theory which amounts to saying that only the Christian consciousness is normative, does not lead to hopeless confusion. But this he cannot do. On the contrary, it is perfectly plain that if any one starts on the road on which Smyth starts, and on which the average modernist starts, there is no stopping till one has gone the whole way of pagan or non-Christian ethics. If the Christian consciousness has no absolute standard by which to judge itself, it is soon lost in the ocean of relativity, in which all the standards of non-Christian ethics swim. More than that, if the Christian consciousness does not completely submit itself to the Scripture it is already pagan in principle. All that is not of implicit obedience to God is sin.

What Smyth should have done is to show that ethical predication is possible upon a non-Christian or non-theistic basis. To do this he should have shown that not only ethical predication, but predication as such, is possible upon a non-theistic basis. In other words he should have attempted to meet the Christian position squarely and should have attacked it in its foundation. He ought to know that the Christian theory of the relation of the Christian consciousness to Scripture is involved in the very bedrock of Christian theism itself. He should have realized that he could not dispose of the orthodox position by taking for granted that it is mere traditionalism and by mentioning a few "difficulties" with respect to it.

But what of those difficulties? Are they not real? We answer that they are real but that they are not any greater than any of the other "difficulties" with respect to theism. If one does not, because he feels he cannot, throw overboard the whole theistic position on account of the "difficulties" involved in it, one need not throw overboard the idea of subordination of the moral consciousness to Scripture. The chief difficulty here in the moral sphere, as elsewhere in the intellectual sphere, lies in the ques-



tion of the possibility of the genuineness of by-personal action, i. e., analogical action.

The non-Christian position assumes that a personal act, to be personal, must be uni-personal. It takes for granted that if man is to be responsible for his deeds he must be wholly independent. The non-Christian position puts man in an ultimately impersonal atmosphere. It is this that is implied in Smyth's objection to the submission of the moral consciousness to the Scripture. Scripture is nothing but the voice of the absolute God in a world of sin. Even in the state of perfection God would be addressing his commands to the consciousness of man. Even in such a case, however, this would not mean that God was submitting his commandments to the final judgments of man. God always expects implicit obedience when he addresses his commands to the consciousness of man. This was true of Adam in paradise. Similarly now that God speaks to sinful man through the Scripture, this does not mean that he has forfeited his claim to absolute obedience. When God says to the sinner, "Come let us reason together," he does not therewith put the sinner on an equality with himself. He asks man himself to see that obedience to God is the best for him, but whether or not man sees this he must be obedient still, or suffer the consequences.

What the objection of Smyth amounts to, then, is to saying that there is no absolute God who has full authority over his creatures. Smyth has reduced the command of an absolute God to the advice of a finite God. And this can be done only on the assumption spoken of before, that there is an ultimately impersonal atmosphere surrounding both God and man.

It is of particular importance to note these consequences of a refusal to make the Christian consciousness of man subject to the Scriptures without any qualification, because the objection of Smyth is typical of a general attitude that is very widespread. One form in which this attitude manifests itself is in the contention of many Christians that there are many moral questions about which the Bible has nothing to say.

This limitation of territory amounts in the end to the same thing as the limitation spoken of in the case of Smyth. The various territories of ethical endeavor are so closely interrelated that it is impossible to live in one territory from one principle and in another territory from another principle. Christ has shed his light over the whole of life in all its ramifications. Sin has gone as far as anything human has gone. Far as the curse is found, salvation is found and the curse has left no territory untouched.

If it be objected that the Bible clearly does not say anything about many problems of the day, we reply that this is not really true. The Bible does say something about every problem that we face if only we learn the art of logically deducing and fitting to our situation that which Scripture offers either in principle or in example.

We may point out still further that if this conception of the complete and unqualified submission of the Christian consciousness to the Scripture be understood, and the reason for the necessity of it be clearly seen, then many difficulties of detail fall away. Smyth asks, for instance, "Would a plain grammatical rendering of some accredited word of an apostle warrant us in thinking evil of God?" (4). The implication of the question is that there are some passages of Scripture, or at least that there may be, which, if taken as they are meant to be taken, would make us think evil of God. Now that is the point in dispute. The whole question is whether we are to get our idea of God from the Bible or whether we are to get it somewhere else. If we are to get it from the Bible it follows that the idea that we get from the Bible by good exegesis is the right idea. We see then that Smyth assumed what he set out to prove, namely, that the Christian consciousness must be the judge of the Scriptures.

A passage such as is found in Romans 9 illustrates what we mean. Paul speaks of man being in the hands of God as clay is in the hands of the potter. In other words Paul, without any qualification, teaches the sovereignty of God. This sovereignty is Paul's last court of appeal. Against this many a Christian consciousness rebels, and in rebelling takes for granted that it has the right of rebellion. But this is the point in dispute.

Still further we would observe that the subordination of the Christian consciousness to Scripture applies to the Old as well as to the New Testament. There is often a difference between the Old and the New Testament as to what they command because of the difference in dispensations which they primarily serve. Yet it remains true that whatever can be shown to be meant for us from the Old Testament must be as implicitly obeyed as what is taught in the New Testament.

The reason for emphasizing this point lies in the effort on the part of many to find a difference of principle between the Old and the New Testaments. We cannot here speak of this in detail. We wish only to illustrate what we mean by Smyth's interpretation of the story of God's command to Abraham to offer Isaac. Says Smyth: What is right for Abraham? Whatever God orders. What shall Abraham do? Not what he thinks God ought to desire of him; but he shall bring the sacrifice which God has required of him. The story of the offering of Isaac can be ethically interpreted only as we put ourselves back into the primitive moral conditions of Abraham's life. The question which on our moral plane at once arises is, How could Abraham have supposed that Jehovah could have required of him the life of his first-born son? We see from the result, when a ram was substituted for the son whom Abraham had bound to the altar, that God did not desire the offering of human sacrifices. Had Abraham known God at the mountain's foot as well as he knew him at the mountain's top, there would have been no need of that long, arduous, heartbreaking journey up the mountain's side" (5).

We have in this interpretation a typical modernist method of procedure. The major premise which is taken for granted at the beginning of the interpretation is that whatever seems to violate the moral consciousness must be taken out of Scripture, or ignored if it cannot be taken out. Smyth takes for granted that God could not have commanded Abraham to offer his son. Now it is true that we can at our state of revelation see that God did not wish such a command actually to be carried out. But it is equally true that according to the narrative God actually commanded Abraham to offer his son, in order to test whether he were willing to be completely obedient to Jehovah. When Abraham showed that he was perfectly obedient, inasmuch as he had faith that God was so great as to be able to raise his son from the dead, thus overcoming any harm that would seemingly result from strict obedience, the offering was not necessary at all.

It was not a mistake of Abraham, as Smyth says we now see that it was, to think that God could have asked such a thing of him. The mistake lies with us if we do not show the same obedience that Abraham showed. And it is this unwillingness to show this same obedience that makes us give such an interpretation as Smyth gives.

Of course, the contention of Smyth and of modernists in general, is that the New Testament presents the principle of love instead of that of obedience. This is simply untrue. It is the same God in both Testaments, who by virtue of his creation expects of his creatures implicit obedience. The New Testament, if anything, reveals to us more clearly than the Old that by redemption we are restored to the recognition that we are the creatures of God. The conception of love in the New Testament means, as far as its ethical interpretation is concerned, nothing but the complete willingness and the internal desire to be perfectly obedient to God. It is for this reason that Abraham is called father of those that have faith. It is not the New Testament that has introduced changes in this respect, but it is the perverted "Christian consciousness" that has tried to introduce changes into both the Old and the New Testaments. Those who reject the story of the sacrifice of Abraham because it violates their moral consciousness can usually, if not always, be depended upon to reject the New Testament teaching of eternal punishment as taught by Christ. That, too, is objectionable to their moral consciousness. And all this brings out once more the necessity of facing this problem squarely and of choosing without reserve.

Summing up the whole matter with respect to the epistemological presuppositions of Christian ethics we may say that the Christian-theistic conception of an absolute God and an absolute Christ and an absolute Scripture go hand in hand. We cannot accept one without accepting the others. It is with the Scriptures as an absolute and an absolutely comprehensive authority that we enter upon a discussion of ethical questions as they confront us. We are fully persuaded that the only logical alternative to this position is the position of an out and out pragmatism. All half-way posi-

tions eventually lead to either one or the other of the two positions spoken of, an absolute submission to Scripture and to God, or an absolute rejection of both.

### The Position of Roman Catholicism

On the question discussed in this chapter, Roman Catholicism takes a position half way between that of Christianity and that of paganism. The notion of human consciousness set forth in the works of Thomas Aquinas is worked out, to a great extent, by the form matter scheme of Aristotle. In consequence a large measure of autonomy is assigned to the human consciousness as over against the consciousness of God. This is true in the field of knowledge and it is no less true in the field of ethics.

In the field of ethics this means that even in paradise, before the fall, man is not thought of as being receptively constructive in his attitude toward God. In order to maintain man's autonomy - or as Thomas thinks, his very manhood as a self-conscious and responsible being - man must, from one point of view at least, be wholly independent of the counsel of God. This is implied in the so-called "free-will" idea. Thomas cannot think of man as responsible and free if all his actions have their ultimate and final reference point exclusively in God and his will. Thus there is no really scriptural idea of authority in Romanism.

It follows that Rome has too high a notion of the moral consciousness of fallen man. According to Thomas, fallen man is not very dissimilar from Adam in paradise. He says that while the sinner needs grace for more things than did Adam he does not need grace more (6). Putting the matter somewhat differently, Thomas says, "And thus in the state of perfect nature man needs a gratuitous strength superadded to natural strength for one reason, viz. in order to do and wish supernatural good: but for two reasons, in the state of corrupt nature, viz., in order to be healed, and furthermore in order to carry out works of supernatural virtue, which are meritorious. Beyond this, in both states man needs the Divine help, that he may be moved to act well" (7). In any case, for Thomas the ethical problem for man is as much one of finitude as it is one of ethical obedience. Man is naturally finite. As such he tends naturally to evil. He needs grace because he is a creature even though he is not a sinner. Hence God really owes grace to man at least to some extent. And man does not become totally depraved when he does not make such use of the grace given him as to keep himself from sin entirely. For in any case the act of his free will puts him naturally in grave danger. Fallen man is therefore only partly guilty and only partly to blame. And he retains much of the same ethical power that man had in paradise. For ethical ability is virtually said to be implied in metaphysical ability or free will.

It follows still further that even the regenerate consciousness need not and cannot subject itself fully to Scripture. Thomas is unable to do justice to Paul's assertion that whatever is not of faith is sin. His entire discussion of the cardinal virtues and their relation to the theological virtues proves this point. He distinguishes sharply between them. "Now the object of the theological virtues is God Himself, Who is the last end of all, as surpassing the knowledge of our reason. On the other hand, the object of the intellectual and moral virtues is something comprehensible to human reason. Wherefore the theological virtues are specifically distinct from the moral and intellectual virtues" (8). In respect to the things that are said to be knowable by reason apart from supernatural revelation, then, the Christian acts, and should act, from what amounts to the same motive as the non-Christian. Faith is not required for a Christian to act virtuously in the natural relationships of life. Or if the theological virtues do have some influence over the daily activities of the Christian, this influence is of an accidental and subsidiary nature.

All in all then it is clear that Rome cannot ask its adherents to submit its moral consciousness to Scripture in any thorough way. And accordingly Rome cannot challenge the non-Christian position, such as that set forth by Newman Smyth, in any thorough way.

A position similar to that of Rome is frequently maintained by evangelical Protestants. As a recent illustration we mention the case of C. S. Lewis.

Like Rome, Lewis, in the first place, confuses things metaphysical and ethical. In his book Beyond Personality he discusses the nature of the divine trinity. To show the practical significance of the doctrine of the trinity he says: "The whole dance, or drama, or pattern of this three-Personal life is to be played out in each one of us: or (putting it the other way round) each one of us has got to enter that pattern, take his place in that dance" (9). The purpose of Christianity is to lift the Bios or natural life of man up into Zoe, the uncreated life (10). In the incarnation there is given one example of how this may be done. In Him there is "one man in whom the created life, derived from his mother, allowed itself to be completely and perfectly turned into the begotten life." Then he adds: "Now what is the difference which He has made to the whole human mass? It is just this; that the business of becoming a son of God, of being turned from a created thing into a begotten thing, of passing over from the temporary biological life into timeless 'spiritual' life, has been done for us" (11).

All this is similar in import to the position of Aquinas which stresses the idea that man is, through grace, to participate in the divine nature.

It is a foregone conclusion that the ethical problem cannot be fairly put on such a basis. Perhaps the most fundamental difference between all

forms of non-Christian ethics and Christian ethics lies in the fact that, according to the former, it is man's finitude as such that causes his ethical strife, while according to the latter it is not finitude as such but created man's disobedience of God that causes all the trouble. And C. S. Lewis cannot signalize this difference clearly. Lewis does not call men back with clarion voice to the obedience of the God of the Bible. He asks men to "dress up as Christ" in order that while they have the Christ ideal before them, and see how far they are from realizing it, Christ, who is then at their side, may turn them "into the same kind of thing as Himself," injecting "His kind of life and thought, His Zoe" into them (12).

Lewis argues that "a recovery of the old sense of sin is essential to Christianity" (13). Why does he then encourage men to hold that man is embroiled in a metaphysical tension over which not even God has any control? Lewis says that men are not likely to recover the old sense of sin because they do not penetrate to the motives behind moral actions (14). But how shall men ever be challenged to look inside themselves and find that all that is not of faith is sin if they are encouraged to think that without the light of Scripture and without the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit they can, at least in the natural sphere, do what is right? Can men really practice the "cardinal virtues" of prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude in the way that they should, even though they have no faith? No Protestant ought to admit such a possibility.

Lewis seeks objective standards in ethics, in literature, and in life everywhere. But he holds that objectivity may be found in many places. He speaks of a general objectivity that is common between Christians and non-Christians, and argues as though it is mostly or almost exclusively in modern times that men have forsaken it. Speaking of this general objectivity he says: "This conception in all its forms, Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Christian, and Oriental alike, I shall henceforth refer to for brevity simply as 'the Tao.' Some of the accounts of it which I have quoted will seem, perhaps, to many of you merely quaint or even magical. But what is common to them all is something we cannot neglect. It is the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are" (15). But surely this general objectivity is common to Christians and non-Christians in a formal sense only. To say that there is or must be an objective standard is not the same as to say what that standard is. And it is the what that is all important. Granted that non-Christians who hold to some sort of something somewhere above man are better than non-Christians who hold to nothing whatsoever above man, it remains true that in the main issue the non-Christian objectivists are no less subjective than are the non-Christian subjectivists. There is but one alternative that is ultimate; it is that between those who obey God and those who please themselves. Only those who believe in God through Christ seek to obey God; only they have the true principle in ethics. One can only rejoice in the fact

that Lewis is heard the world around, but one can only grieve over the fact that he so largely follows the method of Thomas Aquinas in calling men back to the gospel. The "gospel according to St. Lewis" is too much of a compromise with the ideas of the natural man to constitute a clear challenge in our day.

### References for Chapter III

1. Newman Smyth: Christian Ethics, p. 71.
2. Idem, p. 71.
3. Idem, p. 71.
4. Idem, p. 71.
5. Idem, p. 160.
6. Summa Theologica, tr. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Vol. 4, p. 424.
7. Idem, Vol. 8, p. 326.
8. Idem, Vol. 7, p. 150.
9. C. S. Lewis: Beyond Personality, p. 27.
10. Idem, p. 28.
11. Idem, p. 31.
12. Idem, p. 37.
13. C. S. Lewis: The Problem of Pain, p. 45.
14. Idem, p. 47.
15. C. S. Lewis: The Abolition of Man, p. 17.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE METAPHYSICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

In the preceding chapter we have contrasted the Christian and the non-Christian types of epistemology, as far as they have bearing upon the problems of ethics. The main point of dispute was that of authority. The Christian position maintains that man, as a creature of God, naturally would have to inquire of God what is right and wrong. Originally man could speak to God directly. Since the entrance of sin man has to speak to God mediately. He has now to learn from Scriptures what is the acceptable will of God for him. In opposition to this the non-Christian position holds that man does not need Scripture as a final authority. And this is maintained because the non-Christian does not believe that man ever needed to be absolutely obedient to God. Non-Christian ethics maintains that it is of the nature of the ethical life that man must in the last analysis decide for himself what is right and what is wrong.

The same difference between the Christian and the non-Christian position meets us again when we consider the metaphysical presuppositions of the ethical life. In a discussion of the metaphysical presuppositions of the ethical life, we deal with the will of man from the point of view of its ultimate environment.

Is human personality independent of its environment? If it is not independent of, but dependent upon its environment, how then can it be held responsible for its choices? Can there be any ethics if the will is wholly independent? Can there be any ethics if the will is wholly dependent?

We shall have to search into the nature of this environment itself, in order to discover whether that environment is personal or impersonal. Perhaps some will hold that there can be an ethical responsibility if the environment is wholly impersonal, so that though dependent upon environment man's acts are not affected by any outside environment that is basically personal, so that man will have someone to whom to be responsible.

In theological language we call this the problem of the will in its theological relations. We should have a clear understanding of the most fundamental question about the freedom of the will, if we wish to understand the church's doctrines with respect to the original perfection of man, the substitutionary atonement, regeneration, etc. The church believes that a character can be created as well as accomplished. It believes that Adam was a character before he had done any ethical deed. It believes, moreover that it is possible for ethical substitution to be made. It believes that the death of Christ has removed the evil out of other human charac-



ters, so that they are no longer guilty. It believes that the Holy Spirit creates in man a new heart. How can these things be? The non-Christian position says that all these things cannot be. It says that the notion of a created character is an absurdity. It says that the notion of substitution is an ethical monstrosity. It says that regeneration violates the very idea of personality.

The first point to note here is the nature of the Christian God-concept. It is in the Christian idea of God that we finally rest, both for our metaphysics and our epistemology.

### The God-Concept of Christian Ethics

As God is absolute rationality so God is also absolute will. By this we mean primarily that God did not have to become good, but has from everlasting to everlasting been good. In God there is no problem of activity and passivity. In God there is eternal accomplishment. God is finally and ultimately self-determinative. God is finally and absolutely necessary and therefore absolutely free.

It should be especially noted that Christians put forth this concept of God, not as something that may possibly be true, and may also possibly be untrue. From the non-theistic point of view our God will have to appear as the dumping ground of all difficulties. For the moment we waive this objection, in order to call attention to the fact that all the differences between the Christian and the non-Christian point of view, in the field of ethics, must be ultimately traced to their different God-concepts. Christians hold that the conception of God is the necessary presupposition of all human activity. Non-Christian thought holds that the Christian conception of God is the death of all ethical activity. All non-Christian ethics takes for granted that such a God as Christians believe in does not exist. Non-Christian thought takes for granted that the will of God, as well as the will of man, has an environment. Non-Christian ethics assumes an ultimate activism. For it, God has to become good. Character is an achievement, for God as well as for man. God is thought of as determined as well as determinative.

Non-theism starts with the assumption of an ultimately indeterminate Reality. For it, all determinate existence, all personality, is therefore derivative.

Idealists may object that in the eternally Good of Plato, and in the modern idea of the Absolute, there is no mention made of achievement. In those concepts, it will be said, you have absolutely self-determinative experience. In answer to this we only point out that the God of Plato was not really ultimate. The Good rather than God was Plato's most ultimate concept. His God, to the extent that he was personal was metaphorical and, in

any case, dependent upon an environment more ultimate than himself. The element of Chance is absolutely ultimate in the philosophy of Plato. And it is this ultimacy of Chance that either makes the determinate good an achievement, or sets the Good out of relation to its environment, and therewith destroys its value.

Then as to the modern idealist conception of the Absolute, it is to be noted that it is the result of a definite and prolonged effort to find the conception of an absolutely self-determinative Experience. The idealists have been basically convinced, it seems that unless an absolutely self-determinative Experience can be presupposed, all human experience in general, and ethical experience in particular, would be meaningless. Modern idealism has definitely attempted to set the Good of Plato into a fruitful relation to its environment. Yet it has not overcome the difficulties inherent in Plato's ethics. It has ended with a determined instead of with a self-determinative God. It has taken for granted that the space-time universe is a part or aspect of ultimate existence. With this assumption it made time as ultimate as eternity, and made God dependent upon whatever might come out of the space-time matrix.

The basic difference, then, that distinguishes Christian from non-Christian ethics is the acceptance, or denial, of the ultimately self-determinative will of God. As Christians we hold that determinate human experience could work to no end, could work in accordance with no plan, and could not even get under way, if it were not for the existence of the absolute will of God.

It is on this ground, then, that, from the point of view of the necessity of the ethical life, we hold to the absolute will of God as the presupposition of the will of man. Looked at in this way, that which to many seems at first glance to be the greatest hindrance to human responsibility, namely the conception of an absolutely sovereign God, becomes the very foundation of its possibility.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, however, we should distinguish the concept of an absolutely personalist environment from philosophical determinism. It is all too common for men hastily to identify consistent Christianity with philosophical necessitarianism. Yet they are as the poles apart. Philosophical necessitarianism stands for an ultimate impersonalism: consistent Christianity stands for an ultimate personalism. What this implies for the activity of the will of man itself we may now briefly examine.

### The Man Concept of Christian Ethics

If man acts self-consciously before the background of an absolutely personal God he acts analogically. On the other hand, if man acts self-con-

sciously before the background of an ultimately impersonal principle he acts univocally.

To act analogically implies the recognition that one is a creature of God. If man is actually a creature of God, he must, to think truly and to act truly, think and act analogically. Man is created as an analogue of God. Hence man has been created as a character. God could not create an intellectual and moral blank. It would be a denial of his own ultimately self-determinate Experience to create a blank. Hence, too, the idea of a created character is as defensible as the idea of a self-determinative God. This point is worthy of particular notice. Many Christians in effect deny that man was created a character, but will not go further and deny that God is the eternal character. Now it is plain that if one denies that man was created a character, one will also logically have to deny that God is self-determinative.

One of the most common forms in which the objection to the idea of a created moral character appears on the part of Christians, is in the effort they make to hold man exclusively responsible for the entrance of sin. The argument runs as follows: If the sin of man is in any way connected with the plan of God, it is not man but God who is responsible for its entrance. Now the assumption of this mode of argumentation is that man, in order to be responsible, must act univocally, that is, against an impersonal background. But we have found that determinate action would be wholly impossible on such a non-theistic basis. On such a basis man could neither sin nor do good. He could do nothing. Christians need to become fundamentally conscious of the fact that man cannot think and cannot act truly unless he thinks and acts analogically. The very presupposition of man's being able to sin is that from the outset God created him a perfect moral character. And the very possibility of sin implies the plan of God as its background. Man cannot sin in the blue. Does this make God responsible for sin instead of man? On the contrary this is the only way in which man can be considered responsible. Only an anaological act is a responsible act.

It will be noted, then, that if we are anxious to establish human responsibility, and if in order to establish human responsibility we seek to establish what is ordinarily spoken of as the freedom of the will, we are defeating our own purposes. It is often said that God created free personalities and treated them as such after he had once created them. By this is meant that God realized that when he wished to create free personalities he should have to limit himself in order to make room for their activities. This idea of the self-limitation of God is quite commonly put forth as a solution to the problem of human responsibility. Yet it is plainly a compromise with the anti-theistic motif. In the first place it would be self-contradictory for God to limit himself. It is of his very essence to be self-determinative. And since he is eternal he cannot be self-determinative at one time and no longer self-determinative at another time. The self-limitation of God sacrifices the self-sufficiency of God. It is this self-sufficiency of God in

which our whole hope for any solution to any problem lies. The more you break it down the more you work into the hands of the enemy. And for that reason it is that, so far from establishing freedom for man by reducing this relationship to the plan of God, you are destroying his freedom and there-with the responsibility of man by doing so.

True freedom for man consists in self-conscious, analogical activity. If man freely recognizes the fact that back of his created character lies the eternal character and plan of God, if man freely recognizes that his every moral act presupposes back of it this same unlimited God, he will be free indeed. On the other hand, if man tries to liberate himself from the background of the absolute plan of God, he has to start his moral activity in a perfect blank, he has to continue to act as a moral blank and he has to act in the direction of a moral blank.

That it is of more than academic importance to see the issue clearly between these two opposing ethical motifs, appears especially when we note that it is only if one holds unequivocally to the theistic motif that one can justify the ethics of the substitutionary atonement. If God can and must create character, Christ can and must, once sin has entered into the world and man is to be saved, recreate character. If man can be held responsible for the evil deeds of a God-given character, man can also be accounted ethically perfect through the righteousness of Christ. On the other hand, if character had to be an accomplishment on the part of man in the first place, the re-creation of character has to be an accomplishment on the part of man also. If Adam could not be accounted guilty because he acted with a given character, and against an absolutely personal background, then the Christian cannot be accounted guiltless because salvation is a gift of God and faith itself a work of the Spirit within us. If we insist on univocal action at one place we must, to be consistent, insist on univocal action at every other place.

#### The Non-Christian Conception of the Relation of God and Man

To bring out fully the great importance of holding clearly to the concepts of (a) God as absolute self-determination and (b) man's will as an analogue of God's will so that man's activity as well as man's thought must be analogical, we propose to discuss the position of A. E. Taylor in some detail. Taylor has recently published a two-volume work entitled The Faith of a Moralist. It is perhaps the most comprehensive work on ethics published recently by an idealist. Moreover, Taylor is a first rate metaphysician. He gives these problems a metaphysical and epistemological setting, and it is that with which we are here concerned.

A discussion of Taylor's position will bring out the necessity of thinking clearly on the metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions

of ethics. Bringing to light this close relation will serve to bring our two chapters on these subjects into close contact with one another. It will show that a mixture of eternity and time, which is the very opposite of that for which Christianity stands in the field of metaphysics, is the source of the rejection of biblical authority in the field of ethics.

In the first volume of his book, A. E. Taylor discusses the more direct theistic questions, and in the second volume he discusses questions that pertain more directly to Christianity. In the first volume he has a chapter on Eternity and Temporality. It is here that he lays the foundation for his conception of the relation of God to man. It is here that we can see something of the far-reaching significance of beginning one's ethical discussion with a clear understanding of the metaphysical position that one wishes to maintain.

In this chapter Taylor attaches his reflections to the discussion Plato gives in the *Timaeus* on the relation of the eternal and the temporal. According to Plato the "world soul," by which he means the physical universe, is made up of two ingredients, namely, "the same" and "the other." They are, says Taylor, "just object and event, the eternal and the temporal." Now Taylor holds it to be a fact, from which we may begin our reasoning process, that this Platonic concept of the relation of the eternal and the temporal is essentially true. Says he: "As morality becomes conscious of itself, it is discovered to be always a life of tension between the temporal and the eternal, only possible to a being who is neither simply eternal and abiding, nor simply mutable and temporal, but both at once. The task of living rightly and worthily is just the task of the progressive transmutation of a self which is at first all but wholly mutable, at the mercy of all the gusts of circumstance and impulse, into one which is relatively lifted above change and mutability. Or, we might say, as an alternative formula, it is the task of the thorough transfiguration of our interests, the shifting of interest from temporal to non-temporal good" (1).

In this quotation we have the gist of the matter. We observe three things with regard to it. In the first place Taylor takes it to be a fact that morality is a struggle between the eternal and the temporal within us. About this matter he thinks there can be no dispute. Yet it is exactly this that is in dispute between theists and non-theists. There is no inherent logical reason why the theism that comes to expression in the Scripture, when it says that original man was a wholly temporal being with no aspirations whatsoever to become eternal, but with the truly temporal aspiration to do the will of eternal God, would be considered to be so absurd as not to require refutation. Original man may be conceived as being truly interested in "eternal good" if he seeks to live according to it as a standard which has been given to him. At the same time he could be interested in temporal things. Why should the temporal be thought of as necessarily the source of evil? If an absolute God has created it, the temporal is inherently good,

and man could seek God in the temporal. According to theism there was no tension originally between the eternal and the temporal. The reason for reducing the tension to a metaphysical strain between time and eternity is that men do not want the tension to be found in the exclusively ethical sphere. If the tension can be thus reduced to something metaphysical, its seriousness is reduced or taken away, and man is no longer fully responsible for it. For this reason, we hold, it is but to be expected that the "unregenerated consciousness" shall seek to find the very nature of morality to be a strife between the temporal and the eternal in man. And, as noted in the previous chapter, the Roman Catholic position holds a half-way position on this matter.

In the second place, we must observe that the whole antitheistic position is involved in Taylor's assumption that the nature of morality consists in a tension between the eternal and the temporal. Theism holds that there is no being, and can be no being, who is a mixture of the ingredients of eternity and temporality. God is eternal and man is temporal, and not even Christ is a mixture of the two. In the incarnation, the church has been anxious to maintain, Christ's personality remained divine; it was human nature, not a human person, that he assumed when he became incarnate.

In the third place, the truth of the anti-Christian position is taken for granted in Taylor's position. According to Christianity the redemption wrought by God is not that of the eternalization of man, but his restoration and perfection in the temporal sphere. Even the conception of "eternal life" as it is spoken of especially by the apostle John, does not in the least blur or annihilate the distinction between the eternity of God and the temporality of man. By eternal life the New Testament means a continuation of man's temporal existence, while the conception of eternity when applied to God has nothing to do with time. Only God is and remains supra-temporal.

We need not discuss Taylor's position any further. Its essential contention has been mentioned. In this essential contention we meet with a fundamental confusion between ethical and metaphysical categories. This is typical of all non-Christian thought. It is therefore of essential importance that we observe how the metaphysical presuppositions of Christian ethics are calculated to furnish a foundation for an ethics in which God's will is the supreme authority for man, and God's will alone. The ethical problem is for the Christian not at all a question of outgrowing temporality, but of obedience to God his Creator.

#### References for Chapter IV

1. A. E. Taylor: The Faith of a Moralist, Vol. I, p. 69.

## PART II

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS MAN'S SUMMUM BONUM

#### CHAPTER V

##### THE SUMMUM BONUM IDEALLY CONSIDERED: THE INDIVIDUAL

We turn now to a consideration of man's summum bonum. The ethical ideal that man, as originally created, naturally had to set for himself was the ideal that God wanted him to set for himself. This is involved in the fact that man is a creature of God. God himself is naturally the end of all of man's activity. Man's whole personality was to be a manifestation and revelation on a finite scale of the personality of God.

When we use the common expression that the world, and man especially, was created to glorify God, it is necessary to make a distinction between the religious and the ethical meaning of those words. In a most general way we may say that God is man's summum bonum. Man must seek God's glory in every act that he does. Yet there is a difference of emphasis between seeking the glory of God religiously and seeking the glory of God directly, while in man's ethical activity he seeks the glory of God indirectly. This distinction, however, needs explanation and qualification. In explanation we want to make clear that we do not mean the distinction to be taken strictly and absolutely. There is a sense in which all of man's activities glorify God indirectly only. Man's activities fall in the temporal sphere. God alone is eternal. This means that, strictly speaking, God's glory cannot be increased. No temporal being can add anything to the eternal being. In this sense, then, all activity of man can only indirectly glorify God. The glorification of God on the part of man must always take place in the temporal sphere. And it is this fact that should be kept in mind when the distinction is frequently made that religion is directed toward God, while ethics is directed toward man. This is only relatively true. In one sense all of man's activity is directed toward God. Man's ethics is not only founded upon a religious basis but is itself religious. Though we do not mean it in the way that modernism means it, it is true that in seeking the welfare of our fellow men we seek the glory of God.

For this reason, too, we cannot make an absolute distinction between the religious attitude and the moral attitude on the part of man. It is sometimes said that in the case of religion we have adoration of God, while in the case of ethics we have obedience to God (1). This is only relatively true.

We need obedience in our adoration, and if we are truly obedient we adore God.

Again, it is said that religion deals with the credenda and ethics deals with the agenda of the Christian faith. This, too, is only relatively true. Faith is, to be sure, that activity of the human soul that seeks God, but it is also the foundation of ethical activity. More than that, faith in God must find expression in good deeds to our fellow man.

Finally, we cannot discover an absolute distinction between religion and ethics by saying that in religion we deal with the inner attitude of the soul while in ethics we deal with the deeds of man. We cannot make a clear-cut distinction between internal activity and external activity. Just as we need a true adoration, so we also need a true internal moral attitude; we need a true obedience. On the other hand, just as we need to express our obedience to God in external deeds, so we also need to express our adoration of God in external deeds. We need to worship as well as we need to work.

\*\*\*\*\*

With these qualifications in mind we may now try to state constructively what is meant by saying that in religion man seeks God's glory directly, while in ethics man seeks God's glory indirectly.

In the first place, in both ethics and religion we deal with the whole personality of man. We do not try to cut man into water-tight compartments.

In the second place, both ethics and religion deal with the whole personality of man. We do of course speak of Christian theology and Christian ethics, but the contention is that in Christianity theism is restored, so that the demands made upon the Christian are really the demands made upon man as such. One cannot be a true man unless he be a Christian. One cannot act as a man unless one acts as a Christian.

In the third place, both ethics and religion deal with the whole personality of man in the configuration of the entire human race. We deal with mankind. We deal always either explicitly or implicitly with society as well as with the individual. The one does not exist without the other. The one never did exist without the other. The one has no meaning apart from the other.

In the fourth place, both ethics and religion deal with mankind or the human race as it is seen under the aspect of history. All of man's activities, whether mental, emotional, or volitional are temporal acts. It is in history that man must be studied. In neither ethics nor religion can it be truly man's desire to become anything but temporal. Man but stultifies himself if he tries to become eternal. Religious activity as well as ethical



activity is always temporal activity. Romanism virtually denies this and evangelicalism all too constantly forgets it.

In the fifth place, both ethics and religion deal with historical mankind as genuinely revelatory of God and as genuinely significant for the development of God's purpose with the universe. The end and purpose of the universe is the glory of God. It is to us a relative mystery how history can glorify God. It is a mystery the solution of which lies in God himself. We are not now concerned to discuss this point. We only wish to indicate that the distinction between religion and ethics cannot be found ultimately by saying that in religion we seek God while in ethics we seek something else. We seek God in everything, if we look at the matter from the most ultimate point of view.

In the sixth place, both ethics and religion deal with that aspect of the whole of human personality which we speak of as the will. Here, however, we would insert the first distinction between ethics and religion. Religion, even when for specific purposes it deals with the will of man, tends constantly to relate the volitional aspect closely to the intellectual and the emotional aspects of man. Ethics, on the other hand, tends more to busy itself with the volitional aspect of man alone. Religion tends to emphasize the fact that the king is also the priest and the prophet, while ethics, though not denying or forgetting this, tends to deal with man as king alone. Ethics tends to think of man as the actor rather than as the thinker and the feeler.

Ethics is concerned more exclusively than religion is with the driving and directing forces of human personality. It is for this reason that there is justification for saying that in ethics we deal primarily with obedience, while in religion we deal primarily with adoration. We should observe, however, that when we speak of obedience we are not thinking of a passive virtue. Obedience does, to be sure, emphasize man's receptivity. But it does not emphasize his passivity. Obedience is the foundation of a great activity. It is the foundation of a great constructive program of action. But it is the foundation of a constructive program which is reconstructive. By this we do not mean that a program which has once been constructed has broken down so that it needs reconstruction. We mean rather that back of the constructive activity of man lies the constructive activity of God. God has a program for man to realize on earth. When man willingly and spontaneously accepts this program with all his power, then he is truly obedient.

In the seventh place, a further difference between ethics and religion appears when we consider that the volitional activity with which ethics chiefly deals is contemplated under the view of its immediate results in history. In contrast to this, religion seeks to bring the individual and the race in constant and more direct contact with God above history. This thought is often expressed by saying that in religion man deals with God, while in ethics he deals with his fellow man.

## The Kingdom of God As Man's Summum Bonum

All this background we need in order to understand what is meant by saying that the kingdom of God is man's summum bonum. By the term kingdom of God we mean the realized program of God for man. We would think of man as (a) adopting for himself this program of God as his own ideal and as (b) setting and keeping his powers in motion in order to reach that goal that has been set for him and that he has set for himself. We propose then briefly to look at this program which God has set for man and which man should have set for himself.

The most important aspect of this program is surely that man should realize himself as God's vicegerent in history. Man was created God's vicegerent and he must realize himself as God's vicegerent. There is no contradiction between these two statements. Man was created a character and yet he had to make himself ever more of a character. And so we may say that man was created a king in order that he might become more of a king than he was. We may see what this means first in this chapter for the individual, and secondly, in the next chapter, for society.

### The Individual

For the individual man the ethical ideal is that of self-realization. Let us first see why this should be so, and secondly, what it means in detail.

That the ethical ideal for man should be self-realization follows from the central place given him in this universe. God made all things in this universe for himself, that is for his own glory. But not all things can reflect his glory self-consciously. Yet it is self-conscious glorification that is the highest kind of glorification. Accordingly God put all things in this universe into covenant relation with one another. He made man the head of creation. Accordingly the flowers of the field glorified God directly and unconsciously, but also indirectly and consciously through man. Man was to gather up into the prism of his self-conscious activity all the manifold manifestations of the glory of God in order to make one central self-conscious sacrifice of it all to God.

Now if man was to perform this, his God-given task, he must himself be a fit instrument for this work. He was made a fit instrument for this work but he must also make himself an ever better instrument for this work. He must will to develop his intellect in order to grasp more comprehensively the wealth of the manifestation of the glory of God in this world. He must will to be an ever better prophet than he already is. He must will to develop his aesthetic capacity, that is his capacity of appreciation; he must will to be an ever better priest than he already is. Finally he must will to will the will of God for the whole world; he must become an ever

better king than he already is. For this reason then the primary ethical duty for man is self-realization. Through self-realization man makes himself the king of the earth, and if he is truly the king of the earth then God is truly the king of the universe, since it is as God's creature, as God's vicegerent that man must seek to develop himself as king. When man becomes truly the king of the universe the kingdom of God is realized and when the kingdom of God is realized, God is glorified.

### Self Realization

But what then, more in detail, is involved in this goal of self-realization that man must set for himself? We can bring this out by working out the idea expressed above, when we said that man must learn to will the will of God. Man must work out his own will, that is, he must develop his own will first of all. Man's will needs to become increasingly spontaneous in its reactivity. Man was created so that he spontaneously served God. For this reason he must grow in spontaneity. Whatever God has placed within man by way of activity must also be regarded by him as a capacity to be developed. Man was not created merely with capacity for willing the will of God. He was created with a will to will the will of God. In his heart there was an inmost desire to serve God. But just because man was created with this will God wants men to develop this will.

In the second place, man's will needs to become increasingly fixed in its self-determination. In other words, man must needs develop the backbone of his will. Not as though man was created a volitional amoeba, which had to pass through the invertebrate stage before it finally acquired a backbone. Man was created a self. He was the creature of an absolute self and could not be otherwise created than as a self. But for this very reason again man had to develop his self-determination. Man's God is absolutely self-determinate; man will be Godlike in proportion that he becomes self-determining and self-determinate under God. In proportion that man develops his self-determination does he develop God's determination or plan for his kingdom on earth. God accomplishes his plans through self-determined characters. An unstable man would be useless in the kingdom of God.

In the third place, man's will must increase in momentum. Man's will would naturally increase in momentum in proportion that it increased in spontaneity and self-determinateness. Yet the point of momentum must be separately mentioned. As man approaches his ideal, the realization of the kingdom of God, the area of his activity naturally enlarges itself. Just as the manager of a growing business needs to increase with his business in alertness, stability and comprehensiveness of decision, so man, with the development of his progress toward his ideal, would have to develop momentum in order to meet his ever increasing responsibility.

## Righteousness

It is customary in systematic theology to make a distinction between the image of God in the wider and the image of God in the narrower sense. In accordance with this distinction it is said that the will itself is a part of the image of God in the wider sense, while the particular moral character of the will, namely its being righteous, is a part of the image of God in the narrower sense. When we make such a distinction, however, we should not forget that it is only relatively satisfactory. We cannot think of the will as an aspect of the human personality without thinking of its attitude toward God any more than we can think of man as such without moral qualities. The will never did exist as a mere faculty without function. The will of man was created good, that is, with a definite attitude of obedience to God.

For this reason too we have spoken of the development of the will in no neutral terms. The only way in which the will could really be developed was in its exercise toward God. A neutral will cannot develop because it cannot function.

When we say therefore that originally man's will was righteous, and that it sought after righteousness, this is really nothing more than what is implied in what has already been said about the development of the will in the preceding paragraphs. Yet we may give the point a separate emphasis.

What is meant by righteousness we may perhaps best express in the words that Dr. Geerhardus Vos uses when he describes what Jesus means by righteousness in his discourses. Speaking of the use of the word righteousness, Vos says: "Righteousness is always taken by Jesus in a specific sense which it obtains from reference to God as lawgiver and Judge. Our modern usage of the word is often a looser one, since we are apt to associate with it no further thought than that of what is fair and equitable, inherently just. To Jesus righteousness meant all this and more than this. It meant such moral conduct and such moral state as are right when measured by the supreme norm of the nature and will of God, so that they form a reproduction of the latter, a revelation, as it were, of the moral glory of God" (2). It is particularly in the last words of this quotation that, it would seem, we may sum up what may be put into the term righteousness as applied to man in paradise. Righteousness, when taken as an attribute of God, describes that aspect of the entire personality of God by which he maintains within his being and within his created universe that relation of coordination and subordination which is proper to the station of each personality. Accordingly man's righteousness, which ought to be a reproduction of the righteousness of God, would be, to begin with, a proper sense of subordination of himself to God and of coordination of himself with his fellow man. And man's seeking righteousness would mean (a) that he was becoming increasingly sensitive to the meaning of these relationships of subordination and coordination and therefore increasingly spontaneous in his

desire to maintain these relationships, (b) that he was becoming ever stronger in his determination to see these relationships maintained and developed and (c) that he therefore would actually increase in his power to maintain these relationships.

If we put the matter in this way we can see that the distinction which appears in Scripture between forensic and moral righteousness has not in the least been denied, but has not yet been made in our description of the original righteousness of man. The elements of the later distinction are latent in the more comprehensive and more general, because earlier, term. After all, the later distinction between forensic and moral righteousness cannot be fully understood unless one contemplates them as aspects of an underlying unity. By the forensic righteousness of Christ man is once more enabled to become morally righteous, and as such reproduce in a finite way something of the moral glory of God.

Now if we contemplate righteousness as a matter of right relations among all creatures, and of the right relation of all creatures to their Creator, it becomes clear that the will of man had a great comprehensive task to perform. By seeking righteousness, the will of man was seeking the kingdom of God. Righteousness is the sinews of the kingdom of God.

### Freedom

It may be well, in this connection, to indicate that if man would seek his own self-realization as the first aspect of the kingdom of God, and righteousness in the relations between himself and his fellow man, he would be developing his own true freedom. In order to point out this fact, however, it is necessary to state briefly what we mean by freedom.

In stating what we mean by freedom we shall not enter upon a detailed discussion of all that has often been brought under that subject. All that we shall discuss is that which is necessary for the understanding of the ethical position of man when he was in paradise.

With respect to this we may say that all believers in Christianity will, if they see the implications of their position, be opposed not only to determinism but also to indeterminism, as these terms are usually understood. Both determinism and indeterminism place man in an impersonal environment, from which God is wholly excluded. In contrast to this we must, as Christians, think of man as a creature of God. And this is of the utmost significance for the proper conception of his freedom. It implies that man's freedom consists in doing of his own accord the will of God. It implies that there was nothing in man's environment, or in man himself, that would force him not to do the will of God.

With this general conception of freedom in mind, we can see how man was free to develop his freedom.

It is customary in modern psychology to speak of a subliminal self. Everything that lies beneath the "threshold" of consciousness, namely, such matters as are usually spoken of as drives and instincts, have a great determining force upon our conscious activity. Now this "subliminal self" with its urges of various sorts is usually looked upon as a source of limitation upon the freedom of man's will. Determinists in psychology and determinists in literature picture man as being driven to and fro between various passions over which he has no control. We are not here concerned to debate this question. The Bible plainly teaches that what we are determines what we do. But we are here concerned to point out that in the case of original man his instincts did not hamper his freedom. We might be tempted to express this idea by saying that before the fall man's will controlled his subconscious life, while after the fall man's subconscious life controlled his will. This we believe is largely true. Man was created to be, as nearly as that was possible for a creature, a replica of the being of God. Now in God there is no difference between potentiality and act. There are in God no instincts and no drives of any sort. He is perfectly self-conscious. A temporal being, on the other hand, cannot be entirely self-conscious. Man can never become pure act as God is pure act. Man's life is subject to the process of time, and this process of time, when it is an aspect of the conscious creature, involves a transition from some measure of potentiality to an ever increasing actuality. The future will reveal to man an ever increasing opportunity to do more of the will of God. Yet we have to be careful at this point. We cannot speak with any great certainty. The fall of man wrought no metaphysical change in man. We do not mean, therefore, by saying that before the fall man's will controlled his subconscious life while after the fall man's subconscious life controlled his will, that any real change has taken place in man's metaphysical and psychological makeup. What is meant is that a moral turnover has taken place.

Hence we can more fully and more definitely distinguish man as he was originally from man as he became after the fall, by saying that before the fall the will of man, in so far as it was controlled by his instincts, was not therewith hindered in the least in the freedom of its action, while after the fall the will of man, in so far as it is controlled by his instincts, is practically a slave of those instincts. Before the fall, both man's instincts and his will in the narrower sense of the term, that is, in so far as it acts selfconsciously, were good, while after the fall both the instincts and the will, in the narrower sense of the term, became evil.

It may now be clear what we meant by saying that man had to develop his will by developing the spontaneity of its reaction. The spontaneity of man's action has to do primarily with man's subconscious life. This can be seen when we are called upon to act very quickly, when we have to act before we have time to think. In such cases it often appears what is really in

us, whether we love the good or love the evil. Now though Adam was created perfect, in his instincts as well as in his self-conscious voluntary life, it was especially his moral instinct to do the will of God that had to be developed. We may compare this to the action of a spring. If a spring is wound up loosely it does not react quickly. If, on the other hand, it is wound tightly it reacts quickly. So man's moral nature had to grow in its spontaneity and swiftness of reaction. Take the incident of Jesus' rebuke of Peter. What would seem to us at first as an innocent, or at least a merely incidental thing, the Lord evaluates in its true bearings, and traces to its ultimate source. He sees in Peter's desire to keep his master from suffering an effort on the part of Satan to keep him from going to the cross. Quick as a flash he casts the temptation from him.

We are not primarily concerned with the moral coloring of this story. We are not suggesting that the quick responses of Adam should have been directed against evil. We are concerned to indicate that man's will to do the will of God should be as swift and sure as was Jesus' will to do the will of God, which was in this case manifested by directly opposing the will of Satan.

But in the second place, we have seen that man's moral nature should not only increase in the swiftness of its reaction, but that it should also increase in stability of its reaction. The will of man had to become stronger as well as swifter, in its actions and reactions. And again this has reference to man's subconscious processes as well as to man's self-conscious processes. Man needed to develop solidity of character. A man's character includes his whole moral nature. Now he was, as we have seen, created a moral character, but in developing his character man was meant to become increasingly like the character of God which is absolutely determined and therefore absolutely free. Of course, man would always remain a creature.

Finally, it has been pointed out that if man thus develops his swiftness and stability of reaction to the will of God, he develops momentum for the doing of the will of God. Now if we think of every individual man and the whole race of men swiftly and with determination doing the will of God, we can see that the possibility for its being led astray would constantly diminish. And not only would the possibility of its being led astray be diminished, but the capacity for doing more for the realization of the kingdom of God would be increased, and therewith man would be given an ever new freedom to do the will of God in areas formerly unknown to him. He would be free indeed.

#### References for Chapter V

1. W. Geesink: Gereformeerde Ethiek, II, p. 19.
2. G. Vos: The Kingdom of God and the Church, p. 104.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SUMMUM BONUM IDEALLY CONSIDERED: SOCIETY

If it is the task of the individual man to seek the kingdom of God, it is also the task of the society as a whole to seek the kingdom of God. We have seen that the individual man would have to seek the kingdom of God by his own self-realization above all. We have also seen that the individual would have to seek the realization of the kingdom through a process of history in which his own will and power would be developed in order to become an ever better king under God.

This ideal stood before man in paradise. The self-realization of every finite personality would be the immediate task of the whole of society.

This would in the first place be the ideal that parents would have for their children, and in general, the ideal that all grown up men would have for the young. We are not saying that it would be the ideal that each generation would have for the next generation, because before the entrance of sin the generations of men would not disappear from the earth by death. Neither would their strength diminish by old age. We need not speculate far upon this path. We might think of the far smaller percentage of men that would be needed for the education of the rising generation than is now the case. We might think of the energy released for constructive work in the kingdom if the time did not have to be so largely taken up with repairing the damages of sin. We might think of what science would accomplish, if the mind of man had not been darkened by sin, and if the will of man were anxious in every individual instance to bring out the mysteries laid in the universe by God. The possibilities for the development of the kingdom of God were simply unlimited. As the race would grow older, as each member of the race would increase in spontaneity and in stability in his seeking of the kingdom of God, it is simply impossible for us to think now what might have been achieved.

Parents would first of all regard their children as substantives and not as adjectives to themselves. Every individual human personality that was to be born is known of God from all eternity and must be treated as a personality from his beginning in life. This does not mean that the child could at once be treated as a self-conscious personality. He would have to be treated as a dormant personality.

If the child would have to be treated as a dormant personality, the parents would have to act for it in a representative capacity. The parent would have to be God's representative with the child and the child's representative with God. As God's representative with the child the parent would



seek in every possible way to develop the will of the child. This work would have an intellectual aspect in the sense that the parent would have to place before the child the ideal kingdom of God, just as he had to set that ideal before himself. But this work, and it is that in which we are now directly interested, as far as the will is concerned, would be primarily that of developing the spontaneity and stability of obedience to the laws of God. These laws of God would, in large measure, as long as the child would be very young, be identical with the laws of the parent for the child. Hence if the child would exercise its will in quickly and with determination doing the commands of its parents, it would be developing its will in order later to become more directly useful in the realization of the kingdom of God.

However, as soon as the child would be able to distinguish between the voice of his parents and the voice of God, the parents themselves ought to help him to do so, in order that the growth of his personality might be hastened as much as possible. And if this were done, the son would soon stand next to as well as under the father, and together they would build the wall of the kingdom of God.

In this way, too, the son would soon be the neighbor. On the other hand, there would be no neighbors who were not sons and fathers. Or we may say that all men would indeed be brothers. Hence the problem with respect to the realization of the individual and society would be solved in the same way that we have seen the problem between parents and children would have to be solved. There would be no new problem at all. Self-realization of the individual would bring about righteousness in society.

From this point of view we may regard some of the problems that ethicists take up when they discuss the relations of individuals to society.

#### Altruism

The history of ethics has been replete with discussions about altruisms and selfishness. We shall soon have occasion to remark on this phenomenon more in detail. Suffice it here to say that there would be no such problem in the original kingdom. The advantage of the one would be the advantage of all. Personalities would depend for their own self-realization upon the realization of others. The more they would seek to develop the personalities of others the more would their own personalities be developed. There would be universal covenant responsibility. Society would form an organism.

The Roman Catholic position has no such philosophy of human personality as here presented. Its principle of individuation is ultimately non-rational. Accordingly one man's individual personality can be developed only by way of contrast to other men's individual personalities. And if the

various individual personalities are thought of as subject to the common law of God, this law is at most correlative to non-rational individuality. This makes for an original metaphysical strife between the individual and the law above him. The law will come to all men but only as a formal something. It will make universal but abstract assertions, leaving it to every individual man to make his own applications. This implies that self-realization on the part of the individual would always be at the expense of the universal progress of the kingdom of God and therefore also at the expense of social righteousness. On the other hand, if the law did reign supreme it would be at the expense of the self-realization of the individual.

This dilemma is that which is involved in the non-Christian concept of ethics. And Romanism has not outgrown it inasmuch as it has sought to make an alliance between Aristotle and Christ in ethics as much as elsewhere.

Moreover, what is true of Romanism is true, though in a less obvious way, of Arminian ethics.

Now it is characteristic of an organism that each member of it has some particular function to perform. Paul has brought this out beautifully with respect to the New Testament church. No member can say to another member that it has no need of that other member. A body could not exist without a heart. Hence if the ear wants to exist as an ear, it is in its own interest that the heart should exist as the heart. Hence there would not be mere monotonous repetition in the kingdom of God. There would be an inexhaustible variety. Individuality would be at a premium. And no one could develop his individuality at the expense of others. The more any one would develop his own individuality, the more would he give others an opportunity to develop their own individualities. And in this way they would together bring the kingdom of God to realization. Each would help the other to display more of the moral excellence of God.

### Prosperity

Would there be any limitation upon the individual and upon society as a whole in their seeking to realize the kingdom of God because of any untoward physical conditions? Plainly there would not. In the first place there would be plenty of food and of the other necessities of life for all. There would be no financial depressions. There would be no bank failures. There would be no pestilences. There would be no physical handicaps through sickness or accident. The animal world and inanimate nature would be friendly to man, and would, so to speak, be anxious to be transformed for the realization of the kingdom of God.

Now if such would be the situation with respect to the physical uni-

verse as a whole it is especially to be noted that man's ethical strife could not consist in seeking to escape the sense world in order to flee into an ideal world. Asceticism would not be an ideal in the kingdom of God. It is true that man would constantly have to develop his will so that he should not at any time make the body stand prior to the soul. But it is equally true that he would have to stand guard that the soul would not be developed at the expense of the body. The body is lower than the soul in the sense that the physical aspect of created universe is metaphysically lower in the scale of being than the spiritual, but the body is not lower than the soul in the sense that it is any less perfect than the soul. The body was created a willing instrument of the soul through which the soul might seek to realize the kingdom of God in so far as the kingdom was to have a physical manifestation. The body would not be ethically lower than the soul. It is therefore a part of the program of the realization of the kingdom of God that the body should be developed to its utmost capacity. A sound mind in a sound body is a true kingdom ideal.

In the ethics of Thomas Aquinas we are confronted again with what is virtually the pagan principle of the evil inherent in matter. To be sure, Thomas does from time to time assert his objection to Manichaeism. But he seeks to overcome Manichaeism by a premature insertion of the doctrine of grace. He holds that even in paradise, before the entrance of sin, it was grace that held down a natural tendency toward non-being and therefore also toward evil that was inherent in all created reality. He identifies the good with being. Hence temporal being is for him in the nature of the case, merely because it is finite rather than infinite, something short of good.

For this reason Roman Catholicism cannot make the original condition of paradise normative for ethical life. It can do no more than use this original condition as a limiting concept similar to the limiting concepts employed in modern non-Christian ethical theory. On its position Rome cannot require of men that they realize fully the kingdom of God in this temporal world. They themselves say it is metaphysically impossible that this should take place. How then can man be held responsible for its realization?

And what is true of Rome is again true, in a lesser degree, of Arminianism. It is only true in the covenantal view of the Reformed Faith that the Genesis narrative with respect to paradise can receive its full application to ethical as well as to more strictly theological problems. It alone makes plain that the realization of the kingdom of God is, metaphysically speaking, an historical possibility. It alone makes plain that man was originally placed upon the way toward the realization of this historical possibility and that it was only because he forsook the way of covenant obedience that he brought ruin upon himself.

## Happiness As An End

The question of happiness as the goal of ethical endeavor may be approached in similar fashion. The only way in which happiness could be obtained by man was through self-realization. A realized self is a happy self. On the other hand, it is equally true to say that only a happy self is a completely realized self. God created man happy in order that he might become more happy. We may say, in all reverence, that God himself is happy. God's blessedness is the overtone of his righteousness. So also if righteousness prevails among his creatures they are happy, and if unrighteousness prevails, they are unhappy. We may perhaps compare the relation of happiness and righteousness to that of exercise and health in the case of the human body. If we exercise, health comes to us. So if man seeks righteousness, happiness is added unto him.

Originally there could not possibly be any contrast between seeking happiness and seeking righteousness in the kingdom of God. A man could not possibly wish for happiness unless he also wished for righteousness. It is only after the entrance of sin that these ideas have been separated. The members of the kingdom would not think of the one without also thinking of the other.

From the modern non-Christian point of view happiness is a non-rational principle. It is sought by the individual to the extent that he has an animal nature, to the extent that he has a sensuous aspect to his being. Modern ethicists, such as Reinhold Niebuhr, are therefore becoming more and more pessimistic. They say that society can never become happy. This, they assert or imply, is due to the nature of reality. There are ultimate irrational or non-rational forces that can never be controlled. Ethics must therefore at most be melioristic. Men must help one another to make the most of a situation in which they find themselves as finite beings.

Even if men seek to escape this modern irrationalism by means of a return to a rationalistic conception of individuality, the problem of happiness is still unsolved. Rationalists will assert that the individual must submit his will entirely to that of law, eternal, unchangeable, objective law. But as long as this law is not based upon the self-sufficient God of Christianity, it is not eternal or unchangeable or objective. For it is then still up to every man to interpret the law for himself without reference to God. And the result would again be the same.

Now Rome again occupies a half-way position between the Christian and the non-Christian view on happiness as the ethical ideal for men. As far as its philosophy is concerned it stands midway between rationalism and irrationalism. Then when its theology is added to its philosophy the situation is not radically changed. For a theology that has to make its in-

fluences felt by means of adjustment to a philosophy built upon pagan principles is never effective for the curbing of paganism. This appears in the lengthy discussion of Aquinas on the various virtues, passions, etc. On the one hand he follows Aristotle in saying that we have the non-rational aspects of our beings in common with the animals. This is in effect to assert that the principle of individuation that we should hold is non-rational. On this basis, to seek happiness would be simply to allow the animals within us to control us. But Aristotle also asserted that what makes man truly man is his reason. And according to Aristotle it is this which makes man virtually divine. If then man cultivates the reason within him he must repress the non-rational aspects of his being. And he must seek virtual identification with the universal reason of the universe, which is God. Thus he must lose his identity to attain his happiness.

Aquinas seeks a nice balance between pure irrationalism and pure rationalism. And to attain this balance he attaches supernatural grace to the natural situation in paradise. In this way he hopes to bring harmony between man's seeking happiness and his seeking righteousness. But the result is like a patch-work quilt. Aquinas virtually admits that there is a basic contrast between happiness for the individual and righteousness for society. He cannot escape the non-Christian dilemma between abstract rationality and abstract individuality by the artificial attachment of grace to nature as thus falsely set forth.

#### Utility As An End

And what is true with respect to the relation between righteousness and happiness is equally true with respect to the relation between righteousness and utility. Just as the history of ethics is full of the strife between those who hold that happiness is the legitimate end for man to pursue, so the history of ethics is also full of the strife between those who hold that man must strive for that which is useful to him in life. It may not be possible or wise for man to strive for happiness, it is said, but man must live, and therefore he must seek that which is useful to him in living.

Now it is easy to see that in the kingdom of God there can be no disharmony between that which is useful, that which is righteous, and that which makes us happy. That which is righteous is that which is the most useful to man. And this is not meant in the prosaic sense in which it is often said that honesty is the best policy. As that phrase is often used, it means that in the end it pays best to be honest. In that case usefulness is still set in opposition to righteousness. What we mean by saying that that which is righteous is most useful for man is that righteousness itself is the most useful thing to strive for if one wishes to realize the kingdom of God. And since the members of the kingdom wish to establish that kingdom they will naturally seek righteousness. In other words, the ideas of usefulness

and righteousness have never been separated in the minds of the true members of the kingdom. It was only after the entrance of sin that man made for himself an ideal of usefulness other than the establishment of the kingdom of God. In the kingdom itself there can be no disharmony between righteousness and usefulness.

### The Good Will As An End

Finally, we must briefly discuss the distinction frequently made between an ethics of ends and an ethics of the good for the sake of the good. Kant, whose name is bound up with this distinction, has made a great deal of condemning all types of ethical theory which seek the good for any ulterior purpose. He says that Christian ethics, as usually presented, is an inferior type of ethics because it holds out to men the hope of rewards and the fear of punishment. He tells us that we should seek righteousness for righteousness' sake and not for anything that we may get out of it.

This distinction is based upon the presupposition that there is a contrast between seeking righteousness for righteousness' sake and seeking it for some other purpose. But this contrast does not exist in the idea of the kingdom of God. No one could really strive for righteousness if he tried to strive for it with ulterior motives in mind. He who strives for righteousness for ulterior motives has by that token excluded himself from the kingdom of God. For the members of the kingdom there are no ulterior motives. Their motive with the realization of the kingdom itself is the glory of God. Their motive with their own self-realization is the glory of God. Their motive in seeking their own happiness is the glory of God. None of these matters can be separated. Not one of them can be antithetical to another. He that seeks righteousness seeks to realize himself, seeks the good will, seeks happiness, seeks usefulness, seeks rewards, seeks the kingdom of God, and seeks God himself.

At the conclusion of our all too poorly drawn utopia, we must stop again to call attention to the usefulness of drawing such a utopia. It does not have for us as Christians primarily the same purpose that it had for Plato when, for reasons of pedagogy, he talked about the state as the individual "writ large." Our purpose is not merely to paint a nice picture in order to contrast to it the present terrible situation. It is useful to paint utopias from that point of view alone. Yet over and beyond this we should note that as Christians we cannot do anything but begin our discussion of the summum bonum with a consideration of original man. If we believe that Christianity is true we must set up the original state of affairs as the normal state of affairs. It is by this original summum bonum that we must judge all other theories of the summum bonum. It is in the light of the original summum bonum too that we can better understand the summum bonum placed before man in the Scripture. Scripture portrays to us first

the original summum bonum, second, how it was lost sight of and became impossible of realization, and third, how it came once more into view and became once more possible of realization. We have discussed the original summum bonum and must now turn to the substitute offered for it after man had fallen into sin.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE NON-CHRISTIAN SUMMUM BONUM

It is not our purpose to discuss the various forms in which the non-Christian summum bonum has appeared in the course of time. To do so would be to try to write a history of philosophical ethics, in so far as it is non-Christian. Our task is rather the more limited one of looking at the various non-Christian forms in which the summum bonum has been presented, from the point of view of their common opposition to the Christian summum bonum. If we do this it will help us to clarify our notion of the Christian summum bonum itself.

The contrast between the non-Christian and the Christian summum bonum can best be made in this connection. The characteristics which are common to all forms of the non-Christian summum bonum are best brought out in contrast to the absolute summum bonum, or the summum bonum ideally considered, as we have sought to discuss it in the foregoing chapter.

#### Taking Existence for Granted

The main difference between all non-Christian theories and the Christian theory of the summum bonum is due to the fact that all non-Christian ethics takes for granted existence, as it is now, as being normal. By that we do not mean that there are no non-Christian ethics that wish to change and improve things. Naturally all non-Christian ethics wants to improve things. Nor do we mean that according to non-Christian ethics every condition is considered equally good and equally bad. One need only to think for a moment of the high moral ideals of modern idealism, and to compare them with some forms of crass hedonism in order to see that there is a great difference between the various forms of non-Christian ethics, as far as the degree of nobility is concerned. What we mean, however, by saying that non-Christian ethics takes existence for granted as normal, is that according to it the entire picture which we have drawn in the two preceding chapters is a delusion. According to non-Christian ethics there will never be a perfect world. All our insistence on the original state of affairs, in which there was an absolute goal known to man, and in which man had the full ability to reach that goal, is to our opponents, a sad delusion.

More than that, our idea of the original state of man does not only appear to them as sad delusion, but also as a piece of unpardonable arrogance. This does not appear when we put forth our view apologetically and try to make it seem as though there is really no difference between Chris-



tians and non-Christians on the question of the original state of man. When we make clear our point, however, and put forth our view of an original state of man, not merely as something which we would like to think of as true, or as something which even if we think it is true has no great significance for us, as Barth is doing in his writing, but as the standard by which systems of ethics must be judged true or false, it will soon appear that men do not look at the matter as an innocent illusion but as something that they despise. Men are glad to read the utopias that dreamers have dreamed; they are glad to include the story of Genesis 1 in their repertoire of light reading for leisure hours, but men rebel against being told that their ethical ideals must be judged by the ethical ideal of Adam.

The real meaning of this opposition to the original perfect ethical idea is nothing short of hatred of the living God. If God does exist as man's Creator, we have seen, it is impossible that evil should be inherent in the temporal universe. If God exists, man himself must have brought in sin by an act of wilful transgression. Hence existence, as it now is, is not normal, but abnormal. Accordingly, to maintain that existence, as it now is, is normal, is tantamount to a denial of man's responsibility for sin, and this in turn makes God responsible for sin, and this simply means that there is no absolute God.

Yet this rejection of God is covered up under the convenient and innocent sounding slogan that we must, of course, take experience, as it now is, as our standard of judgment. Not only that, but the arrogance involved in this seeming neutrality is denied or ignored and charged to those who do hold that God is the Creator of the universe, and therefore do hold that there was an absolutely perfect condition of affairs to begin with.

It will be seen from this that there is nothing to be gained by trying at the outset to cover over this basic difference of attitude between Christians and non-Christians with respect to this matter of an original perfection of man. It is far better for us, as Christians, to make the difference perfectly clear, but point out that our belief in the original state of affairs as an absolute standard has been given us by grace, so that there is no arrogance on our part at all. And if even this will be misinterpreted, we can only pray to God that he will make others see the light as he has been pleased to enable us to see the light.

#### Results in General of This Difference in Attitude

The result of this difference in attitude can be observed in different ways. In general we can see it in the fact that in non-Christian ethics men will take the results that sin has brought into the universe as being permanent. Accordingly, every type of non-Christian ethical theory holds that all that we can do is to make the most of the situation. Ethics is thought of as

patchwork. Not as though the matter is put in this way. On the contrary, men speak of constructive programs. They deem it to be a waste of time to think about perfect conditions. We are told over and over again that we should not waste time building heavens but should get to work improving this earth. All this is nothing but the natural result of the assumption that underlies all non-Christian philosophy, namely, that evil is an inherent part of the universe and is therefore just as ultimate as the good.

The result is instability. Just as all non-theistic thought builds upon the ultimately irrational and in this way affords no foundation for the experience of the finite rationality that we have, so non-Christian ethics has no more than a quicksand foundation for the structure it seeks to build. The cracks will soon appear in the wall because the foundation of human experience sinks into the vague possibilities of an ultimate temporality.

### Tender Minded and Tough Minded Ethics

We may note, however, that though the general description just given holds of all non-Christian ethical theories, there is a great difference among them. For our purposes it will suffice to distinguish in general between two rather sharply contrasted tendencies of interpretation among non-Christian writers on ethics. The two tendencies that we find through the history of ethical theory are the idealist and the pragmatic. To distinguish between them we may use the phraseology of William James, when he distinguished between the idealist and pragmatic type of thinking by saying that the former is tender minded and the latter tough minded.

What did James mean by these distinction? He meant that the idealists throughout history have been given to speculations about absolutes and about ideal conditions. Plato loved to dream of a perfect state. So too, in modern times the Hegelian type of ethical theory has minimized the reality of evil, and has passed it over lightly as a stepping stone toward the realization of the Absolute.

It will be noted from this criticism by James that what he is opposed to most strenuously is that which we have spoken of above, namely, the setting up of an absolute ideal. Now since there is in idealistic thought some sort of remnant of this, it is against even this remnant that your typically tough minded child of the earth must direct his attack.

What James means by being tender minded is not some sort of grandfatherly good-heartedness, but a childish fear of facing stern reality. He thinks that all types of idealist thought have spent their time in blowing bubbles. We bring out this point in order to indicate that the opposition to the essentially Christian theistic position, which believes that man once was in contact with God, and was therefore perfect at the beginning of his ca-

reer, has passed through a history. The opposition to our position is much more pointed and direct in modern times than it was in ancient times. It is true that there are some intermixtures of Christian and non-Christian thought. And it is true that, because of these intermixtures, the opposition to Christian thought seems often to be less pointed today than formerly. Yet when one disregards these Christian elements one can see that underneath the surface the opposition on the part of non-Christian ethics is much stronger in modern times than it was in earlier times.

Still further, the distinction between idealist and pragmatist ethics also calls our attention to the necessity of careful evaluation. We cannot say that all non-Christian ethics are equally valuable because equally valueless. We must, to be sure, when we regard the matter from an ultimate point of view, when we regard the matter from the point of the value of men's deeds before the judgment of God, hold that the highest form of non-Christian ethics leads men to eternal destruction just as well as does the lowest form. Even from this ultimate point of view, however, we must remember that some shall be beaten with many stripes and some shall be beaten with fewer stripes. It is not a matter of indifference even for eternity whether man has been a Nero or the "good moral man" of the suburbs.

But speaking now for this life only, we greatly rejoice when men are tender minded rather than tough minded. More than that, we rejoice when the tough minded at times show some symptoms of having a tender minded spot. The most tough minded Darwinian ethicists sometimes catch themselves building utopias. Even the most tough minded is not completely tough minded in this world. God's common grace makes that impossible. If one ceases to have any tender minded spots, one commits suicide.

### Optimists and Pessimists

This leads us to make a general distinction between optimistic and pessimistic non-Christian ethics. The distinction corresponds roughly to that of tender minded and tough minded. Yet there are tender minded men who commit suicide and there are tough minded men who wax fat on the earth. The point is that due to sin all things have gone awry. When men have, by the common grace of God, retained a large element of tender-mindedness, so that they sense the necessity of relating their deeds to some ideal standard, they expect that they can easily reach this standard. They are like children who see the rainbow in the sky and set out to catch it.

There have been many manifestations of this attitude in history. It is this attitude that accounts for the efforts to build utopian communities on earth. Sin is thought of as something that can easily be removed by changing man's environment. Even Christians have often retained a remnant of this type of thinking and have sometimes sought to build a paradise

on earth. The social gospel of the day is another evidence of the persistence of this superficial type of thinking. We may certainly call this type of thought superficial, if it actually pretends to build upon a Christian foundation. The very meaning of Christianity is that sin is such a terrible thing that it cannot in this way be eradicated. When this theory is built upon a non-Christian basis, however, we would not call it superficial. We would rather regard it as an evidence of the truth of Christianity itself that eternity is created in the heart of man, in the sense that man cannot escape thinking upon the home from which he has been driven. The human race is still like Adam and Eve in that it with them looks back wistfully at the tree of life from which they had been driven away. All the optimistic theories of non-Christian ethics may be compared with men who think that they can leave this earth in a balloon. It is a contradiction in terms to think that one can leave this earth by earthly means and materials. Every balloon is bound to return to earth sooner or later. So every optimistic non-Christian theory of ethics is bound to return to pessimism sooner or later.

For this reason we believe that the pessimistic theories of non-Christian ethics are more consistent than the optimistic. The pessimistic theories do not look back at the tree of life at all. Or at least when they catch themselves looking back, they at once apply a dose of pragmatic tough mindedness, and tell themselves to go on to the self-chosen destruction. And when they thus tell themselves to continue on their path, they seek to satisfy their indestructible longing for a utopia to some extent by substituting meliorism for it; James spoke of his position as meliorism. He holds that, though it is hopeless and foolish to look for an absolute perfection, in view of the fact that both God and man are subject to certain limitations, it is best to seek to improve conditions to some extent at least. And he thought it was possible to do this if only God and man would cooperate in doing so. Now since he was quite sure that God would cooperate, he insisted that man should lend God a hand in order to make life on earth somewhat better than it is now. It is in this way that James and others have used the melioristic camouflage in order to conceal from themselves the hopeless pessimism involved in their view. We do not mean that they have done this self-consciously and dishonestly; we only mean that sin has so blinded the hearts of men that a spirit of error dwells in their hearts and makes them think that they are speaking the thoughts of God when they are actually being deceived by the prince of darkness.

And now that we have discussed in a general way the characteristics of non-Christian ethical theory with respect to the summum bonum we may seek to bring out something more of these characteristics by contrasting them to the characteristics of Christian ethics as we have discussed these in the preceding chapter.

## A Broken Personality

In the first place we said that Christian ethics bases its summum bonum upon the idea of the whole personality of man. In contrast to this non-Christian ethics holds that the personality of man is an accomplishment to begin with, and that the "accomplishment" has never yet been accomplished. Non-Christian ethics holds that the whole personality is an ideal to strive for, while Christianity holds that though to be sure it is now, because of sin, a far distant ideal to strive for, man was actually created as a whole personality.

This difference comes out in a striking way if one for a moment compares the ethics of Plato with the ethics of Christianity. In the ethics of Plato, and in the ethics of paganism generally, the psychology that is presupposed is dualistic. Both Plato and Aristotle hold that the rational part of man is really a part of the eternal ideal world, while the sensuous part of man is part of the sensuous world. In this way man is somehow a patchwork of pieces that will not "stick together." We have a little piece of eternity patched onto a little piece of temporality, and the two are somehow held together loosely for a while. The result is an internal and continuous strife. The intellect is at war with the will, and the feelings are at war with both the intellect and the will. Some who sympathize with the intellect will work out intellectual theories of ethics. So, for instance, the ethics of Socrates was intellectualistic. He thought that if men only know the good they will be glad to do it. And it is this sort of intellectualism that still underlies to a large extent most of our ethical theories, especially that aspect of ethical theories that has to do with the education of children. In the eighteenth century intellectualism had its heyday. It was then boldly advocated that if we only build enough schools, we could close our prison doors. And we have not yet, even in our day, outgrown this one-sidedness. Sin is still all too often practically identified with ignorance.

On the other hand we have had many one-sided theories of voluntaristic ethics. Broadly speaking we may say that whereas ancient ethics was intellectualistic, modern ethics is voluntaristic. In modern times ethics tends to become an art of skillfully manipulating the drives and instincts of man in order to accomplish the greatest amount of good and prevent the greatest amount of evil. The assumption is that there is no definitely and intellectually conceived goal which man can and should set for himself, but that he should float along as best he may. In this way the irrationalism that is inherent in all non-Christian philosophy and in all non-Christian ethics is boldly accepted as an immediate working principle.

It is in contrast to this one-sided intellectualism and this one-sided voluntarism that we ought, as Christians, to make clear that we think of human personality as being a unity. We ought to emphasize that one-sidedness is the consequence of sin. Man was created in perfect harmony with

himself because he was created in perfect harmony with God. Hence Christian ethics can never be one-sidedly intellectualistic or one-sidedly voluntaristic. We do not say that as Christians we are not often one-sided. As a matter of fact no one escapes being one-sided to some extent. But we confess that this one-sidedness is sin before God. And we hold that harmony between the various aspects of human personality can be obtained on no other than the Christian basis.

### Nationalism in Ethics

As a second presupposition of Christian ethics we mentioned that Christian ethics deals with man as such, and not only with Christians. This presupposition is based upon the doctrine of creation which lies at the basis of Christianity. But all non-Christian thought denies this doctrine. Hence it can never have unity in its ethical interpretation. On what ground can any one claim that a set of ethical teaching shall have compelling force for human beings if one does not believe the doctrine of creation? There is no other ground at all. There can be no more than a strange coincidental resemblance between the various ethical ideals of various peoples on any but the Christian basis.

And certainly it would be impossible upon a non-theistic basis to think that one nation should receive a revelation containing an ethical code that should be binding upon all men in all ages. The most that can be granted, from a non-theistic point of view, is that one people seems to have more of a genius for religion or for ethics than has another people. In this way it has often been granted that the Jews as a nation had a genius for religion and for ethics, while the Greeks had a genius for intellectual interpretation. Now there is, to be sure, a certain element of truth in this way of stating the matter. God did give different gifts to different nations. And he also used that nation which he had given a particular gift for religion in order through it to reveal himself to man. But the point is that the revelation that he gave to them was intended for the race. And that it was intended for the race was because of the fact that the race is thought of as a unity created by God.

Here too it is necessary that we set the unified Christian scheme of interpretation over against the broken up schemes of non-Christian thought. It is once more the absolute Rationality of God over against the absolute Irrationality of non-Christianity.

### Individualism

In the second presupposition we tried to bring out that revealing himself to man through one nation God spoke through this one nation to all

men. In the third presupposition we wished to bring out that these men, found everywhere and through all ages, must not be thought of as so many individuals, but must be thought of as a family. Now in contrast to this, non-Christian ethics always has been utterly individualistic.

To prove this contention we need only to point to a few illustrations. In Greek ethics the individual was often sacrificed to the state. This may at first seem to be the very reverse of individualism. Yet it is really individualism of the worst sort. For it only meant that a large number of individuals was sacrificed to a small number of individuals who happened to be in authority. The whole structure of Greek ethics was built upon the presupposition that it is unavoidable but that some must suffer at the hands of others. There was no organic conception of the nation, let alone of the race.

In contrast to the ancient ethics of the Greeks, modern ethics has, as a whole, emphasized the right of the individual at the expense of the society. Society is thought of as an aggregate of individuals. Consequently there is no proper sense of the necessity of authority. Authority has largely disappeared from the family. The autocracy of the father, as it often existed in the perverted individualism of old, has been replaced by the autocracy of the child in the perverted individualism of today. The autocracy of the king which did not recognize the rights of the subjects has been replaced with a false democracy which seeks the ultimate source of authority in the multitude of men, without recognition of God.

### Egosim and Altruism

This false individualism appears in the various ways in which non-Christian ethical theory has conceived of the relation of selfishness and altruism. There has been a long debate between ethical writers on the question whether men should seek themselves, that is their own happiness and good as the supreme end, or whether men should seek the happiness and good of others.

The common assumption of all these writers was that there is a natural warfare between the individual and society. The assumption was here, as in the case of the Greek ethics, that one individual cannot develop himself except at the expense of other individuals. It was taken for granted that this universe is inherently a give and take proposition. Now this is in a sense true. We do not deny that since sin has entered the world all the relations between men have become so perverted, and the circumstances have become so abnormal, that in practice the advantage of one often results in the disadvantage of the others. But the point is not this. The point is that we hold this situation to be an abnormal situation. And we mention that in Christianity this abnormality has, in principle, been removed. The church is a body, an organism; the growth and advantage of one member must in-

variably benefit all members. But non-Christian ethics thinks that this is at best a dream that is of little practical significance.

There have, to be sure, been ethical theories on the part of non-Christians which have seriously spoken of the benefit of one being the benefit of all. But this can in the nature of the case be nothing more than a sweet dream to them. That this is so can be seen clearly if only we remember that according to all non-Christian ethics there is no relation at all between moral and physical evil. There is thought to be a physical evil that is independent of man which befalls man irrespective of his moral life. There is a sense in which this is true. We too believe that those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were no greater sinners than others. But on the other hand we do believe that the fall of man has brought physical evil in the world. And because we believe this we can also believe that a good moral man, who suffers physical evil, is not therefore necessarily at a final disadvantage in comparison with him who, though he suffers no physical evil, is morally corrupt. In other words, we have, as Christians, a longer range, the range of everlasting life, from which we can view the "unevenness" in the present world. Non-Christians on the other hand have only the range of the present world and the present life of man to use as a standard. And from this point of view it is impossible to view things otherwise than as absolutely uneven. Things in this life are simply, as a matter of fact, uneven. Accordingly, all non-Christians must, in accordance with their assumptions, maintain that the ethical life is necessarily individualistic. They may in a superficial way think with the friends of Job that ten pounds of virtue will be rewarded with ten pounds of good, but as soon as they learn to think more profoundly, or as soon as they themselves experience something of the evil that Job experienced, they are bound to see that things remain uneven as far as this world is concerned. This world must be a warfare of every one against every one if non-Christian thought be true. That men do not altogether regard life in this way, that men are still able and willing to think of a theory of life which is not wholly a matter of warfare is due not to any goodness of themselves, but is due to God's common grace. Someone has said that not only has paganism failed to produce one good man, but it has also failed to produce a picture of a good man. This is profoundly true. And it is true of all non-Christian thought. It does not have the material with which to picture a perfect man.

### Aristotle's Mean

The most perfect example of this failure of non-Christian thought is that of the doctrine of the mean of Aristotle. The best man that Aristotle could think of was one who should walk on the middle of the road between the extremes to which his desires would naturally drive him. Aristotle took for granted that a man will naturally be either a miser or a spendthrift. Accordingly the virtuous man is the middle-of-the-roader. Again we agree



that there is, in a superficial sense, much truth in this contention of Aristotle. Sin has made men go to extremes. And a life of moderation is certainly to be desired. But the point we are now concerned to make is that the doctrine of the mean of Aristotle is basically a denial of the idea of the possibility of a perfect man. If Christianity is true, virtue did not originally consist in keeping balance between two evils. There were no evils to begin with. Man did not appear upon the scene with the desire to be either a spendthrift or a miser. He was created not merely with a perfect balance but without the need of a balance, since there were no evils between which he had to be balanced.

Then too the Christian is not one who has struck a better balance between various evil tendencies than non-Christians have. If that were so it would be impossible to distinguish the Christian from the "good moral man" who may not have a speck of Christianity in him. The Christian is one who in the depth of his being leads the perfect life. This perfect life has been implanted in him by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit. This perfect life is based upon the righteousness of Christ. We are not now going to speak of this at length. We only wish to point out the contrast between it and the balanced moral life that grows upon a non-Christian root. The Christian's perfect life is perfect in principle only, and not in degree. Hence he too must battle against his evil instincts that remain within him against his will. Hence, too, his actual moral life will often very closely resemble in externals the actual moral life of a man who is not a Christian but who enjoys a generous portion of God's common grace by which he may seek to do what Aristotle wants man to do, that is, live a life of moderation. It is even possible that the moral life of the Christian will appear less valuable than the moral life of the non-Christian. But even this, however much it is to be deplored, does not in the least militate against the validity or the importance of the distinction between the principle of the Christian life which is that of perfection in Christ and the principle of the non-Christian life, which is that of balance between evils.

If we realize that it is really this same principle of the mean that controls the relation between the individual and society we can clearly see that at best the summum bonum of non-Christian ethics can be an effort to strike somewhat of a balance between various opposing evils. The relation of the individual to his neighbors is then symbolized by the parable of the prodigal son. As long as he was useful to his "friends" they were glad to have him. As soon as he was useless to them, because his substance had disappeared, he was no longer their friend. There is no conception of a true organism of the human race found outside of Christianity. From the most extreme form of ancient autocracy to the most extreme form of modern socialism, and from the regicide of Caesar's day to the live-and-let-live philosopher of the modern business world, men have never caught the vision of an organic conception of the race.

It should be noted again that on this point as elsewhere, Thomas Aquinas occupies a middle position between Christianity and Aristotle. He accepts Aristotle's doctrine of virtue as the mean between two evil tendencies. To this he adds his doctrine of supernatural grace as a balance-wheel that kept man from yielding to evil even in paradise. Thus the whole of ethical endeavor becomes a matter of metaphysical tight-rope walking.

### The Idealist Theory of Self-Realization

There is one form of this give and take theory of ethics that we must take note of particularly. It is the theory of idealist philosophy. It has been charged against Idealism over and over again that it has done scant justice to the individual. The human individual, it was said, was too easily taken up into the Absolute. In this Idealism resembled Eastern Mysticism. It has been especially in more recent times that this opposition to Idealism has grown strong. We cannot review this debate in detail. We only recall the opposition to the absolutism of F. H. Bradley and B. Bosanquet on the part of Pringle Pattison and others. A debate was held in the Aristotelian Society on the question whether the individual has a substantive or an adjectival existence. Now in order to meet the various criticisms launched against the idealist school, Bosanquet and other idealists have given particular attention to this question. We wish to note only what Bosanquet has said with respect to this matter. Bosanquet points out that if we are ever to have a solution of the One and Many problem it must certainly be sought in the idealist way, that is, by emphasizing the priority of the absolute or the whole to the individual. Man's freedom is to be found in his interest in the whole. Not till the individual loses his own interest does he feel the "nisus toward the whole." "The unit makes no insistence on its finite or isolable character. It looks, as in religion, from itself and not to itself, and asks nothing better than to be lost in the whole which is at the same time its own best" (1). It is therefore for the individual's own interest to be lost in the whole. There is, to be sure, also an individual that is to be realized in the whole, but this latter individual has entirely renounced the former individual which was bent upon its own interest. The new self which is interested in the whole, which wants to be taken up into the whole, becomes an aspect of the whole. In spite of all of Bosanquet's efforts to the contrary, he cannot, on his assumed foundation, find anything but an individual who is either wholly independent of the whole, or an individual who is reduced to an aspect of the whole. It is again an either-or proposition, a give and take theory of ethics. The conception of organism has nowhere appeared in non-Christian ethical theory.

And it is this criticism of Bosanquet that enables us to contrast the idealist concept of self-realization to that of the Christian position. Self-realization has become the slogan of modern idealist ethics. Hence it is of the utmost importance to point out that the self-realization ideal of Chris-

tianity is at bottom the opposite of the self-realization ideal of the idealist ethics. This is especially necessary in view of the fact that this idealist realization program comes to us right within the fold of the Christian church by way of Sunday school literature, as well as in other ways. Character development, as taught quite commonly today, is only thinly disguised self-realization such as is found in idealist philosophy. The difference between a truly Christian theory of self-development and the idealist theory of self-development can best be observed if we see that the idealist notion is based upon the non-Christian conception of the self that is to be realized. That self is not thought of as a creature of God, but is thought of as an aspect of rationality somehow here in the midst of a universe among other specks of rationality also somehow here. And that universe in which these selves live is somehow hostile to these selves that must develop themselves, and the selves themselves, inasmuch as they are somehow derived from the principles of this evil universe, are also to an extent evil. Hence the basic principle of the relation between selves, at least at the beginning of history, is that of warfare. And the ideal that they must place before themselves is that of getting along together without killing each other off. It is as a certain churchman recently expressed it, when he said that man would soon have to learn to be good or he would perish. And we can see a good reason for such a point of view if invention carries on till one man can, by the atomic bomb, destroy thousands in no time at all, a few individuals could destroy all the rest. The idea is still that one can really live in no other way than at the expense of others. It is this general non-Christian soil out of which the idealist flower of self-realization springs. There is no other alternative, as far as theories of reality are concerned, than that between Christianity which regards man as a creature of God, and non-Christian thought which regards man as a product of impersonal forces in a universe that is somehow here. It follows that the only way in which we can account for the lofty character of idealist ethics is by saying that the gift of God's common grace has in a particular manner restrained what would be the ordinary operation of sin, when it allowed men to conceive a relatively speaking very high conception of self-realization. For the idealist, too, speaks of man's realizing himself by self-sacrifice. He too speaks of being wholly unselfish, wholly honest, wholly sincere, and wholly pure. We rejoice that men still conceive of such high ideals as they do. But we are certain that the ideals they conceive of are not high enough. The trouble is not only that they cannot reach the ideals they set for themselves. The trouble goes further back than that. Apart from Christ men have never even drawn a picture of a morally perfect man. At best they take for granted that man is in an evil universe for which he is not responsible. At best they will still find excuses for man's failures.

### Ethics a Struggle of a Temporal-Eternal Being

And now we come to the fourth presupposition of Christian ethics

mentioned in the foregoing chapter, namely, that we deal with mankind's seeking to realize the kingdom of God in history. And to this we may add the fifth presupposition that this history in which man is to realize the kingdom of God is genuinely revelatory of the plan and purpose of God. We have already discussed this point when we brought out how A. E. Taylor simply takes for granted that the ethical struggle of man is nothing but an attempt on his part to outgrow his own temporality. Ethics accordingly is not a matter of seeking to realize the kingdom of God by man, but it is a matter of seeking metaphysical adjustment on the part of both God and man to one another. The tuned string is a symbol of all non-Christian thought in general and is also a symbol of non-Christian ethics.

We have said enough, we trust, to bring out the chief points of contrast by which one can distinguish the Christian from the non-Christian summum bonum. We have indicated that all the contrasts between various schools of non-Christian ethics, such as those between intellectualistic and voluntaristic, between national and international, between individual and social, between selfish and altruistic, between happiness and goodness, between usefulness and virtue are all due to the assumed correlativity of God and man. This assumed correlativity of God and man, this assumed denial of the creation doctrine, this assumed ultimacy of evil allows for no ethical ideal other than that of a give-and-take, of a "claims and counter-claims" between individuals who must live together and who yet must live at the expense of one another. It is marvelous that out of such a soil the lofty ethics of idealism in all its forms has sprung. It can only be the common grace of God that accounts for it.

## Reference for Chapter VII

- (1) B. Bosanquet: The Value and Destiny of the Individual, p. 153.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BIBLICAL SUMMUM BONUM IN GENERAL

We turn now to a consideration of the biblical summum bonum. But here we face at once the differences between the Old and the New Testament.

We believe that we can conveniently sum up the differences between Old and New Testament ethics, in opposition to all other ethical theories, by mentioning four characteristics. First, the whole Scripture says that the ethical ideal is as absolute as we have spoken of it when discussing the ideal summum bonum. Secondly, the kingdom of God, as the ethical summum bonum of man is presented in the whole Scripture as a gift of God. Thirdly, a part of the work in reaching the summum bonum is taken up with the negative task of destroying the works of the evil one. Fourthly, because the works of the evil one continue till the end of time, the ideal or absolute summum bonum will never be reached on earth. Hence biblical ethics is always an ethics of hope. We shall look at each of these characteristics in turn.

#### The Absolute Ideal Maintained

It has been pointed out that according to all non-Christian ethics it is foolish to speculate on the original existence of a perfect man. It is still more foolish in the eyes of the world to hold that it is man's business to be absolutely perfect. And it would surely be wholly unreasonable to demand that man must be absolutely perfect, if man has not originally been perfect. This demand of absolute perfection which is clearly taught in the requirements of absolute obedience to the law of God, internally as well as externally, as we are told, e. g., in Deuteronomy 6:5, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might," sets off Old Testament ethics, as well as New Testament ethics, from all other ethics with an impassable gulf.

Both Old and New Testament ethics thinks of man as created in the image of God with ability to do the will of God perfectly. This conception of man is involved in the notion of an absolute ideal. The very fact that nowhere but in the Old and New Testaments is found any such idea as the original perfection of man, in turn proves that man was given an absolute ideal.

But in addition to the plain statements of the law that man must be absolutely perfect, the absoluteness of the moral ideal stands out clearly in the promises and the threats of the Scriptures. Both the Old and the New Testament promise is to him who is perfect that he will live in complete

happiness. The Old Testament couches this promise in more temporal terms than does the New Testament, but this does not alter the fact that both Testaments portray the future of the obedient servants of God as one of absolute bliss.

For the Old Testament we may note this in the promise with respect to Canaan. It is to be a land flowing with milk and honey. If the children of Abraham were obedient to God, they would live in a land of plenty. That this was never actually realized was due to the sins of Israel, but does not detract from the fact that the promise itself was given so absolutely as no promise is given in any other ethical literature.

On the other hand the threats for disobedience are in the Old Testament most severe. The death penalty was enacted for what seem to us to be the most trivial transgressions of the moral law. Moreover, the death penalty was enacted for transgressions of the ceremonial laws, for which we often scarcely find any justification. All this may be to an extent explained on the ground that in this early age of redemption God did not reveal himself as fully as he did later, and to an extent adjusted himself to the customs that had developed among men as the result of sin. But this does not explain the whole matter. It at most explains to some extent the manner in which disobedience was punished, that is, the externalism of the whole affair, but it does not explain why the death penalty should be so frequently and so insistently applied upon seemingly small infringement of the ceremonial law. That can be adequately explained only if we realize that God wished to inculcate the truth that he is a God of absolute holiness and expects of his people absolute holiness. It is God's covenant wrath that comes to expression in the threats contained in the Old Testament.

As for the New Testament, it is perfectly clear that the reward for obedience is that of eternal life in the presence of God. There is no colorless talk about the immortality of the soul in some unknown realm with or without God, but there is the definite assurance that those who die in the Lord shall be with the Lord.

On the other hand, it is equally clear that in the New Testament too the threats of punishment are absolute. There is no talk of a colorless and semi-dark realm somewhere in the underworld. There is instead a clear-cut assurance that those who have not been obedient to God will go to the place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. There may be differences of interpretation about the exact nature of the place of eternal woe, but there can be no debate about the fact that the woe is eternal, and that it is complete. Here God's covenant wrath comes to its final climactic expression.

Another thing that should not escape our notice is that in both the Old and New Testaments the rewards and the punishments are couched in

personal rather than in impersonal terms. If one looks at the utopias of non-biblical literature one finds that the main feature is that of bliss for which it is immaterial whether or not it be enjoyed in the presence of God. In the Scripture, on the other hand, it is God himself who makes the bliss what it is. At the end of his description of the beautiful city the prophet Ezekiel tells us, "And the name of the city is, 'The Lord is there.'" It is this that constitutes the glory of the city. This is only in accordance with the nature of the covenant promise. The whole substance of the covenant promise was God himself. Abraham knew no greater joy than to have Jehovah promise to him that he would be his God and the God of his seed. And what is true with respect to the Old Testament is equally true with respect to the New Testament. If one looks at the picture of the future glory drawn in the book of Revelation in the twenty-first chapter, one notices the same emphasis that one finds in Ezekiel. After a description of the picture of the city foursquare, the apostle tells us that in the midst of the city we may find the tabernacle of God. God will be the God of his people fully without any intermediaries and without any interruptions. It is that which makes heaven heaven.

Moreover, the promises and threats are universal in their scope. This appears in the first place in the fact that all nations are to share in the blessings of God when they are obedient to God. At the very beginning of the formal covenant relationship between God and his people God promises Abraham that in him shall all the nations of the world be blessed. The race is contemplated as a unity. It is for the sake of the race as a whole and not merely for itself, that Israel as a nation is set apart to be God's covenant people. Then as to the New Testament, it is perfectly clear that the command is given the disciples to go forth and to disciple all nations. But more important than this is the picture of the future life in which there will be those of all nations and kindreds and tribes of the world.

There is another aspect to this universalism that is frequently overlooked. In both the Old and the New Testament the reward for the obedient includes the perfection of the whole nature 'round about man, as well as the perfection of man himself. We need only to think for a moment of the glowing pictures of the Messianic kingdom drawn by the prophets, in which all the animals shall be at peace with one another and with man, to realize that nothing short of universal perfection of the whole created universe is contemplated. And the same thing appears again at the end of the revelational process. The picture drawn in the book of Revelation is that of paradise regained. Whatever will be in the new heaven and the new earth, it is certain that absolute harmony will prevail between man and the whole of his environment.

Now this universalism with respect to a perfect nature really brings up the problem of the results of man's disobedience. It was on account of man's disobedience that nature was cursed. Natural evil is everywhere but

in Scripture taken to be independent of moral evil. In Scripture the sin of man is definitely set forth as the cause of all physical evil. The whole world groaneth and travaileth in pain because of the sin of man. It is therefore to be expected that when the sin of man is removed the "regeneration of all things" will follow.

It was to inculcate this difference between the Bible point of view of natural evil and the point of view of non-theistic ethics that the Old Testament ordinances with respect to impurity, and especially with respect to death, were given. If natural evil had no connection with moral evil, there would be no justification in holding a person morally responsible for physical impurity as is the case in the Old Testament ordinances.

We may note one of these Old Testament ordinances that brings out this point clearly, namely, the ordinance with respect to the burial of the dead. A priest might not touch the body of any one but his nearest relatives. The high priest, who was supposed to symbolize the theocratic purity more fully than any one else, might not even touch the body of his father or mother. Now there would be no justification for this if there were no moral significance attached to the whole affair. Is not death a natural something? Does it not come in the course of time to all men and beasts? And must not the dead be put aside? All non-biblical thought has looked upon death as a natural phenomenon. There have been particular instances in which particular deaths were regarded as due to the wrath of the gods, and this may be taken as a remnant of the true, original view, but as a whole death has been looked upon as having nothing to do with the moral evil of man. Certainly modern thought has tried to free itself entirely from what it would deem a foolish superstition, that death is a result of sin. So for instance, Professor A. A. Bowman, in a pamphlet The Absurdity of Christianity, does not find this absurdity in anything that Christianity might have to say with respect to the physical universe, but exclusively in what it has to say with respect to the possibilities of the moral life. He tells us that the meaning of Jesus when he said that he came to bring life cannot have been that he wanted to save us in any sense from the death of the grave, but must have been a fullness of moral life while we are on earth. So fully has it been taken for granted by modern thought as a whole, and by modern ethics in particular, that death is a natural phenomenon which has nothing to do with the sin of man, that it is no longer considered a point worthy of debate.

In opposition to this, both the Old and the New Testament are outspoken on the point that all natural evil is the result of the sin of man. And they are equally outspoken on the assurance that by the work of redemption not only moral evil but also natural evil will be removed. The Old Testament ordinance with respect to the disease of leprosy and the burial of the dead taught the Israelites that death has come into the world by the wilful disobedience of man. Natural evil is not inherent in the originally constituted state of affairs. If it were, man could not be held responsible for it.



And similarly in the New Testament it is not only the soul that shall be freed from sin, but the body shall also be resurrected and glorified, being made conformable to the glorious body of the Redeemer.

Here again the Roman Catholic occupies a mediating position. He virtually admits that physical evil is a metaphysical ultimate. According to him it required grace to keep the evil tendency of nature in check even before man had sinned.

Such then is the biblical summum bonum. It is absolute. Think of the challenge this places before those that seek to realize it. It sets their work in the configuration of absolute certainty. Nothing is so paralyzing to moral endeavor as doubt with respect to the usefulness of it all. It is in biblical ethics alone that men are given a summum bonum that has its certainty of realization in God himself, and that therefore gives to men the assurance that their work will not be in vain. They can be steadfast and immovable and always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Such then is the biblical summum bonum. It is absolute. It puts before man a more comprehensive program than he can find anywhere else. His work is put in the configuration of an all-embracing plan of God. He can be a co-worker with God. His work is not for a passing day. His work is done as it were in the dawn of eternity. The fruits of his labors shall follow him. If he has given a cup of cold water to a disciple for the sake of the master, he will in no wise lose his reward. What a great encouragement then for him to increase in the spontaneity, the stability and the momentum of his will to will the will of God! There is a challenge in the biblical summum bonum such as is found nowhere else.

#### The Summum Bonum as a Gift

The second point to be discussed under the general heading of the biblical summum bonum as a whole is that the whole kingdom of God is a gift of free grace to man and that therefore the summum bonum is a free gift to man.

The very absoluteness of the summum bonum would have no meaning unless it were that the whole kingdom of God is in the Scriptures presented as a gift of the free grace of God to sinful man. Since man became a sinner it is clear that he could not begin to live up to the perfect ideal. He could not even make the first step in the direction toward realizing an absolute ideal. The sinner is not contemplated in Scripture as somewhat weakened by sin, but as dead in trespasses and sins. We cannot speak of this fully here. We must remark however, that man could not know the summum bonum after he became a sinner. The summum bonum had to be revealed to him. And once more the fact that nowhere but in Scripture is

there as much as a picture of a perfect summum bonum, corroborates the necessity for the revelation to the sinner of what he should do if he was to be pleasing to God. In the second place, man not only became blind through sin but he became totally unwilling to do the good. Hence his will had to be renewed. He had to be given not only the picture of the true ideal for him, but also the ability to strive for the true ideal.

That the New Testament looks upon the kingdom of God as a gift to man appears convincingly from the words of Jesus with respect to it found in the gospels. Dr. Geerhardus Vos has worked this out beautifully in his little book Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church. The kingdom of God is not realized by self-righteousness but by the righteousness of God, which must be given unto men. It is naturally in Paul's theology that this idea comes to fullest expression. Paul constantly speaks in absolute terms when he addresses his churches. They are spoken to as absolutely holy and as absolutely righteous. John tells us that those who are born from above cannot sin. Now it is plain that the Apostles do not mean that the saints are already perfect in degree while on earth. The only meaning that can be given to their words is that our perfection is the perfection of Christ in us. That is, the perfection that the Apostles speak of is a substitutionary perfection, and a substitutionary perfection is nothing but a gift of God to sinners. This substitutionary perfection is genuinely ours and will blossom forth in all its glory in the life hereafter.

But it is no less true of the Old Testament than of the New Testament that it regard the kingdom of God as a gift to sinners. The whole of the covenant of God with Israel is a free gift. The Lord reiterates from time to time that he has chosen Israel not because they were better than the others, or because they were greater in number than others. Then too the realization of the covenant promises is constantly accomplished through the acts of God's grace. It is the miraculous power of God that leads Israel through the Red Sea, that causes the sun to stand still, that drives out the Canaanite and that retains the Israelites in the land of promise, in spite of their sins. One need only to look at the prophecy of Hosea to see that the Lord takes his people to himself again and again by acts of his forgiving grace.

All the activity in the kingdom of God is based upon the free grace of God. It will be necessary to emphasize this point over and over again. Modernism seeks to present the matter as though the ethical ideal is not absolute. It thinks of the absolute ideal merely as a "limiting concept." And it thinks that man can of his own accord set out for the realization of the "absolute ideal." Modernism speaks a great deal of the kingdom as the ethical ideal of man. But its conception of the kingdom is not that of the Scriptures. It is not that of the Scriptures because the ethical ideal of the modernist kingdom is not absolute. Modernism has limited the range of the summum bonum to the moral life. It does not dare to accept the picture

of the perfection of nature as well as the perfection of morality. Modernism is imbued with non-theistic ethics in its kingdom ideal. In the second place, modernism has denied that the kingdom is the gift of God's free grace. It has put the kingdom of God before man as something that he must realize by his own ability apart from the grace of God.

Now because modernism has abused the entire conception of the kingdom and has substituted for it a semi-pagan notion of a kingdom to be realized by man with some help of Christ, there are orthodox theologians who prefer not to speak of the kingdom of God as the ethical summum bonum of man. So for instance Dr. Geesink tells us that the kingdom of God must not be spoken of as man's summum bonum inasmuch as God himself is man's highest good (1). Now as we have seen, this is true if we mean that in the most ultimate sense God is the end of the whole creation. In this respect God is the end of man both in religion and in ethics. But we have also seen that ethics deals more directly than does religion with what God has given man to do on this earth. Dr. Geesink himself makes a similar distinction when he says that this highest good is reached by man religiously in adoration and ethically by doing God's will on earth with respect to our fellow man (2). Now it is this doing the will of God on earth that we speak of as the ethical summum bonum for man. Hence there is no conflict between saying that God is man's supertemporal or most ultimate summum bonum, while the kingdom of God is man's more immediate summum bonum.

A further point that we must consider here is that which Dr. Geesink speaks of when he says that since the kingdom of God is a gift it cannot be thought of as something for the realization of which we must strive, as our summum bonum (3). He says that the mediating theologians have tried to escape the simple Bible teaching that the kingdom of God is a gift by saying that though it is a gift it is also an ideal for which to strive. The Germans spoke of this by saying that the kingdom is, to be sure, a "Gabe" but also an "Aufgabe." Against this claim Geesink says that the kingdom of God is nothing but a gift, and can therefore not be thought of as something to be realized by us.

Geesink here attempts to steer clear of Hegelian idealism. It is very easy for us to think of the kingdom of God as the dialectical process of overcoming the evil by the good as Hegel conceived of it. If we do this we have reduced evil to a correlative of the good. And this prepares the soil for modernism or is itself modernism. But it is equally true that there is a sense in which the kingdom of God is an "Aufgabe" as well as a "Gabe." In theological terms we speak of this when we say, after Paul, that though it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do, yet we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Is there a conflict between them? Not at all. We can speak of the kingdom of God both as a "Gabe" and as an "Aufgabe" in a truly Christian as well as a Hegelian sense. We have learned to trust in the righteousness of Christ, instead of

in our own righteousness. But the good works done upon the basis of Christ's righteousness are nevertheless our good works. And there is no sphere of exercise for these good works except in the realization of the kingdom of God. It is of this that Geesink himself speaks when he says that we must, as creatures of God and as redeemed, seek God as our summum bonum in doing the will of God for us in relation to our fellow creatures.

We may note in passing that if we are to say that because the kingdom of God is a gift it cannot be made into our summum bonum, the same difficulty would appear if we speak of God as man's summum bonum. God's communion is itself a free gift of God to man once man has become a sinner. Now we do not say that because God's communion is a free gift of his sovereign grace to us, therefore the seeking of the glory of God cannot be to us an object for which we ought to strive. It is an object for which we ought to strive in gratitude for the gift that we have received. And the striving itself is a gift.

The importance of this subject warrants us in dwelling on it still further. We must trace this thing back to its metaphysical foundation. Back of the idealist ethics against which Geesink is militating, lies the idealist metaphysics. And this idealist metaphysics thinks of the relation of God to the temporal universe as a whole, and to man in particular as a matter of identity or of cooperation. In other words, idealist metaphysics, as well as all other antitheistic metaphysics, cannot believe in the possibility and the actuality of analogical action. But in contrast to this it is of the very heart of theistic metaphysics to say that all human action is analogical action. Every act of a temporal being is based upon the creating and sustaining power of God. Even when man was in paradise his own life was a gift and the universe was a gift, and yet because of this very fact it could also be a thing to strive after. Moral responsibility is impossible upon any other basis than that of the theistic idea of analogical action. Now if we apply this concept, this exclusively theistic concept, of analogical action, to the question of the kingdom of God in Scriptures, we can once more hold without qualification that the kingdom is a "Gabe" and also our "Aufgabe."

One detail must be noted here. Dr. Geesink points out that when Jesus tells men to strive to enter into the kingdom, to seek first of all the kingdom, he does not mean that men can seek to realize the kingdom. This is true. Christ tells men there to seek the free gift of God's grace. But we should note that this does not militate against the position we have just outlined which holds that, once we have entered into the kingdom, by a free gift of God's grace, and that once we are given the ability to strive for that which is good in the sight of God, the only area in which our God gives ability to do his will is in the seeking of the realization of the kingdom of God.

The Reformed concept of analogical action is the equivalent of the Reformed concept of analogical knowledge. Both of them are what they are

because of their final reference point in the self-contained ontological Trinity and his comprehensive plan with respect to the whole course of events in the universe

Over against these stand the Roman Catholic concepts of analogical knowledge and analogical action. The Roman Catholic concept of analogy, both with respect to knowledge and action, is formed by the union of the Aristotelian form-matter scheme and the Christian doctrine of God. The final reference point for Rome's theory of knowledge and action is not exclusively found in God. It is therefore not covenantal in character. It is not the relation between the Sovereign God and his creature that comes to expression in the Roman notion of analogy. It is rather the idea of a contract between one very great and one very small sovereign individual. There is no final dependence of man upon God. Accordingly there is a common relation of God and man as individuals to a principle that is correlative to both. Man's relations to his environment do not finally end exclusively in God. His thought and his actions are therefore not truly analogical of God's thoughts and God's actions.

#### The Task of Destroying the Works of the Evil One

We turn now to the third characteristic of biblical ethics spoken of above, namely, that it is only in biblical ethics that the destruction of evil within man and round about man, moral and physical, is set as a part of the ethical ideal of man.

It goes without saying that if evil is what all non-theistic ethics says it is, namely, an unfortunate circumstance in which the universe somehow exists, it cannot be duty for man to seek to destroy it. It can at most be a wise thing for himself to seek to get as far as possible away from this evil.

In contrast to this it is clear that if man was created perfect and placed in a perfect universe so that sin is an insult on the part of man against the living God, with the result that all evil, natural as well as moral, violates the holiness of God, it must be a part of the task of man, once he has been redeemed, to seek to destroy that evil in all its forms, and wherever found. The destruction of all evil everywhere is the negative but unavoidable task of every member of the kingdom of God. Wherever the believer sees evil, he sees insult to God, to his God who has graciously saved him from evil. This does not mean that there is no gradation in evil. It does not mean that man must everywhere use the same method in seeking to destroy the evil which he sees. There is undoubtedly gradation in evil. The natural evil is the result of man's moral deflection. Accordingly the believer will not seek in all sorts of foolish ways to destroy the natural evil without relating it to moral evil. On the contrary, the believer will seek to eradicate the root of evil first of all in the heart of man.

And even so he will not fight indiscriminately. It is his task first of all to overcome evil in himself. We cannot speak of this in detail at this point. We speak of it here only as an aspect of man's summum bonum.

It is important to note that both the Old and the New Testaments do as a matter of fact regard the destruction of all evil as a part of the task of man. It is equally important to note that as a matter of fact Scripture throughout considers it man's first task to overcome evil in himself.

That the Old Testament considers it a task of the people of God to destroy evil is so obvious that it is often made the basis of unfavorable criticism of its ethics. It is said that it is an evidence of the rudeness and non-Christian spirit of Old Testament ethics that it requires of the people of God that they shall destroy their enemies. And Christian apologists all too often practically admit this criticism by giving no better defense of it than that we must figure with the general characteristics of the times.

What shall we say with respect to this? We may note first that it is, to be sure, perfectly legitimate and necessary to advance the characteristics of the times as an explanation for Old Testament ethics. Even so, it should be remembered when we bring in the characteristics of the times as an explanation for Old Testament ethics, that we do this in order to bring out the greatness of the condescending grace of God by which he was willing to seek out men at the very low depths of morality to which they had brought themselves, in order gradually to lead them out. It does not mean that the absoluteness of the standard has been lowered when we read of God's allowing certain things on account of the hardness of men's hearts. Nor do we allow that the standard has really changed with the coming of the New Testament. It is only the mode or manner of bringing about the realization of the goal that has been changed. In the Old Testament times this goal had to be reached in an externalistic fashion, while in New Testament times this goal is reached in more spiritual or internalistic ways. The goal was the same in both instances.

More important than this is to note that the commands of complete extermination of the enemies of the people of God marks off the Old Testament ethics as being essentially one with New Testament ethics rather than the contrary. Instead of apologizing for this aspect of Old Testament ethics we should glory in it. It is the best proof of the genuinely theistic character of the Old Testament that one could desire. If God is what the theist says he is, sin must be absolutely destroyed, and it is naturally to be expected that God would order his people to destroy evil. And it is equally natural that this should be done in an externalistic way in the Old Testament times when the whole of the divine revelation to man was given in an externalistic way.

It is at all times a part of the task of the people of God to destroy evil. Once we see this we do not, for instance, meanly apologize for the

imprecatory psalms, but glory in them. We rejoice that God is setting before man, even after he has become utterly unworthy of it through his sin, the ideal of a perfect earth in which only righteousness shall dwell, and in which there shall be nothing whatsoever of sin and evil.

In the second place, we must note that just as certain as it is that the Old Testament requires of the people of God that they shall destroy evil, so certain is it also that they should begin that program of the destruction of evil within themselves. It was within the theocracy itself that God's holiness was to be manifested. The least bit of infringement of the holiness of God was punished quickly and severely. The least bit of impurity in the theocracy was intolerable in the sight of God. The Jewish lepers had to be driven out of the camp of the Israelites and had to dwell in awful separation, symbolizing the great loathing of God for the impurity of sin. It was not till the Israelites were pure in the sight of God that he could really use them as a scourge for the nations. God was even willing to use the heathen, who were not his people, and to whom he had not given his covenant, to scourge Israel, in order that his own people might become pure. It was not till Habakkuk, the prophet, saw this great truth that he could really understand how it was possible that God should allow his own people to suffer so grievously at the hands of the enemies of the Lord.

And what is true in the Old Testament as a nation is true in the New Testament of individuals. And what is true of the Old Testament in an externalistic sense, is true of the New Testament in an internalistic sense.

The individual believer has a comprehensive task. His is the task of exterminating evil from the whole universe. He must begin this program in himself. As a king reinstated it is his first battle to fight sin within his own heart. And this will remain his first battle till his dying day. This does not mean, however, that he must not also seek to destroy evil in his fellow Christians and in his fellow men while he is engaged in destroying evil within himself. If he had to wait till he was perfect himself to seek to destroy evil within the hearts and lives of others, he would have to wait till after this life, when there will be no more evil to be destroyed. It is true that we all live in glass houses and therefore should never assume a proud attitude. It is true that we all sin again and again and that it will be necessary for us to warn our brother of his sin at one time while it will be necessary for the brother to warn us of our sin at another time. But all this does not absolve us from the sacred duty as Christians to warn one another of our sins.

And then we must go one step further. It is our duty not only to seek to destroy evil in ourselves and in our fellow Christians, but it is our further duty to seek to destroy evil in all our fellow men. It may be, humanly speaking, hopeless in some instances that we should succeed in bringing them to Christ. This does not absolve us, however, from seeking to re-

strain their sins to some extent for this life. We must be active first of all in the field of special grace, but we also have a task to perform with respect to the destruction of evil in the field of common grace.

Still further we must note that our task with respect to the destruction of evil is not done if we have sought to fight sin itself everywhere we see it. We have the further obligation to destroy the consequences of sin in this world as far as we can. We must do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith. To help relieve something of the sufferings of the creatures of God is our privilege and our task.

A particular point is that of the Christian's attitude toward the abolition of war. Some would hold that since the Bible tells us that there will be wars till the end of time, it would be flying in the face of providence if we should try to outlaw war. But there is a difference between a commandment of God and a statement of what will come to pass. God commands us to be perfect but tells us that none of us will ever be perfect in this life. So it is our plain task to do what we can, in legitimate ways, to lessen the number of wars and to make them less gruesome.

A word needs to be said about seeking in other ways to ameliorate the results of sin. It is not as common as it used to be to find Christians who think it wrong to call a doctor when they are afflicted with disease. Yet one does not always know whether this change of attitude is due to a deeper spiritual insight or whether it is due to a more careless attitude. It may be either, in any given instance. It may be that we hold that Christianity really forbids us to seek a doctor in times of sickness but that we do not take our Christianity seriously enough to live up to it in this respect. On the other hand it may also be that we have learned to see more deeply into the nature of Christianity and have come to see that it does not forbid us to call a doctor but rather requires us to do so in case of disease. Disease is, in general, the result of sin. Yet God has graciously mitigated the results of sin by placing in creation itself the healing powers that reduce the pains of man and prolong his life. It would be disobedience to God and failure to make proper use of his gifts if we neglected to call a doctor in time of need.

Such then is the third aspect of the summum bonum. We have an absolute ethical ideal to offer man. This absolute ideal is a gift of God. And this gives us assurance that our labors shall not be in vain. This gives us courage to start with the program of the eradication of evil from God's universe. We cannot carry on from the place where God first placed men. A great deal of our time will have to be taken up with the destruction of evil. We may not even seem to see much progress in ourselves or 'round about us, during our lifetime. We shall have to build with the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other. It may seem to us to be a hopeless task of sweeping the ocean dry. Yet we know that this is exactly what our ethical ideal



would be if we were not Christians. We know that for non-Christians their ethical ideal can never be realized either for themselves or for society. They do not even know the true ethical ideal. And as to our own efforts we know that though much of our time may have to be taken up with pumping out the water of sin, we are nevertheless laying the foundation of our bridge on solid rock, and we are making progress toward our goal. Our victory is certain. The devil and all his servants will be put out of the habitable universe of God. There will be a new heaven and a new earth on which righteousness will dwell.

### An Ethics of Hope

Finally, we must note the fourth characteristic of biblical ethics, namely, that it is an ethics of hope. If there has been a time in the church when there was a one-sided other-worldliness in its theology and in its ethics, it remains true that in both its theology and in its ethics the church should be other-worldly. To say this is simply to recognize that sin has played havoc with the universe as it is and that it is God's plan that after the judgment, and not till then, will sin be removed from this world. To be other-worldly is therefore not to have no eye for the things of this world, but it is to think more of this world than any one who is not a Christian could think of it. It is to live in the daily assurance that this universe can and will be renovated completely in God's own good time. It is to look for the new heaven and the new earth.

It should be noted at once that biblical ethics being such as we have described it in the preceding paragraphs, namely, in speaking of the kingdom of God as an absolute summum bonum, in speaking of the kingdom of God as a gift of God, and in speaking of the kingdom of God as to be realized upon the destruction of the evil one and all his work, it could not be otherwise than an ethics of hope. The summum bonum is absolute. It was, as we saw when we were considering the summum bonum ideally, to be realized in the course of history by the activity of the whole human race. Even as such it would to that extent be an ethics of hope. Man had life and would hope to get life more abundantly. There is no conflict between possessing and striving for the kingdom. Then sin came into history. It, so to speak, retarded the realization of the kingdom of God. A great share of the energy that should go to the direct realization of that kingdom had to be expended indirectly in the destruction of sin. How slowly the procession of the Messianic king leading on his kingdom, in the olden days, moves. How slowly even the procession of the ascended Lord, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords as he leads the soldiers of the cross, moves. But no matter if it does go slowly. And no matter if you are the first one to fall in the strife. Your reward is not lost. It is safely placed with the builder of the celestial city. Abraham looked for the city that hath foundations. Among the vistas of the earth he saw heaven. Job saw that his Redeemer lived in

heaven. He knew that justice would be done hereafter. Much clearer did Paul see that Christ was able to keep that which he had entrusted unto him against the final day. It was gradually in the course of the special revelation of God to his people that they began to see more clearly that in this life justice will not be fully done. But finally even the entrance of sin will not merely retard, but also advance the coming of the final kingdom.

It is of importance to note that both the Old and the New Testaments present an ethics of hope. It is quite often stated with respect to the ethics of the Old Testament that it is an ethics of hope, while it is not made plain that this is equally true with respect to the ethics of the New Testament. It is true that there is a difference between the ethics of the Old and the ethics of the New Testament with respect to this matter of hope. We may perhaps say that the ethics of the Old Testament is twice over an ethics of hope while the ethics of the New Testament is only once an ethics of hope. We mean by this that the Old Testament ethics looked forward to a fulfillment in the New Testament times, while together with the ethics of the New Testament times it looked forward, even though not with the clear self-consciousness, to the final fulfillment after this life. But it should be clearly noted that the fulfillment in the New Testament times, toward which the Old Testament believer looked, is no more than a fulfillment in principle. The kingdom of God is a present reality. We have entered into it. But it is also that for the realization of which we daily strive. Dr. Vos has made this two-fold aspect of the kingdom abundantly clear on the basis of the teaching of Jesus. It will not do to teach with modernism that the eschatological aspect of Jesus' teaching of the kingdom is not an important aspect. It is closely and inextricably interwoven with the aspect that pertains to the present. We cannot obtain a complete picture of Jesus' conception of the kingdom if we ignore either of these aspects. And it is not too much to say that the final or eschatological aspect is the end toward which the other is working. It is the regeneration of all things that Jesus contemplates as the objective of his redemptive program on earth. And it is this that makes it impossible on the one hand to interpret the ethics of the New Testament as being merely an interim ethics. Jesus gives us the picture of a task to perform for the ages. But it is equally impossible to interpret Jesus' ethics as being for this world only. He went about doing good to the poor and needy, to be sure. He told us that in helping the poor we are serving him. To that extent the vision of Sir Launfal is true, that when he gave the leper a morsel of his own coarse loaf, he was fulfilling the spirit of Christ. But he was certainly not fulfilling the spirit of Christ - and it is this which modernism forgets - if he did this without reference to the Christ who gave himself as the substitute for men in order to save them for eternity. Only they are his true disciples, who have been saved by him from the wrath to come. And only then have we truly served him in our fellow men, if we ourselves have with them been saved from the wrath to come. It is no doubt Christ's will that we should serve all those that are in need. This does not imply, however, that we

are serving him equally if we serve those that are not his own and if we serve those who are his own.

Such then is the ethical ideal of the Scriptures. It presents to us an absolute ideal such as no other ethical literature presents. This ethical ideal is a gift of God to man, and the power to set out upon the way to that ethical ideal is also a gift of God to man. It is this that assures us that the ideal will be reached without a doubt. Then in the third place, this ethical ideal, just because it is absolute, demands that all evil be destroyed. Hence both in the Old Testament and in the New it is a part of the task of the people of God to destroy evil. Finally, because this ethical ideal is an absolute ideal and demands the complete destruction of evil, its full realization lies in the life hereafter, biblical ethics is an ethics of hope.

That this ethical ideal of Scripture is unique ought to be abundantly plain from this description. There is no other ethical ideal that is even remotely similar to it. All other ideals visualize a relative end. None of them think of the ideal as a gift to man. None of them demand the absolute destruction of evil. None of them look to the hereafter for the full realization of their ideal. The Old Testament is in all these respects just as unique as is the New Testament. They are in perfect agreement on these points. Together they are in perfect disagreement with all other ethical ideals.

#### References for Chapter VIII

1. W. Geesink: Gereformeerde Ethick, Vol. II, p. 21.
2. Idem, II, p. 22.
3. Idem, II, p. 23.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE OLD TESTAMENT SUMMUM BONUM

With the background of the preceding chapter we can now take up the particular characteristics of the Old Testament summum bonum. It goes without saying that the Old Testament is nothing but a particular form of the redemptive summum bonum in general.

But why should there be various forms of the one redemptive summum bonum? The reason for this is given in the fact that redemption itself is an historical process. And redemption itself is an historical process because, as we have seen, God has created man as a race that was to appear gradually in the course of history.

In the first place, we may say that just because the kingdom of God as man's ethical summum bonum lies in the future, as far as its complete realization is concerned, man needs to have placed before him more immediate or subsidiary objectives.

In the second place, it is to be expected that these immediate objectives will be given by God to man in accordance with the state of development to which the kingdom of God has reached among men.

In the third place, it is to be expected that in the earlier stages of revelation men will more readily identify the immediate with the ultimate objective than they will at the later stage of revelation.

In the first place then, we must note that it would be natural for man to set immediate objectives for himself under the direction of God just because the realization of the kingdom of God was to be a temporal process. These more immediate objectives may be spoken of as earlier. We may compare the whole process with the normal growth of a child. It may be a child's immediate duty to obey the voice of the parent in some trivial detail. But the obedience of the child on this point prepares it for higher tasks. It is just a question of relative maturity. This point should be kept in mind when one looks at the Old Testament ethics. All too often men point to the lower ethical ideal of the Old Testament as evidence of the evolutionary process. To them the orthodox conception of things is identical with a mechanical conception of things. They forget that the most orthodox church not only can but must, on the basis of its own principle, allow for development. But it is to be noted that when one allows for this sort of development one is not catering as much as an iota or tittle to the evolutionary idea of development. Back of the development we allow stands the creation of a perfect, albeit not yet fully developed, character. It is not by

striving at the tethers of self-preservation and by striving at other sorts of tethers that man has finally grown into a moral being. Back of the development of the Old Testament ethics stands the story of the creation of man in paradise.

On the other hand there has sometimes been some excuse for the interpretation that liberal men have given of the orthodox position. Sometimes orthodox men have had no eye for the truly biblical conception of development. They have been greatly worried sometimes by the externalism of Old Testament ethics, not realizing that externalism is naturally to be expected in a process of historical development. Even we as Christians may speak of primitive man, if only we make clear that we do not mean by that term what the evolutionist means by it. If we call Adam a primitive man we should always remember that this primitive man was created as a character. Yet Adam was the father of the whole race, and the race as a race would have to go through a process of development. He would have to learn to apply the ethical principles implanted in him by God to every newly arising ethical situation. And it would only be gradually that he would begin to see clearly the most ultimate ethical ideals. The more immediate ethical ideals would not be substitutes for the ultimate ethical ideal; they would simply be stepping stones by which man would reach the ultimate ethical ideal.

What we do actually find then in the Old Testament corresponds to what we expect to find. We actually find that there is a gradual development in the clarity with which the final or ultimate ethical ideal is seen. There is a gradual development in the realization that the ethical ideal is absolutely comprehensive and that its final accomplishment lies in the far distant future. We shall speak of that more fully when we discuss the further problem of evil getting into this process of development. For the present we wish only to call attention to the fact of development itself.

Further, there is in the periods of development of the immediate ethical ideals a sort of fitness for every stage. There is a far greater externalism in the earlier stages of revelation than there is in its later stages. That the prophets have a more internalistic ethics than was given to the Israelites at an earlier stage is often used as evidence of the evolutionary development of Old Testament ethics. Yet it does not prove anything of the sort. It is simply what we should expect. On the other hand it is not true that there is no internalism in the earlier stages at all. We have already quoted Deuteronomy 6 to show that the Israelite was to love God with all his heart and with all his mind. It is simply a matter of degree. Then too it is evident that in the course of redemptive revelation the later stages seem to present a much faster development than the earlier. In the first stages it seems as though there is very little development. Then suddenly rapid strides of advance are made. The final reason for this is ultimately in the free disposition of God. Yet we can see it in certain laws of progress. We

can see a process something akin to the accumulation of snow on a rolling snowball. The capacity for taking in more snow increases greatly as the actual quantity increases. So also it is but natural to expect that once the facts of the life and death of Christ are accomplished the church will make rapid strides in its capacity for catching hold of the ultimate ideal and making every immediate ideal subordinate to it.

In the earlier stages of a child's growth a penny for the present means more than a million twenty years later. When he has come to maturity, however, a human being will gladly forego privileges in the present if he can thereby guarantee the future. Similarly with the stages of the ethical ideal. We find it to be an actual fact that God treats his children in an infinitely wise way. He sets before them at the early stages of the revelation of himself to them immediate objectives without intimating clearly that they are but stepping stones to a higher and even to an ultimate ideal. It is extremely important to note, however, that this is a pedagogical measure only.

If it were not a pedagogical measure only there would be a flat contradiction in Old Testament ethics. The ethical ideal of the Old Testament ethics is not any less absolute than the ethical ideal of the New Testament. Cursed is every one that does not do all the works of the law. Cursed is every one who does not do all the works of the law with his whole heart. That is an Old Testament requirement. Yet we see that God does actually permit of practices that correspond to lower ideals. We need only mention the matter of polygyny. Jesus makes perfectly plain that this permission was a pedagogical measure on the part of God. From the beginning things were not so, he says, and things are not to be so in the future.

With this we are ready to consider a further complication that sets in when we consider Old Testament ethics, namely, that the whole process of historical development through which the race would naturally have had to go has been modified in the form of its manifestation through the entrance of sin. If we may venture on the analogy of childhood once more we may say that the process of redemptive revelation may be compared with a convalescing child. The child must grow and it must at the same time fight disease. Sometimes its growth may be stunted altogether while all its energies are taken up with the warding off disease. At other times there may be a wholly abnormal growth due to the fact that the patient does not get up and around. Such a child will often not know its own true interest. It may have to be operated on in the most critical situations. All manner of things must be done that would not be done in the case of a healthy child, in order to preserve its life and to assure its final growth. Certain things may even be allowed this child that would not be allowed a healthy child in order that the child may recover health as well as attain maturity.

It is very difficult to distinguish between that which would have been

necessary even if sin had not come in, and what is necessary only because of the results of sin. Yet it is necessary to remember these two points: (a) that the race would have had to go through a process of development even apart from sin and (b) that when sin did enter it was naturally to be expected that this would complicate the process and make it look like anything but a normal one. We shall have occasion to refer to this more fully below.

### The Theocracy

With these general considerations in mind we may now look directly at the ethical summum bonum of the Old Testament. That ethical summum bonum was the theocracy. It was by seeking with all its power the realization of the theocracy that Israel was to make its unique contribution to the development of the general human summum bonum, namely, the kingdom of God.

The theocracy answers to all four of the requirements of the redemptive ethical ideal that we have spoken of in the preceding chapter.

### The Absolute Ideal

In the first place, it was an absolute ideal. God was gradually bringing man to the realization that he himself was the absolute ruler of men. The very nature of sin was that it set aside the word of God as man's final authority. Man had to learn through a slow process that God is King of kings and Lord of lords. God was to be the direct ruler of Israel. In the first part of Israel's national existence God even forbade them to have any earthly king at all. They had to learn that they were not like other nations. Then when God did allow them to have a king, he gave Israel to understand that their king was not a king like other kings but a king always under God. The prophetic office would always stand next to the kingly office in order that God could directly make his will known to the king.

Still further, Israel was throughout its history strictly forbidden to use political expedience as a guiding principle of state. The kings themselves had to learn this lesson first of all. And if they deflected from this principle most easily, because the pride of their hearts would lead them to assume a more independent course, then there would be the prophets to call them back or to provide another king who would do the will of Jehovah. No matter how critical the situation seemed to be, no matter how wise and expedient an alliance with some strong neighboring power might seem to be, the word of God through his prophets was the only thing that was to count. And that was true no less of the internal affairs of the kingdom than of its foreign policies. Israel was to be an absolutely God-directed people.

What was true for the nation as a whole was true for the individuals that comprised the nation. It is true that not as much attention is given to the individual as to the nation in the Old Testament. Yet it would be wholly impossible for the nation to be a true theocracy if the individuals that comprised the nation did not take the word of God as the guide for their lives. We shall not speak of this at length here. We only note that in the course of Old Testament history there have been many individuals to whom God came with a special test whether they would choose to guide themselves by his word alone. Of these individuals Abraham stands out as a supreme example. Abraham had to learn the absolute obedience of faith. This appears especially at the very beginning of his contact with the living God. He had to be blind as to the future. When the call of God came to him to leave Ur of the Chaldees, all appearances were against the wisdom of his leaving. He simply had to take the word of God for it. Then when he was in Canaan he had to learn this lesson over and over again. The supreme example of this is the test God placed before him when he asked Abraham to offer his only son Isaac. Here again appearances were all against the wisdom of doing such a thing. In the first place it would seem to be a gruesome thing to do. It would break his father's heart to do such a thing. In the second place, it would be hard for Abraham to believe that the true God would require such a sacrifice of him. In the third place, it was impossible for Abraham to see how the promises of God to him should be realized if he should slay Isaac. It was through Isaac that he was to receive the numerous offspring promised him. So God seemed to be not only cruel but also self-contradictory. Yet Abraham was placed before this test in order to see whether he would set aside all his interpretations about nature and history, and even about God himself, in order simply to obey the voice of God, trusting that God would cause history to come out as was best for Abraham, and would take care of the "contradictions" too. How marvelously Abraham stood the test. Hebrews tells of the victory. Abraham trusted that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, if necessary. That took care of the history and the promises. And God did not actually want Abraham to offer Isaac, but stayed his hand at the critical moment. That took care of the "contradictions." Surely there can be no doubt about the absoluteness of the ethical ideal of the Old Testament. It was a nation of Abrahams that God desired to form for himself.

#### Severities in Connection with the Absolute Will

At this point it should be noted that the very severity of the measures employed over and over again by God, both in the case of training individuals and in the case of training the nation as a whole, finds its explanation in the absoluteness of the ethical ideal. It is for us difficult to imagine that God should ever have given such a test as he gave to Abraham. And it would be out of accord with the whole principle of revelation to think that God would give such a test to any one in the New Testament times. We do



as a matter of fact find that God has not given any such test as that in the later stages of revelation. But in the early stage of revelation, we can see, if we really think into the nature of sin, and the absoluteness of the ethical ideal, it was necessary that God should give such a test. If we add to this that Abraham was to be the father of the faithful, that his example of faith was to serve as a household word for centuries to come, we can understand that a test of absolute obedience was necessary.

And what God did with Abraham as an individual he did over and over again with the nation as a whole. We may call attention especially to the time when Jehovah threatened to destroy the whole nation after the sin with the golden calf. Was it such a wonder that Israel should do what it did in view of the heathen practices in the midst of which it had grown up? Could not God deal with them a little more gently than he did? No, he could not! It was an absolute ideal that he was placing before them. Again Moses could not see how the promises should be fulfilled. Again Moses saw "contradictions" in God who had promised one thing and now was going to carry out another thing. Again it was not till Moses gave himself over willingly unto death if only his people might live, that God revealed himself as not really intending to destroy the people.

### The Concessions

Furthermore, if the severities of the Old Testament but establish the absoluteness of its ethical ideal, its concessions do not compromise it. In order to understand the nature of these concessions we must call to mind the distinction we have drawn between the ultimate and the more immediate goal that God had set before his people. The theocracy itself is only a stepping stone to a higher theocracy. Even if it had been fully realized, according to the ordinances of God given for it, it would have had, in the whole history of redemption, only a temporary significance. By that we do not mean an unimportant significance. We mean the significance that childhood has for maturity.

It is this same principle that we shall have to apply if we consider what are more generally spoken of as concessions of God to lower ethical ideals. We cannot discuss these points in detail. We may refer to the excellent discussion of the details given in the Notes on Old Testament Ethics by Dr. Greene. He defends Old Testament ethics against the charge that it presents God as being sometimes "partial, hateful, revengeful, and otherwise morally unworthy" and that he sanctions immoral actions on the part of man. The case of polygyny being tolerated in the Old Testament is the classic illustration of the supposed low type of Old Testament ethics. Yet, as Dr. Greene points out, Jesus himself interprets this as a pedagogical measure on the part of God in order to lead Israel on to the absolute ideal. It was for the hardness of man's heart, and for the blindness of man's eyes

that God was willing to come down so low as to tolerate for a time that which is out of accord with the absolute standard, so long as it was a stepping stone toward the absolute ideal. We have seen that God frequently set the absoluteness of the ideal before men very vigorously. And that might lead us to ask why he did not do this consistently and at once set up the absolute ideal along the whole front of the ethical life. If God expects Abraham to be so absolutely submissive as to be willing to sacrifice his only son, why does he not also demand absolutely monogamous marriage on the part of Abraham? The answer to this, we believe, must be found in the analogy of the convalescent child. The convalescent child needs strong medicine in order to live. It may need many varieties of strong medicine. But if these were all administered at once the child would die. So too if God would have maintained the absolute standard at once along the whole front of the ethical life, we can see that he would not have attained his purpose. It was the all-wise physician who was healing his patient slowly, and giving him just the medicine that he could bear and no more, whom we see at work in the Old Testament.

This pedagogical and this medical principle of redemptive ethics should not be interpreted as being a concession to the notion that man's ability of living up to God's commands is God's standard by which he gives his demands. If we speak of a pedagogical principle alone we are easily led to think falsely. We are then easily led to say that we do not expect as much of a child as we expect of a full-grown man. But the childhood analogy holds only in part. The race began with Adam as a full-grown man wholly responsible for his deeds. He was given one wife; monogamous marriage was a creation ordinance of God which was obliterated in the minds of man for no other reason than that of sin. Hence we must add the idea of a medicinal principle to that of a pedagogical principle. And even this is open to misinterpretation. A child that is sick is not sick because of any special sins of its own. Yet the race is sick because of its own sins, and for no other reason. It is therefore only partially true to say that the lower demands of Old Testament ethics are due to the fact that God adjusts his demands to the times. That God makes concessions to low ethical practice is not in the least an admission that he has not the right to demand the fulfillment of the absolute ethical ideal.

### Grace in the Old Testament

The very absoluteness of the ideal was calculated to teach Israel that it had to be a gift of God if it was to be reached at all. The law was all-inclusive and exhaustive in its demands. In trying to fulfill it the Israelites would experience their inability to fulfill it. This very fact that God uses this seemingly round-about way of inculcating the idea of free grace into the hearts of his people instead of saying to them simply, as Paul says to the New Testament believers, that they must be saved by grace, indicates that Israel could learn the idea of free grace in no other way than

by a spiritually agonizing process of seeking to save themselves by the fulfillment of the law.

With respect to the teaching of the free grace of God we may note briefly what happened both in the case of individuals and in the case of the nation as a whole.

As to individuals Jehovah sought to inculcate the conception of free grace especially at the beginning of the theocracy. He made plain to Abraham that he was taken out of Ur of the Chaldees not because of any inherent goodness of his own but simply on account of God's free choice of him. It was made plain to Abraham that the promise of a numerous offspring was not given for any other reason than the free grace of God. Then in the case of Isaac, it is important to note that his very birth was a miracle. Sarah was past age when Isaac was born. This was to teach Abraham that he was not only dependent upon the free grace of God as far as the promise itself was concerned but also for the means by which that promise was to be fulfilled. Abraham learned this lesson gradually. He had taken Hagar to wife in order through her to obtain the promises. Then God appeared to him and said, "I am El Shaddai," by which he meant that he was the God who could take the natural means and make them subservient to the realization of his promises. Abraham had to learn to rely on God rather than take things into his own hands. Similarly with the "sacrifice" of Isaac. It was God's purpose to teach Abraham that he was able to raise Isaac from the dead. This story of the "sacrifice" of Isaac, as we have seen, was calculated to bring out that the ethical ideal was absolute. It was also and at the same time calculated to teach Abraham that the absolute ideal would be reached by no other way than by the grace of God.

As to the story of Jacob's life we observe that it more than anything else up to this time was calculated to teach that it is God's electing grace alone that brings in the kingdom. In Isaac it was particularly shown that the means by which the kingdom was to be established was to be miraculous; in Jacob it was particularly shown that the recipients of the kingdom are in themselves utterly unworthy. The story makes plain that Jacob had no advantages over Esau in any sense. They were born of the same mother. This had not been the case with Isaac and Ishmael. Jacob and Esau were not only born of the same mother, but were twins. Yet Esau is the first-born, and the rights of the first-born were very great. In addition to this, Jacob was not as noble a character as was Esau. He was a "lifter of the heel" at birth and through all his dealings with Esau. He did not have enough faith in God to believe that in God's own time and in God's own way the promise to him would be fulfilled. He took matters into his own hands. The Lord wanted to teach that even with such people as Jacob the Lord was willing to establish his kingdom. Paul points to this in Romans when he indicates that God's electing love appeared most clearly at this point.

It is this same electing love that appears again when God makes plain to Israel as a nation over and over again that he has not chosen them as a nation because they were greater in number or better than other nations. They were inferior to other nations as Jacob was inferior to Esau. Then too, they made themselves totally unworthy over and over again. At various times the Lord even threatened to destroy their very existence. Moses' intercessory prayer was calculated to teach Israel that their very existence could be tolerated only upon the ground of mediatorial work. And back of this mediatorial work was the great name of Jehovah itself. It is because he wants to preserve his own great name that he will answer the mediatorial prayers of Moses.

Meanwhile, Jehovah was making it clear that just as the nation itself owed its origin and its continued existence to acts of God's grace, so, too, it owed its origin and its continued progress towards its goal to the miracle-working power of God. The nation was born in miracle and preserved by miracle. Israel could never have loosened the strangle-hold of Egypt without the miracles of God. They were planted in Canaan by miracle. They were preserved in Canaan by miracle. At every national crisis it was miracle and nothing else that saved them.

The nation is born in miracle and preserved in miracle. Yet it is also true that Jehovah threatened to destroy the nation because of the sin of the worship of the golden calf. Then too there was throughout the history of Israel a very strict insistence on the external observance of the various detailed laws of the theocracy. It seems as though salvation itself depended upon this external observance more than upon the faith in the gracious power of God. The law itself was given after the promise. It was meant to be a part of the covenant of grace. Yet it is also true that the law is presented as though one should seek by obedience to it, apart from grace, to enter into the promises. If any man did not live up to the requirements of the law he was stoned to death without mercy.

Now all this would seem to be contradictory. Yet it is not contradictory. It only shows that God was teaching the doctrine of grace gradually just as he was teaching the doctrine of an absolute ideal gradually. He was inserting just so much as his people could stand and no more. All this involved a wearisome process on the part of Israel. Just as a patient nigh unto death lives in the fear of death even while actually on the way to recovery, so Israel lived under the dispensation of condemnation. It seemed to them on the one hand that Jehovah expected of them ethical as well as forensic perfection, immediate as well as future perfection, if they were to enter upon the promises, while on the other hand it seemed to them as though their own deeds had nothing to do with the matter since they were sometimes forbidden to do anything at all in the way of seeking to realize the promises. All this Paul brings to expression when he says, speaking of the privileges of the new dispensation, "For ye have not received the

spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father" (Rom. 8:15), or again, "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory" (II Cor. 3:9).

### Gradual Destruction of Evil

And now we turn briefly to see that what holds true with respect to the bringing in of the absolute ethical idea and the bringing in of the conception of free grace also applies with respect to the principle of the destruction of evil.

We can be brief on this point inasmuch as we have already used material that might be discussed under this head in order to illustrate God's method of bringing in his absolute ideal. We have already referred to the fact that on the one hand Abraham was required to live up to an absolute standard of obedience and on the other hand was allowed to have two wives. We now look at this same fact from the point of view of the destruction of evil. Jesus gives us his interpretation of this by saying that divorce was allowed in the Old Testament times under certain regulations for the hardness of men's hearts' sake. This interpretation of Jesus gives us the key to the whole problem of the seemingly lower ethical standards of the Old Testament. It shows that God has not at all lowered his standard but that he is temporarily bringing the absolute standard down to the level of the people in order to insert the redemptive principle gradually. In Matthew 5:21-48 Jesus expounds this principle with respect to several of the Old Testament ordinances. In each case he shows that he is not bringing in anything different from the Old Testament but that he is only carrying through the program of the Old Testament to its logical conclusion. The requirement of the law was complete perfection. Jesus says that he has not come to destroy the law on this score but rather to establish it. He ends this section by saying, "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Certainly then all evil must be destroyed.

Yet in the Old Testament the nationalism and the externalism of the age prevented Israel from seeing the full implication of this requirement. As to the nationalism we may say that on the one hand it was involved in the promise to Abraham from the beginning that nationalism would be a passing stage, since Abraham was to become a blessing to the world. On the other hand it seemed as though the whole promise was to be wrapped up in the national existence of Israel. And this seems to be a contradiction. But it is no contradiction, since God was bringing the absolute ideal close to the consciousness of the people by identifying it with the proximate ideal. Then as to externalism we have the same sort of seeming contradiction. On the one hand the law requires that men shall love the Lord their God with all their hearts. The ideal of absolute internal perfection is set be-

fore the people without compromise. On the other hand there is so much emphasis upon the external fulfillment of the law that it seems as though God will overlook a good deal of internal evil if only the requirements of the law are met externally. This "contradiction" too is resolved if we note that God was gradually seeking to inculcate the absolute ideal of both internal and external perfection.

### Old Testament Hope

Finally we must observe that what is true of the absolute ideal, of the free grace of God, and of the destruction of evil, is also true with respect to the idea that the absolute ideal is a matter of hope.

In illustration of this we may turn again to Abraham. Abraham must learn that the fulfillment of the ideal lies in the future. It was not for himself but for posterity that he had to leave Ur of the Chaldees. And more than that we learn from Hebrews that Abraham was taught to look further than earthly things, though the promises as given spoke only of earthly things. He looked for the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. That was the hope of Abraham's faith and in it he became an example for all the faithful. That hope was exercised throughout his life. He who received the promise that he should inherit the land as far as he could see in all directions did not own a foot of ground in which to bury his wife. He who had the promise that his seed should be as the stars of the heaven and as the sand by the seashore did not have a son until the old age of himself and his wife. On the other hand the fact that the promises to Abraham were couched in terms of earthly things alone shows that God was bringing the absolute ideal of the far distant future of the new heavens and the new earth closer to Abraham by identifying it with the earthly Canaan. This far distant earthly future ideal was also brought closer to Abraham in the fact that Abraham was a wealthy man. God increased his possessions. He was, moreover, a man of power with whom his neighbors had to figure in their plans.

It would be instructive to look at the history of Job from this same point of view. We can only make a few remarks with respect to it. The story of Job illustrates that in the kingdom of God, righteousness, holiness and blessedness belong together. That is the teaching of the New Testament as well. Yet it will not be till in the new heavens and the new earth, when paradise lost has become paradise regained, that this will be fully true. Between the time of paradise lost and paradise regained the balance will not always be maintained. More than that, it may even be said that it seems as though it is often true that those who are righteous are not as prosperous as those who are not righteous. At any rate there is great unevenness throughout the course of history. And this unevenness itself was calculated to make men look to the future. But it was more difficult for men of the old dispensation to look to the absolute future of the new heavens

and the new earth than for men in the new dispensation. Therefore God graciously brought the future closer to them by identifying it with a close future on this earth. God promised a land that would flow with milk and honey. And to the patriarchs he demonstrated this principle that righteousness and holiness and blessedness belong together by actually giving them great wealth. So Job was wealthy at first and Job was once more a wealthy man when he had stood the test. That test itself consisted in God's searching his heart whether he would retain his righteousness and holiness when his "blessedness" was taken from him. In other words, the real test was whether Job was satisfied to look to the future for his blessedness while retaining his righteousness and holiness in the present. But gradually the vision of the future dawned upon him and then he gladly submitted to the unevenness of the present. And when he did submit to the unevenness of the present, God removed that unevenness. And it is this that distinguishes the Old from the New dispensation. In the New Testament God expects his people to live more fully into the absolute future than in the Old Testament. He expects of them that they will be able to sustain the unevenness of the present to the day of their death, since they have a clearer revelation of the new heavens and the new earth. In the Old Testament, on the contrary, God condescends to give an external manifestation of the principle that righteousness, holiness and blessedness belong together.

We can see this principle operate on a national scale in the fact that the Israelites were promised length of life and health as well as a land flowing with milk and honey if only they would be obedient to Jehovah. In this way they would be externally distinguished from their neighbors not only in their righteousness and holiness, but also in their blessedness.

Thus the Old Testament summum bonum stands before us in its broad outlines. It is the redemptive summum bonum in its earliest and therefore lowest form of realization. As a seriously sick patient may lie for weeks at the brink of death, so that we cannot see whether progress is being made, so also it is very gradually that we see (a) the absoluteness of the ethical ideal; (b) the notion that it must be a gift of God's grace; (c) the principle of the complete destruction of evil; and (d) the hope for the future, develop in the consciousness of the people of God. And as in the case of the patient who has once overcome those first stages shows signs of rapid improvement so also we may note that when the first slow and bitter stage of the insertion of the redemptive ideal is over, things manifest a sudden change in every respect. And it is to that change that we must now turn as we consider the New Testament summum bonum.

## CHAPTER X

### THE NEW TESTAMENT SUMMUM BONUM

The difference between the Old and the New Testament ethical ideal is that the New Testament presents the requirements of the redemptive ethical ideal more clearly than does the Old Testament. In fact we depend largely upon the New Testament in order to see what the Old Testament ethical ideal was.

#### The New Testament Absolute Ideal

In the first place, we may note that since the New Testament believer has a clearer insight into the principles of ethics than the Old Testament believer had, he can more clearly see the true relations of all things. He stands, as it were, upon a mountain peak, while the Old Testament believer had his vision obstructed by surrounding mountains. It follows that the absoluteness of the moral ideal of man stands before him more clearly than it did before the Old Testament believer.

This greater clarity of vision with respect to the absoluteness of the ethical ideal applies, first of all, intensively. The New Testament believer has a far greater consciousness of sin than the Old Testament believer had. It is true that there were individuals in the Old Testament times who realized that God required truth in the inward parts, but, speaking generally, there is a far greater internalism in the new day than there was in the old. The New Testament believer sees clearly that external obedience will not suffice. He seeks to overcome the position of a servant with that of a son.

As a true son of God, the New Testament believer turns back to the story of creation. He sees the vision of what God had in mind for man. He seeks therefore to increase in the spontaneity of his reaction to the will of God for himself and for the world. He sees more clearly than ever before that God wants man to reflect his moral glory. It is that which Jesus' words meant to him: "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." He seeks also to increase in the stability with which he keeps this ideal of God for man before himself. He sees clearly that stability within him rests upon the finished work of Christ. He knows that the posse peccari of Adam has been changed with him, in principle, through the substitutionary work of Christ, to the non posse peccari. He knows that that which is born from above cannot sin (I John 3:9). He knows that he is righteous and holy in the sight of God since God regards him not in himself but in Christ. It is this certainty with respect to the objective foundation of his perfect relationship to God that furnishes the subjective strength to go on forward with a stead-



fast hope and step. Nor is he disheartened by the fact that he has not yet reached perfection in degree. The Old Testament believer could not clearly distinguish between the perfection which he has through the work of Christ, and the perfection which God seemed to require of him directly. The New Testament believer sees clearly that his perfection is substitutive. And it is this that enables him also to see that he must distinguish between forensic and ethical perfection. That is, the believer is perfect in parts but not in degree while he is in this world. And having clear insight in these distinctions, he is not trying in any sense to gain salvation by the works of the law. He realizes that the foundation of his salvation has been laid by Christ, and that all his works could not add one bit to this foundation. He realizes that the motive for the doing of good works is none other than gratitude for salvation received as a gift of the grace of God. It is that which gives the greater stability to his ethical program than anything else could give.

A still further point that should be noticed with respect to the greater internality of the New Testament ideal is that the New Testament believer sees more clearly than the Old Testament believer did that there must be one unified controlling principle back of all his ethical striving. We have noted that in the case of Abraham God required of him absolute surrender at one point, namely, at the point of his willingness to sacrifice his only son; while at another point, namely, the matter of bigamy, God seemed to be very lenient. The reason for this was not that God was lowering the absoluteness of the ethical idea, but that he was bringing the absolute ideal as close to man as it had to be brought for man to understand the first principles of it. But now in the new dispensation the believer sees clearly that he who has broken one commandment of the law has broken the whole law. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Again we emphasize that this was known in the Old Testament too. There too it was made plain that everyone who does not all that is written in the book of the law is accursed of God. Yet this fact did not come clearly to the minds of the Old Testament believers, as the very fact that God made concessions with respect to divorce proves.

### The Example of Christ

In this connection we must discuss briefly what we should mean when we say that Christ is our example or our ethical ideal. There is much false teaching on this subject in the Church at present.

Modernism has taken the idea of Christ as an example out of its theistic setting and has caused it to float on the shoreless ocean of non-theistic thought. Men assume that the idea of a perfect Christ fits in with the evolutionary scheme of reality. One of the most common sayings of modernism is that origin does not determine validity. By that is meant

that though man has sprung from a non-moral and a non-rational background, we need not look backward to this origin, but may expect great things from man in spite of his origin. So also it is assumed to be quite reasonable to assume that the person of Jesus could have come out of the evolutionary process. Or, if men do not argue that it is possible, they will say that it is a fact. We have the fact of evolution, and we also have the fact of Jesus' personality. All this is amazingly naive. The evolutionary idea is part of the whole non-theistic philosophy and, as such, holds that the evil is as basic as the good. Hence, there is no reason to believe that perfection has ever been actual, or even that it may be possible. On the other hand, if we say that for evolution anything is possible, since it believes that rationality itself and morality itself somehow have sprung into existence from the non-rational and the non-moral, this is true, but this also is to admit that the whole of morality is a matter of chance and therefore has no significance.

The first point, then, that we must see clearly, is that if the idea of the example of Jesus is to mean anything for us it has to be on the basis of our belief in the creation story. If the perfect man Jesus is to be of any service to us, the constitution of the universe must be such that perfection is a concept that has cosmic significance. It is because man once was perfect that the words of Jesus: "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect" can have meaning for him. Without that background Jesus would have been speaking "ins Blaue hinein." There would be no moral responsibility at all, and no sense in any one moral being addressing other moral beings on moral subjects unless this were a moral universe, and there can be no moral universe except upon a theistic basis.

In the second place, the example of Jesus presupposes the fall of man. This is naturally implied in the first point. Without creation one cannot have the fall, and if one believes in creation, one must also believe in the fall. If man was created perfect, the fall is the only explanation for the fact of evil. So Christ holds up his own perfect example to us because it is our business to be perfect and because we are ourselves solely responsible for our present evil estate. And this gives the note of absolute authority to the example of Jesus. Jesus' example is not merely good advice, as modernism holds that it is. The judgment stands back of the example of Jesus. Those who are not willing to be like him will be condemned by him. And even those who say that they are willing to be like him but are not like him will be condemned by him.

In the third place, the example of Jesus presupposes his substitutionary atonement. As the fall of man is implied in the creation story, so the substitutionary atonement is once more implied in the idea of the fall of man. Sin is, because of the original perfection of man, such an awful thing and renders man so completely hopeless that he cannot take the first step on the way to his own recovery. Hence, we have seen, the kingdom of God as

man's summum bonum must not only be placed before man as his absolute idea, but must also be presented as the gift of God's grace to him. Now Jesus does not place himself as an example before man as though man could just begin to follow him of his own accord and in his own strength. Nor is it as though Jesus allows that men can follow him for a good way in their own strength, while for the absolute ideal that he sets before them he is willing to help them with his grace. Jesus nowhere allows that men can take even the first step in the direction of following him unless they have been saved by his redemptive work from their sins. He that came into the world to save sinners from the wrath to come, how could he offer himself as an example to man except on a basis of his finished work on Calvary? Modernism has with its superficial Sunday school literature run roughshod over all of these three points.

When modernism runs over these three points roughshod it is clear that its conception of following Jesus should be set over against the Christian conception of following Jesus in all the literature that we put out, especially for the Sunday schools. It is a culpable neglect on the part of the orthodox churches if they permit the modernists to write Sunday school literature that is used in the instruction of the children of believers.

Still further, we should note that these points, creation, the fall, and the substitutionary atonement, imply certain limitations on the idea of Jesus as our example even if we do not wish to take it in the modernistic sense. The imitation of Jesus literature has not always been free from a pantheistic tint. People have easily misunderstood Jesus' words about his identity with the Father and his absolute communion with the Father to imply that they too as human beings must imitate Jesus in seeking complete identification with and union with the Father. In this sort of imitation of Jesus the bounds between the Creator and the creature have all too often been neglected. Jesus never meant to wipe out the boundary between the Creator and the creature. All his work presupposed the creation story. Hence he could not mean that we should seek fellowship with the Father by way of essential union with him. He always means that our following him in his love for God must be a finite imitation of that which is infinite. Our whole moral life must be a finite replica of the eternal glory of God. As creatures we were to be like God because we were created in his image. But the fact that we were created in his image and therefore should be like him may never make us forget that we were created in his image, so that we can never and should never strive to be identical with him.

And what holds with respect to the difference between the Creator and the creature when we are told by Jesus that we must be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect holds also with respect to his setting himself as an example for us directly. Here the danger of pantheism is even greater than at the former point. Here Christian mysticism has often run into non-Christian mysticism. It will readily be admitted by some that we can-

not imitate God by being just like him in every respect since he is eternal and we are temporal, but it will not so readily be admitted that Christ too is eternal and that we are temporal, so that our imitation of him must always keep in mind this limitation. Has not Christ appeared on earth? And is he not much nearer to us than is God? There is an element of truth in this. Christ has assumed our human nature so that the imitation of Christ comes closer to us than the imitation of God. Yet even so Christ ever was and ever remains the second person in the blessed Trinity. Hence our imitation of his person must always keep in mind that he is our Creator and that we are his creatures. Hence our imitation of him should never involve an attempt to be one with him in essential union. Our mystical union with Christ must always be and must always remain an ethical union of one divine person and one human person. Our imitation of Christ must always be an imitation of God.

The misunderstanding with respect to this point has come about to a large extent by the modernist idea of a Christ-like God. As this phrase is generally used, it presupposes that God was, in his being, far away from man till Christ brought him near to us. Or in other words the supposition is that the idea of God is in itself an abstract idea, while Christ has made that idea concrete to us by "revealing the Father" to us through his own appearance in the midst of us. Here too we find that there is an element of truth. There is a sense in which the idea of God was far from man till Christ came. There is a sense in which the idea of God was abstract to man till Christ came. But in what sense this is true we cannot clearly see till we have first looked at the other side of this matter. That other side is that, originally, God was very near to man. God walked and talked with man in the garden. That does not mean that God was actually man, but it does mean that God was immediately present to man's consciousness. It is true that the implication of the God-consciousness would become increasingly clear to man as time went on, so that, when time went on through the devious path of sin and redemption, the incarnation, and what followed in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ became the outstanding means of bringing God close to man. This implies also, however, that the abstractness of the God-concept, and the far-away-ness of God, is due to an ethical and not to a metaphysical alienation, is due primarily to sin and not to creation. Hence we do not tell the story right if we present the matter as though God is naturally far distant from man but that Christ has brought him near to us. We do not tell the story well if we present the matter as though the human race has really for the first time seen the face of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and is therefore for the first time able to live the God-like life. Man was once able to live the God-like life, without Christ. Man once did live the God-like life without Christ. The incarnation would not have been necessary to reveal the Father to man unless man had sinned against the Father and had thus ethically estranged himself from the Father. On the other hand, it is true that the fulness of the kingdom of God as the summum bonum of man could not appear at the outset of history. It would

have to appear gradually. Hence when, because of sin, the incarnation became necessary, it is true that the fulness of the summum bonum of man came to clearer expression in the person of Christ than it had ever come to expression before. Christianity is always to be regarded as restorative and as supplementary.

If these matters with respect to the person of Christ in the economy of redemption be held in mind, it will also appear what the place of Christ is in the summum bonum of man. We have seen that the whole of the created universe, and particularly mankind, was to be a finite replica of the kingdom of God. Hence we said that man's ethical ideal is the realization of the kingdom of God. Sin came into the world and would have broken the process by which the realization of the kingdom of God was being effected. Then Christ came in order to enable man to realize the kingdom of God once more. He reiterated the absolute ideal. He gave men the kingdom again as a gift of grace through his sacrifice. He became their King to lead them on to the destruction of evil in the universe. He went before them to prepare the kingdom in the world to come.

Keeping this place of Christ with respect to the kingdom of God in mind, we can see, in large features at least, just what place the idea of the imitation of the life of Christ should take in our notion of the summum bonum. That imitation must always remember that Christ is the Mediator.

If we remember that Christ is God, we shall never transgress on the boundary-line between the Creator and the creature. We do not, like modernism, drag his example down to the level of that of one human person following another human person. We realize that as a divine person he has assumed a human nature. In this human nature he had a perfect soul and a perfect body. In this perfect soul and perfect body, Jesus gave to us a perfect finite replica of the moral glory of God. Hence we have, in the human nature of Christ, an expression of God's ideal for us, which helps us to realize directly what that ideal is. In that human nature we have something definite as to what God wants us to be in our individual and in our social life. Yet it should be remembered that this does not imply that the whole of Christian ethics is simply a matter of asking, "What would Jesus have me do?" There is a sense in which this common question may be asked and asked wrongly. The right way of asking this question is to ask what the direct example or the implication of the example of Christ, based as it is upon his own substitutionary work, would be for the ethical situation for which we seek enlightenment. We emphasize this matter of implication since, in the nature of the case, the direct example of Jesus did not cover all our ethical situation. There are many social relations into which we enter into which he could not enter. Moreover, Christ did not come at the end of time. We have seen that the kingdom of God was to be realized not by individuals only, but by the race as a whole through the whole course of history. Hence we cannot merely look back to Jesus. We have to look back

to Jesus in order, with him, to look forward to our future ethical task. This enables us also to see that Jesus himself helps us to look to the creation story in order from it to learn what God wanted man to be and what he wanted the whole kingdom of God to be. Jesus' example gives us anew and more fully than ever before a vision of the kingdom of God as it is set before man at creation.

In the second place, when we ask the question as to what the example of Jesus means to us, we must remember that his place in the kingdom of God is primarily that of Mediator. As the second person of the Trinity he is, of course, the One who has, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, set before man the kingdom as man's summum bonum. Then as Mediator he has come into the world, assuming a human nature, in order in it to suffer the penalty for our destroying instead of building the kingdom, and in order to give us power to begin building the kingdom anew. Thus his example is always a secondary matter. It is something that follows upon his mediatorial work, but would be meaningless without it. Hence, too, in many things that he did as Mediator, we cannot and should not try to follow him. There is much misunderstanding on this point. Nothing is so common in modernist pulpits as to have Jesus put on a par with or at the head of a group of human individuals who have, each in their own age and in their own way, but all according to the same principle of self-sacrifice, given their lives for their fellow men. This juxtaposition of Jesus with martyrs and heroes in general rests upon the denial of his mediatorial work. It goes without saying that no human being can imitate the mediatorial work of Christ. It would be a gross sin for us to try to imitate the mediatorial work of Christ. It would be to deny the uniqueness of that work. It would result in the failure to reap the benefit of that work, and therefore in the failure of every effort we make to help our fellow man. We should therefore carefully distinguish between various kinds of self-sacrifice. There is first, the sacrificial work that is done by non-Christians on the basis of common grace. So, for instance, non-Christians may give their lives for their country in a righteous cause and be worthy of honor for it. In distinction from this sacrificial work in which non-Christians engage is the sacrifice required of Christians because they belong to Christ. Because they belong to Christ, Christians must sacrifice freely for all men, even for those who are not of the household of faith. Christ says that we must take his cross upon us. It is this that the martyrs of the Church have done in an outstanding manner. And this suffering for the cause of Christ must, in a sense, be done in imitation of Christ. We must portray something of the patience of Christ when we suffer for his name. Yet the suffering of Christ is absolutely unique. It was not, first of all, the example of Christ's suffering that enabled the martyrs to suffer in the way they did. It was primarily the substitutionary character of Christ's suffering that enabled the martyrs to suffer as they did. It was because he faced the hosts of darkness alone that they could face darkness with songs on their lips. None of the martyrs thought that they could duplicate the sufferings of Jesus. It was, to be sure, the example of Christ

that they followed, but always the unique example of Christ. And what holds with respect to the martyrs' following the unique example of Christ holds for the whole question of following the example of Christ: we should follow the example of Christ, but never forget that it is a unique example.

We see then that the absolute ethical summum bonum stands before men more clearly in the New Testament than it does in the Old. And the example of Christ has helped to place the ideal more vividly before man than it had ever been placed before him till Jesus' day. Christ emphasized the greater spontaneity and stability and momentum required of the New Testament believer as he seeks to realize the kingdom of God.

### The New Testament Summum Bonum as a Gift of Grace

We can now be more brief with respect to the three remaining characteristics of the New Testament. The same principles that apply to the matter of the absoluteness of the summum bonum also apply to these other matters. It is all a matter of clearer revelation of the principles that were already made manifest in the Old Testament.

With respect to the fact that the kingdom is a gift of God's grace, this is easily shown. It is patent on the face of it that the entire New Testament is full of the doctrine of the free grace of God. It is true that within the New Testament there is development of the idea of grace. It was not as clear in the first part of Jesus' teaching with respect to the kingdom of heaven that it was to be a gift of grace as it was in the teaching of Paul. Speaking of the righteousness of the kingdom spoken of by Christ in the sermon on the mount, Dr. Vos says, "It would be historically unwarranted to read into those utterances the whole doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ. It was impossible for Jesus to develop this doctrine with any degree of explicitness, because it was to be based upon His own atoning death, which still lay in the future!" (1). Or, again, he says: "Our Lord's doctrine is the bud in which the two conceptions of a righteousness imputed and a righteousness embodied in the sanctified life of the believer still lie enclosed together. Still it should not be overlooked that, in more than one respect, Jesus prepared the way for Paul by enunciating principles to which the latter's teaching could attach itself. He emphasized that in the pursuit of righteousness, the satisfaction of God should be man's supreme concern. This, carried out to its ultimate consequences with reference to sinful man, could not but lead to the conception of a righteousness provided by God Himself in the perfect life and atoning death of Christ" (2). The true righteousness was to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. It was to be attained by disciples only, by those who had been accepted by the Father:

This doctrine of free grace found its full expression in the epistles

of Paul. Hence there can be no difference at bottom between the ethics of Paul and the ethics of Jesus. In Paul we have a full expression of that which was present in the teaching of Jesus.

For a long time the Pauline ethical ideal was obscured in the history of the Church. With the Reformation, when the Pauline theology was really discovered, Pauline ethics was also discovered. And as the chief point in the soteriology of the Reformers was that man is saved by grace and not by the works of the law, so the ethics of the Reformation pointed out that man's good works are in no sense to be accomplished in order to express his gratitude for salvation already received. And since it is in the Reformed churches that the doctrine of the free grace of God has been most faithfully preached, it has naturally also been in the Reformed churches that ethical life has flourished most. There has been a far more faithful preaching of the law of God first of all as the source of our knowledge of sin and then as a norm for our gratitude to God in the Reformed churches than in any other churches.

Then, too, it should not be overlooked that it has been only in the Reformed churches that the motto of "Pro Rege," that is, of the kingship of Christ in every sphere of life, has been carried out to any extent at all. Other churches which have seen something of the idea of free grace have engaged almost exclusively in individual soul-saving. Unfortunately, practically all the churches that are evangelical at all at the present time have fallen into this anti-biblical individualism. Add to this that most churches have largely forgotten the doctrines of free grace and it becomes apparent that the ethical ideal is far from being realized today. Modernism has returned to the righteousness of the Pharisees. It wants to gain heaven by good works. It seeks to live by the golden rule without the foundation of the righteousness of Christ.

But wherever and whenever the gospel of the free grace of God has free sway, it will be seen that the absoluteness of the ethical ideal is to some extent approached.

Wherever the gospel of the free grace of God is preached, men will have the true internalism we have spoken of. Only those who have seen the deep internal wickedness of their hearts accept the grace of God, and the grace of God begins by cleansing the heart, and afterwards, the hands.

Wherever the grace of God is preached, man will show the true universalism spoken of. Those who hold to the grace of God see that there is no respect of persons with God.

Wherever the grace of God is preached, men will show the true spontaneity of seeking the kingdom of God. True spontaneity can come only where there is true joy. And true joy comes from a sense of complete for-



giveness and acceptance with God. Those who have truly experienced the grace of God can say "Abba, Father." It becomes the joy of their heart to do the will of the Father which is in heaven. David felt something of this when he said, "Oh how love I thy law." But even then he could not love the law or the will of God as much as a New Testament believer can. Moreover, what was the experience of an individual here and there in the Old dispensation became the experience of the congregation of believers in the New Testament day. The prayer of Moses, "Oh, that all God's people were prophets," has been answered. Paul speaks of this when he rejoiced that we all with unveiled face may behold the glory of our Redeemer.

Wherever the grace of God is preached, men will show the true stability required of the member of the kingdom. They will naturally rely on nothing else while they know that with God all things are possible.

### The New Testament Destruction of Evil

It goes without saying that the absolute ideal could never be reached as long as there was any evil left in the universe. Yet it is very common to hear men say that in the New Testament the idea of negation has passed away. In the first place, it is said that the idea of ethics having anything to do with externals has been done away with in the New Testament. We are no longer considered morally impure when we are physically impure. Then, too, it is not a part of the New Testament teaching, as it was of the Old Testament teaching that redemption has anything to do with the external world. When Jesus said that he came to bring life, he could not mean that he came to save us from physical death, but that he came to give us moral power. In the second place, it is said that in the New Testament ideal of love there is no limit and therefore no room for exclusion. We must love all men of whatever nationality and whatever standing, however much they hate us.

With respect to this interpretation of New Testament ethics, we may say first that it is difficult to see how anyone can hold to such views and still teach that the New Testament contemplates a perfect ideal. Granted that all men will, in the future, accept this Christian ideal, what of those who have died and have not accepted that ideal? It will never be possible to have a new heaven and a new earth on which righteousness shall dwell if all the unrighteous ones come to life by the resurrection from the dead. Hence those that claim the ideal of perfection for the New Testament and yet maintain that it does not teach the destruction of evil, will have to deny the resurrection. But the resurrection is plainly taught in the New Testament. Besides, those who hold such views would themselves be teaching the destruction of evil since many who do not accept the Christian ideal would not be raised from the dead. That is, they would have to teach annihilation, to say the least. The only alternative to this is to teach universal-

ism. If the New Testament ideal of a perfect universe is to be carried out, and there is to be love inclusive of all, it means that all men who have died must eventually be saved, whether it be by a second chance, or directly. This doctrine, too, is foreign to the New Testament. As the tree falls, so shall it lie. We see, then, that the only thing that remains for those who deny that the New Testament teaches the complete destruction of evil is to deny also that the New Testament teaches an absolute ethical ideal. And it is this that is actually done by modernism. It does this by denying that Christianity has anything to do with physical evil. It does this by the adoption of the evolutionary view of the origin of man, which is based upon the non-theistic notion that evil is as fundamental as the good.

It is therefore first of all necessary that we indicate clearly that the New Testament is consistent with itself in teaching both the absolute ideal and the destruction of evil, and is also consistent with the Old Testament in that it carries forth the teaching of the Old Testament in both these respects.

We have already seen that Jesus stressed the internality of the ideal of perfection. If we look at this from the point of view we are now considering, it means that no evil thoughts, desires, or ambitions are tolerated. The apostles followed out this teaching of Jesus. They tell us that all things are open and naked before him with whom we have to do. This teaching culminated in Revelation, where the One who judges is presented as the One whose eyes are as flames of fire. Hence, too, those who were to enter the kingdom of which Jesus spoke were to have a righteousness that exceeded the righteousness of the Pharisees.

In the second place, it made clear that the kingdom is not only to be more intensively purified, but is also to be extended much more widely than formerly. The gospel of the kingdom is to be preached to all nations. In this way, many of those who are now haters of the kingdom will become lovers of the kingdom. All men are our neighbors whom we must win for the kingdom. But it is just at this point that misunderstanding of the New Testament ethical ideal creeps in. It is argued that since the New Testament tells us to love all men, since it is so absolute in its demands of complete love that we must even forgive our enemies, therefore it cannot be that it should also teach destruction of evil. The fact of the matter is that the New Testament plainly teaches both. In order to see this, we do well to begin with the conception of eternal punishment. Jesus taught this more specifically than it had ever been taught before, perhaps nowhere so clearly as in Matthew 25:46, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

There will be an eternal separation therefore of those who are members of the kingdom from those who are not members of the kingdom. And the reason for the separation is that some have loved the King, and others have not loved the King or the kingdom. Jesus says that all those who have

not desired to have him as their King over them will in the judgment day be cast out into outer darkness. It is out of the question that we should interpret the New Testament command of universal love in such a way as to include the devil and his host. We have already noted in an earlier chapter that it is not a mark of piety to love those whom God hates with an exclusive hatred. God hates those whom he casts into perdition. It is only because of their hatred of him that he casts them out of his presence.

But then comes the more difficult part, that is, with respect to those who are still on earth. With respect to them it is certainly true that God knows who really love him and who do not really love him. It is therefore also certainly true that God loves those who love him and hates those who hate him even while they are on the earth. It will not do to say with respect to all men on earth that God hates only the sin but not the sinner. God hates the sinner. And it is on this basis that those who reveal themselves as haters of God in this world must not be tolerated as members of the Church of God. Here we enter the field of religion, but it also has ethical significance. It means that we are to recognize definitely that we must oppose with all our hearts and with all our minds the ethical program that those who deny Christ have made for themselves. That ethical program is, at bottom, the flat denial of our ethical program. If they succeed with theirs we cannot succeed with ours. All compromise is therefore strictly forbidden by our King. Even compromise that we engage in, as we say, in order to win others for the kingdom, is strictly forbidden by Christ. We should throw out the life line but may not allow ourselves to drown along with those whom we wish to save. Yet nothing is more common than to see kingdom members engage in ethical programs in conjunction with those who have a different ideal, with the avowed purpose of saving them.

But what then of the other side of the story? Is it not true that God himself blesses all his creatures and that he gives a call to salvation to many who oppose him, and of whom he knows that they will never accept his offer? This is true. And this is our foundation in religion for following God's example and offering the gospel to all men and pleading with men that they may accept the gospel. And as God says that he offers entrance into his kingdom to whosoever will come, so we must make no limitations on our concern to bring the gospel to all. With respect to the difficulty involved in this position, we may say that if God is able to hate those who are not his, and yet offer them, while they are in this world, the gospel of salvation, we who do not know in advance whether someone may not still be converted, should surely seek to follow God's example and seek by our love to win them for Christ. It is this policy that has been followed in the case of church discipline when the Church was more faithful than it is now. The Church has hesitated in excommunicating from its membership those who by their profession or by their life showed that they did not love God. At the same time, the Church has sought to labor with them still, in order to make them see the error of their way. And it is this that should also be

our guide in ethics. On the one hand, we should never allow ourselves to be blinded to the fact that someone who says he does not love our King or who shows that he does not love our King is at variance with our ethical ideal. For this reason we cannot at all cooperate with such a person. Yet we must continue to try to win such a one for our kingdom ideal. An analogy from the nature of war may serve to illustrate this point. As long as someone carries the flag of our opponents, we must seek to shoot him. Yet we would like nothing better than to have our opponents come to our side by a recognition of our flag. But this can never be accomplished unless they swear off allegiance to their former flag.

Our conclusion can be no other, therefore, than that the destruction of evil is the condition for the realization of the perfect ideal of the kingdom. Hence it is that regeneration is the condition for entrance to the kingdom. He that is not born again cannot see the kingdom. Hence, too, conversion must be as much the subjective basis for the ethical activity of the Christian as the substitutionary death of Christ must be the objective basis. And from this it may be seen how far the Church has strayed from the true path. It advertises cooperation in all sorts of ethical activities without placing before men the need of their conversion. The Church asks men to join it in its philanthropic work without asking that they be converted first. Now it should be made perfectly plain that the philanthropic work of the Church is not based upon the same principle on which the philanthropic work of welfare agencies is built. The Church is built upon special grace, and the work of welfare agencies is built upon general or common grace. The Church must do good to all men, but most of all to those of the household of faith. The Church has ultimately a motive for its work different from that of welfare agencies. It is true that in ethics we do not deal with the Church directly. Yet it is also true that the same principle that guides a Christian in his religious life should also guide him in his ethical life. He must realize that he should give his cup of cold water for the sake of Christ.

The second aspect of the extension of the idea of the destruction of evil has to do with the evil that is in the physical universe. We have seen that during the Old Testament time God brought the ideal of the absolute destruction of evil home to Israel by promising them release from the ravages of disease to a large extent, as well as delay of death, by promising them old age if they would walk in the way of the Lord. Here too it seems as though the New Testament teaches the opposite of this. Does not Jesus say that the tower of Siloam did not fall upon certain individuals because they were greater sinners than others? And is not a part of the New Testament outlook in general that we realize that a man may be righteous while not prosperous, and prosperous while not righteous?

With respect to this, we should note that we have found it to be true in general that Jesus goes back to things as they were in the creation ordinance. So it is here, also. Jesus does not for a moment do away with the

creation ordinance that a perfect soul, a perfect body, and a perfect world go together. On the contrary, he established that relationship anew. He healed the souls of men. He drove out demons, he gave sight to the blind and stilled the sea. How then account for his teaching with respect to the tower of Siloam? The two are not contradictory. They can easily be harmonized if we keep in mind that Christ has given to his New Testament children the vision of the future.

### The New Testament Summum Bonum and the Future

Thus we see that the question with respect to the destruction of evil of itself leads us to remark on the fourth aspect of the redemptive summum bonum, that is, that its realization lies in the future.

We have already adverted to Job when first discussing this question of the future. We saw that to a large extent the difficulty that Job had was that he was not able to see things at long range. He knew that righteousness, holiness and blessedness belong together. On this point he was right, but the difficulty was that he could not see that they could be temporarily separated from each other. In order for Job to see the absolute ideal at all, he had to see it in a form that came very close to him. Then, when his blessedness was taken away from him, he only slowly began to see that there was a future in which matters would be rectified. So Asaph in Psalm 73 also struggled with the problem of how it was possible that the unrighteous should flourish in this world. That seemed to him to be flatly opposed to the promises of God. We can easily see why the problem should have been particularly acute for the Old Testament saints if we recall that God had promised them external prosperity if they were obedient to Jehovah. It is true that often they were not obedient and thus could not claim the promise of Jehovah. Yet it is also true that in comparison with the nations round about them they knew themselves to be God's righteous people.

In the New Testament all this is to a large extent cleared up. In the first place, it is made clear that righteousness, holiness, and blessedness do belong together. Dr. Vos makes this abundantly clear in his notes on Biblical Theology, and in his book, Concerning the Kingdom of God and The Church. He speaks of righteousness, conversion, and blessedness. We have spoken of righteousness when discussing the New Testament summum bonum as a gift of God's grace. We have spoken of conversion when discussing the New Testament summum bonum and the destruction of evil. Now we must take up the matter of blessedness.

Dr. Vos makes plain that there is a two-fold aspect to Jesus' teaching of the kingdom. Righteousness and conversion have to do with the present aspect of the kingdom, and blessedness primarily with the future aspect of the kingdom. Apart from the fact that those who are in the kingdom are

now blessed, in the sense that they know themselves to be heirs of God, their actual and complete blessedness lies in the future. They cannot be completely blessed till all of sin and all of the results of sin are done away. Hence they cannot be perfectly blessed till their own souls are perfectly and permanently cleansed from the last remnant of sin. They cannot be perfectly blessed till their bodies are free from the last evil consequence of sin, that is, death. They cannot be fully blessed till all of nature be recast with glory resplendent. In short, they cannot be fully blessed till "the regeneration of all things." Now it is because the New Testament believer has a clear insight into this future character of the final realization of the kingdom that he can see how God should allow in this world a temporary separation of righteousness and conversion from blessedness. In principle they belong together and always are together. In actual realization the one may be far ahead of the other. God did not need to give to the New Testament believers a sample of their actual togetherness as he gave to some of the Old Testament believers, in order to make them see that they do actually belong together. God wants his New Testament believers to live on such a high level of spirituality for righteousness' sake, for the sake of Christ, if necessary, all the while keeping their eyes fixed upon him who shall make all things work together for good for them that love him. It was because Abraham looked for the city that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God that he was able to live in patience without the fulfillment of the promises for many years. So it is because we have the vision of the future glorious coming of the kingdom that we can rejoice in the midst of tribulation, in the midst of adversity, individually and collectively.

And here we may briefly touch upon the ethical significance of the second coming of Christ. That coming will be catastrophic. That coming will be a free act of the Son of God. How then is it related to the ethical ideal that we have so far spoken of? Or is it perhaps not related to this ethical ideal at all?

The second coming is, throughout the New Testament, described as being the climax of the course of history. It is not till after certain things have taken place in the course of history that the Christ can come again. He himself tells us that. And this at once tells us a great deal as to what the relation of the second coming of Christ is to our ethical ideal. It tells us that we may never interpret the words of Jesus to the effect that we must wait for his coming to mean that we must sit idly by and be indifferent to the realization of the ideal on earth. There is a sense in which we must wait for the kingdom. It is certain that we can do nothing about its coming in so far as it is primarily a direct divine act. But it is equally certain that Christ himself has set an organic relation between that second and final coming of himself and our ethical activity on this earth. The fact that he tells us to pray, "Even so, Lord, come" in answer to his promise, "Surely I come quickly" proves that. Now the temptation is very great for the believers in these times when the Church is in apostasy, and its conquest

of the world for Christ seems to be losing out, that it shall spend a great deal of its time in passive waiting instead of in active service. Another danger that lurks at a time of apostasy is that the few faithful ones give up the comprehensive ideal of the kingdom and limit themselves to the saving of individual souls. On the other hand there is a danger that we should think that since Christ has set before us the absolutely comprehensive ethical ideal of perfection for the whole universe, we can actually accomplish that ideal without or prior to his catastrophic return. If we begin to think that, the further danger is that we should think also that it can be obtained without the grace of God. We are not concerned about the millennial doctrine as such. We only wish to point out that in this day we should not forget that the second coming is organically related to our ethical program, and that this ethical program is all-inclusive. We must therefore work with all our might for its realization in every sphere of ethical activity. We may never allow ourselves to feel that the Lord is coming soon anyway, so that it is of no use to put too much energy into this or that sort of work. On the other hand, we should constantly realize that even with all our efforts the kingdom will never be fully realized on earth. If we keep these things in mind, if we work while it is day, he will suddenly come and say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

So then we see the summum bonum in the course of its history. At the end, as at the beginning, we see an absolute ideal. We see the human race as kings under the supreme King seeking increase in the spontaneity, stability and momentum in its seeking to realize the ethical program given it by God to do. We see such a historically constructed kingdom actually adding to the glory of a God who is above history.

In the second place, we see sin come in. Then the kingdom must become a kingdom of grace if it was to be at all realized. Hence, to the mystery of how it is possible that the historical should be able to glorify the eternal comes the mystery of how, out of the sinful, the glory of God may be advanced. Yet we see that though the kingdom must be a gift, it may and must also be a task.

In the third place, now that sin has come into the world, a part of the task of the realization of the kingdom is taken up with the destruction of evil. Hence the paradox of Christian ethics seems to become still more baffling. Some are graciously made children of the kingdom and others are not. Yet in this time-process the separation is not complete. Hence there seems to be a conflict for the Christian. He must seek the absolute destruction of evil, yet he must seek to bring salvation to the evil ones. The resolution of this difficulty, too, is found where the resolution of the two former difficulties was found. In fact, all three difficulties are but aspects of the one difficulty which we have already met at the outset, that is, How can the temporal add anything to the eternal? The various qualifications of evil and good do not add to the complication of the problem. If it can have mean-

ing that the temporal should add to the glory of the eternal, it can also have meaning that a sinful temporal should add glory to the eternal. In both cases, the solution is found in the conception of the complete self-consciousness of God which we have found to be the epistemological and metaphysical foundation of Christian ethics. Hence it is possible to have something that is relative without being correlative. The temporal universe is relative without making God correlative to itself. Evil is relative without making God correlative to itself. Hence also God can give a relative offer of salvation without making his plan of redemption come to nought.

In the fourth place, the kingdom is a kingdom of hope. And that seems to add still more to the paradox of ethics. Ethics would seem to be something certainly for the present since it involves the activity of man here and now. Yet this also finds its explanation in the character of God, and in the fact of his creation of the temporal world. The meaning of history could not, in the nature of the case, come out in all its fulness till the completion of history. And then when sin entered and the kingdom had to be made a gift of the grace of God, the future realization of the kingdom would have to be, in a still deeper sense, the work of God alone, while also the work of man.

#### References for Chapter X

1. Geerhardus Vos; Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church.
2. Ibid, p. 117.



## PART III

### THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD AS MAN'S ETHICAL STANDARD

#### CHAPTER XI

##### THE STANDARD OF MAN IN PARADISE

We are looking at the whole ethical program of man under the idea of the kingdom of God. We have discussed the ethical summum bonum of man as being the realized program of God for man. It follows that we must think of the standard of ethics as the revealed will of God for man. It was God who set the ethical ideal for man; it is God also who gives to man the standard according to which he is to live in order to reach that ethical ideal.

At the outset we must note carefully what the relation is between the ethical ideal and the ethical standard. We have before indicated that the ideal is often spoken of as the good, while the standard is spoken of as duty, and the subjective principle by which man controls himself as virtue. But in many cases writers on ethics do not make any clear distinction between these three. The reason for this is that some men say that it is man's highest good to do his duty, or they say that it is man's highest good to be virtuous. Now we are only concerned here with the relation of the good to duty. On this relation we may remark that, from a Christian-theistic point of view, it is necessary to distinguish between them, as it is necessary to distinguish between both of them and virtue. The reason for this is that the whole end and purpose of history lies, according to Christian theism, not in history itself, but beyond history, in the God of history. This God of history has set the kingdom of God as the climax of history. It is, to be sure, necessary, for each individual in the kingdom to have an immediate end in mind for his own life. Yet the main thing that he should be concerned about is the final realization of the kingdom of God as a whole. This realization lies in the future. It is therefore impossible for him to see the end from the beginning. He does, to be sure, see the end from the beginning in a general way. Just as a sailor may know that the end of his journey lies three thousand miles west, so man knows in general that God wants to accomplish a certain end with the whole of history. But just as such a sailor needs a compass to guide him in his daily effort to make headway toward the final end, so also man needs a standard that guides him day by day. This compass or standard of man's ethical striving is the revealed will of God to him.

## The Moral Consciousness of Man

The first question that comes up with respect to this compass is as to where it is located. The common answer to this question is that it is located in the moral consciousness of man. That is, it may not be true that each individual man has within his moral consciousness as a compass that will guide him correctly, but the race as a whole in its common consciousness has, we are told, a safe guide for its course of action.

But it will be seen that a still more fundamental question faces us at once if we say that the common consciousness of man is a safe compass for the race. The common consciousness of man is not nearly so common as its name would seem to indicate. Aside from the differences that obtain between nation and nation at the present time or at any other time, it is notorious that at different ages the "common consciousness" has changed its verdict about the actions of men. So then we have to ask why this is. Either of two explanations must be given to this phenomenon. It may be that the race is slowly seeking its way through history by the trial and error method. It may be that, as Columbus tried to reach the Indies by going west instead of east as the common consciousness of sailors up to his time had instructed them to do, so the common consciousness of modern times is seeking the same end as the common consciousness of earlier times, but with better knowledge of the method to be followed. And even so the common consciousness of today may not know whether it is going to reach the Indies or not. It may have to reverse its course of action in the future, as its predecessors have had to modify their course of action in the past. So we see that we are back at the beginning, that is, we are back to the place where we must look again at our metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions.

It will be seen at once that it is the non-theistic conception of the nature of reality that makes men take such a view of the standard of ethics as we have just outlined. On the non-theistic basis, the whole of history is a drift. No one knows to what it is drifting, hence no one knows the end, the summum bonum for man. In short, there is no summum bonum that is absolute on this basis. Hence there also can be no standard that is absolute.

But from the Christian-theistic point of view God has definitely set the end for man. The end is therefore known to God. Hence, if we look at the pronouncements of the "common consciousness" of man through the ages and see its contradictions amid its seeming continuity, we know that something is wrong. We know that it cannot be, as such, a trustworthy standard for man. Something must have happened to it, since we know that an absolute God could not have created it with its present imperfection. In short, we know that the present common consciousness only corroborates the idea of the fall of man.

Accordingly, we shall be compelled to get back of this fall of man and see what was the original state of affairs. It may be that after we have

done so we may be able to attach a certain amount of value to the common consciousness of man as it exists today, but it is certain that it can never be our starting point when we discuss the standard of ethics.

Our reason for bringing in this point here is that it is all too common, even on the part of thoroughly orthodox writers, to make too uncritical a use of the common consciousness of man. So, for instance, in Charles Hodge's Systematic Theology there is a constant appeal to the common consciousness of man without any clear-cut definition or description of that common consciousness from the Christian-theistic point of view. Now we need only to reflect for a moment to realize that this common consciousness of man is a very flimsy foundation to base any arguments upon if the question pertains to more than superficial matters. It may be said, for instance, that the common consciousness of man condemns murder. True enough. Yet the more basic question remains as to why it does. One does not find an answer from the common consciousness of man on this point because, when an answer is sought to this question, the common consciousness of man is no longer common, but divided. The consciousness of the Christian condemns murder, in the last analysis, because murder breaks down the kingdom of God and is therefore violation of the revealed will of God. The consciousness of the non-Christian condemns murder for some reason that lies within the universe itself. It may be that he considers it impudent for the individual or the race; it may be that he finds it out of harmony with the constitution of things and therefore unaesthetic, or illogical; it may be for any one or more of several other stated reasons, but these reasons will never reach up to the will of God. Hence it follows that, for more than the most superficial questions, there is no such thing as a common consciousness of man. Hence it follows too that we must certainly not make the common consciousness of man a starting point for our main argument in the matter of a standard of ethics.

Yet it is on this foundation that all too often the whole structure of Christian ethics has been built. All too often it has been presented as though there is, first of all, that which Christianity has in common with all non-Christian ethics, and then there are special requirements that pertain to Christianity alone. The first may be spoken of as the first story of a house, and the second may be spoken of as the second story of a house. So Roman Catholicism argues as though Christianity took the four cardinal virtues of Greek ethics as a first story, and merely added to it the three virtues of love, hope, and faith as a second story. But this is not true. The structure of Christian ethics is something that is different from all other systems of ethics. The first story of Christian ethics is built of different material from that of which non-Christian ethics is built, as well as is the second story. And it is to the difference of the first story that we must turn first.

This difference appears best if we note that the Christian ethics is the only ethics that is genuinely theistic. We are not now concerned to work

out this point in detail. We have already spoken of it before. We only wish to make the point clear as far as the standard of ethics is concerned.

This difference is perfectly clear as far as the standard of ethics is concerned if only we keep in mind that, according to Christian ethics, the moral consciousness of man has never functioned apart from God, while according to all non-Christian ethics, the moral consciousness has always functioned apart from God. We do not mean that, according to the express statements of all non-Christian ethical writers, the moral consciousness of man has always functioned without God. Idealists would, of course, maintain that they make the moral consciousness of man to depend on God. We mean only that all non-Christians, whether idealists or pragmatists, have another God than we have, and since we cannot own their God as God at all, our statement must hold that only Christians think of the moral consciousness of man as functioning in relationship with God.

We mention this point here in connection with the story of paradise, because it is sometimes said that the only difference between idealist and Christian ethics is that the one figures with the fall of man and the other does not. This difference would be great enough, and really involves everything else. Yet we can point out more directly that, even if we ignore the fall for the moment, the difference between idealism and theism remains. The difference is here, exactly, that the idealist, as well as every other type of non-Christian ethics, thinks of the moral consciousness of man as operating independently of God. We cannot stop to develop this point. We may illustrate it with the attitude displayed in Plato's dialogues. In the Euthyphro, a thing is not holy because God desires it, but God desires it because it is holy. In the Republic, Books II and III, it is said that God could not be as certain myth represents him as being. That is, the principle of goodness is established by the moral consciousness of man first and afterward God is judged in accordance with this principle. The moral principles according to which God is judged are, to be sure, thought of by Plato as existing beyond man himself, even as being eternal. Yet the point is whether they are thought of as existing independently of God, and on this point the words of Professor Bowman sum up the whole matter when speaking of the Greeks he says: "The personality of the Gods was subordinated to the conception of the universe as a system of timeless moral principles" (1). And what holds for Plato holds for all the modern idealists. Invariably one finds them surrounding the individual moral consciousness with a comprehensive universe of impersonal principle. Idealism knows of no personality that is absolute.

#### External and Internal Standards

In opposition to this we ought to be clear that at the foundation of the Christian conception of this standard of ethics lies the conception of man's original moral consciousness as having been created by God, and therefore

as never having for a moment operated in independence of God.

Hence, it also follows that we can put the contrast between Christian and non-Christian conceptions of the standard of ethics by saying that, according to Christian ethics, the standard of men's moral activity is the revealed will of God, while, according to all other conceptions, man's own independent moral consciousness is the standard. The point is that, before man had fallen into sin, God was revealing his will to man through the moral consciousness of man without the danger of mistake. As far as the question of revelation is concerned, it makes no difference at all whether the revelation be given internally or externally. When Adam, before his fall, guided his actions by the moral consciousness implanted in him by God he was guided by the revelation of God as much as when Moses received the code written by the finger of God on Mt. Horeb. The real contrast between the conception of those who believe and those who disbelieve the Scripture is not that the former hold to an externalistic and the latter to an internalistic standard of ethics. The real difference is that the former believe in God as the source of the standard, while the latter believe in man or the universe at large as the source of the standard of ethics.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that even in paradise before the fall, man did not live by the internal standard of his consciousness alone. God spoke to man by giving to him commands that did not emanate from his moral consciousness. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the command not to eat of it were not given to man directly by his moral consciousness. What his moral consciousness did do with respect to this was to answer that it was his business to obey this command, since it was the command of the same God who spoke directly through itself. The moral consciousness of man was an infallible guide as to what man had to do till such time as God, by direct external revelation, should give new directions to him. Hence we should again emphasize that the externality or the internality of the revelation of God to man is a matter of quite secondary importance for the Christian-theistic position. It is just a question of fact whether God did actually give to man external as well as internal revelation, and what his reason for doing so if he did. Now we know that from the very beginning God gave to man external as well as internal information as to his duty. Before the fall, the reason for this was that the scope of God's moral purpose for man was not apparent to man by virtue of the activity of his moral consciousness as such. The moral consciousness of man needed for its own supplementation the supernatural, external revelation of God to man. After the fall, there was the additional reason that the moral consciousness was itself no longer to be trusted, since its verdict was vitiated by sin. But of that we shall have to speak later. For the present we wish merely to emphasize that Christian theism, because of its transcendent God, can allow for external as well as internal revelation, while non-theistic thought, because of its denial of the transcendence of God can, in the nature of the case, allow for no external standard at all. Non-Christian thought

must, by virtue of its presuppositions, maintain that all external revelations are based upon delusion.

This point is so important that we cannot refrain from illustrating it from the writing of one of the idealist writers on ethics, namely, W. R. Sorley. Sorley tells us: "I will begin by excluding from the inquiry all theories which seek the basis of ethics in something outside the constitution of man as a feeling and reasoning agent" (2). The reason for this, his initial exclusion, is, according to him, that "it is at any rate the more obvious course to seek to determine the function of an organism by studying its inner constitution, than by having regard to something which is external to it, and does not act upon and modify it as a necessary part of its environment" (3). Sorley assumes that the consciousness of man can not only act, but as a matter of fact, does act, univocally. By this sort of procedure, Sorley reveals the common error of all non-theistic ethical thought, and in addition, the specific error of idealistic ethics. All systems of non-Christian ethics assume this independence of the moral consciousness of man. Idealism, however, adds to this initial and all-determinative mistake, the second mistake that it does this in spite of its own contention that it is not naturalistic. Thomas Hill Green in his justly famous book Prolegomena to Ethics has made much of this contention that idealist ethics is on a much higher level than the ethics of naturalism. He tells us, for instance: "For nature, as a process of continuous change, implies something which is other than the changes to which they are relative" (4). Sorley and the other later idealists have followed in the footsteps of Green. Yet all of them, and Sorley in particular, have shown that theirs, too, is no more than an ethics of naturalism. Sorley does not hesitate to exclude as extraneous the whole idea of an externally given law.

In opposition to this we must emphasize ever anew that without God-consciousness man's self-consciousness is an irrelevant particular. Without the conception of an absolute God the moral consciousness of man could not act. Sorley tells us that: "The very notion of conscious activity contains the idea of bringing about something which does not exist. It involves a purpose or end." We maintain that if it were not for its God-consciousness the human consciousness could bring about nothing. It could not even exist. The finite moral consciousness as a determinate something, and therefore as a standard that can determine a course of action, would not exist except for God. And the converse of this is that since the moral consciousness of man cannot exist without God, the moral consciousness of man is always accessible to God by external as well as direct internal revelation.

It should further be remembered that the difference between an external and an internal revelation is one of very limited application. As man lived originally in paradise, the whole of the created universe was naturally a revelation of God to man. Hence it was not only in the specially given com-

mands that God came to man, but also in the whole of external nature. Thus the expression of the will of God for man's moral activity pertains to a large extent to external matters; hence, the external situation would always be one of the determining factors in his ethical action. The only alternative to this position is to go the whole way with naturalistic thought and to deny that this created universe has anything to do with God. If the laws of the created universe are still to be thought of as laws of God, then man meets with an external revelation of God even if he never looks into the Bible. And this external revelation of God in nature speaks with the imperative voice. All of God's revelation involves and is an expression of God's requirements for man. In his handling of this revelational material man is obliged to glorify God. Those who reject the Bible simply on the ground that it claims to be an external revelation of God to man ought also to deny theism.

### Externality and Rationality

The idea of an externally given law of God to man is often flouted on the ground that we cannot harmonize it with the rationality of our own nature. We have already had occasion to observe that Newman Smyth, for instance, makes much of the fact that the Scripture itself appeals, in the last analysis, to the moral consciousness of man in order to justify its rationality. That was his argument for making the moral consciousness of man the final authority in the decision of moral problems. We are not now interested in the relation of the consciousness of man to the Scriptures directly; we are interested in noting that such an attitude springs from a deep hostility to the transcendence of God. Those who oppose what they call the "externalism of Scripture" can be depended upon also to oppose the "externalism" of the transcendence of God. On this point again idealism wavers constantly. So Sorley says that the end of ethical conduct cannot be determined from practice unless it be shown that the practice is rational. Now how can the practice be shown to be rational? Can this be determined from the course of history as such? It cannot. History is not self-explanatory. Idealism itself constantly contends that the eternal must be back of the temporal if the temporal is to be rational. Hence the rationality of the temporal in general, and the history of the moral consciousness in particular, must be found in the transcendent God. The rationale of man's moral action must be found in something beyond man himself.

If this conclusion be correct, then there cannot possibly be any inherent contrast between externality and rationality. The very asking of the question with respect to such a contrast betrays an anti-theistic bias. In the nature of the case the external must always be prior to the internal. Even when man could do the right in a large area of his life, without any reference to an external standard in the form of anything mediated through other human beings or through any created means, God would still be external to man before he came with his revelation into the penetralia of

man's consciousness. Now this priority of the transcendence of God above man to the immanence of God in man is the source of all our rationality. Perfect obedience to God is the most reasonable thing for man.

### The Categorical Imperative

Similar to the objection against external law on the ground that it is irrational, is the objection that an external law often conflicts with our instincts of right and wrong. So Smyth asks whether any externally promulgated command could convince us that right is wrong and wrong is right. Here the point of their actual or possible contradiction is broached.

A second objection in this connection pertains to the question of starting point. Should we start in our ethical judgment from any externally given law, or must we always start from our inherent intuitions of right and wrong? In other words, can ethics at the outset do without metaphysics? Borden P. Bowne tells us with respect to this: "Ethics begins independently but must finally be affected by our metaphysics." Or again, "So in ethics (as in epistemology) we begin with trust in our ethical consciousness; but in the totality of our theorizing we may reach conclusions incompatible with that primal trust."

A third point is whether we should now allow our ethical intuitions to control us altogether without any regard to our metaphysics. Kant has maintained this in his famous doctrine of the categorical imperative. We are to obey our sense of right and wrong without the least bit of regard to the question of whether the universe is favorable to our actions or not. Under the influence of the Kantian position, Bowne thinks that we can separate between duty and the good, altogether. "To discover these (justice, truthfulness) we need enter upon no speculation about the chief good. They stand in their own right, and their obligation is intuitively discerned."

With respect to these questions it is well that we should return to our fundamental position in this whole matter, that is, that God-consciousness is basic to man's self-consciousness. Hence, the moral principles upon which man would hit in his intuitive life would not be some abstract principles that exist apart from God, but are principles implanted by God in the nature of man. If everything is normal, there can therefore be no contradiction between moral principles intuited and moral principles revealed. The intuited moral principles were originally revealed moral principles as much as commandments given on tablets of stone. If there is disharmony between them, it is certain that the "intuited" moral principles are wrong, and the externally revealed moral principles are right. This is not because the externally revealed moral principles are temporally prior to the intuited moral principles. The opposite is in many instances the case. A great part of the externally promulgated law was given only after man's intuitive



perception did not function correctly. The reason for the priority of the external principles lies in the transcendence of God. The only reason why there could be any conflict between external law and intuited principle would be if man had himself revolted from the transcendent God and tried to intuit his moral principles from some other source. Hence, these moral intuitions must be wrong unless they are in accord with whatever of externally revealed law there may be at any time.

From this it also follows that it is utterly impossible to do without metaphysics at any time, either in the beginning, as Bowne speaks of it, or altogether, as Kant speaks of it. Hence, too, there is no meaning in saying that the intuited moral principles stand in their own right. They may stand in their own right in relation to other things in the created universe. As to their relation to God who has himself created moral man, it cannot be otherwise than that they are subject to him.

We should note in passing that in view of these considerations, we may say that those who speak much of eternal principles of right and justice may be just as far from the truly theistic position as those who openly avow pragmatism. There are no eternal principles except those rooted in the very being of God. All non-Christian ethics are temporalistic or naturalistic ethics that have no rationality and no imperative.

### Authority

The Roman Catholic concept of authority is, as may be expected, a hybrid between Christianity and Aristotelianism. The standard for right and wrong in the case of the cardinal virtues is said to be found in reason. In this, Aquinas argues, Aristotle was right. But Aristotle did not realize that reason has been weakened by the fall. Hence it is the business of Christians to add the standard of the Christian Faith to that of reason when judging of ethical questions.

In this construction of the ethical standard man is never confronted with the God of the Bible. Even man in paradise is not confronted with God as the one who, as his creator and governor, everywhere speaks with the imperative voice. It is therefore to be expected that Romanism will make an easy compromise with various forms of the non-Christian ethical standard. Itself partly autonomous, it has nothing with which to challenge the autonomy of Aristotle, of Kant, or of Dewey.

It is sad to say that a position such as that of C. S. Lewis is very similar to that of Rome. The "objective" authority which Lewis would substitute for the subjectivisms of pragmatic standards in ethics is not truly that of the God of Scripture. To seek an objective authority that various forms of paganism and Christianity have in common is to seek what does

not exist. It is at the same time – and that is worse – virtually to level down the authority of the Creator and Judge to that of impersonal law. And impersonal law is an abstraction. The virtual result is a return to the autonomy of the individual man who interprets impersonal law for himself.

We have purposely brought up the question of the externality of the revelation of God to man at this stage rather than at the stage where it seems to come most in the foreground, namely, in the discussion of the Old Testament legal code, because we wish to bring out that the real difference between Christian and non-Christian ethics goes much deeper than is often supposed. For the same reason, we wish now to say a word about the authority of the revealed standard of ethics. It will be considered extravagant to say that men will not regard anything as authoritative that has not emanated from themselves. But it is important to note that, though it has been Kant who has given the idea of autonomy its modern form, and who has most effectively spread this idea, it was after all involved in the very bedrock of all non-theistic ethics. The ethics of Plato and Aristotle are autonomous, as well as the ethics of Kant. There is no alternative but that of theonomy and autonomy. It was vain to attempt to flee from God and flee to a universe in order to seek eternal laws there. Much has been written about eternal and immutable morality independent of the arbitrary will of anyone, human or divine. The external must was to give way for the internal recognition of laws that exist in themselves. The Greek idealists thought of moral principles in this way. The Cambridge Platonists in a later day followed the ancient Greeks in making the tuned string the symbol of true morality. Men were to live in aesthetic harmony with the eternal laws of the universe. Still others have conceived of ethics after the analogy of logic rather than after the analogy of aesthetics. So Wollaston thought that to steal was wrong "because it is to deny that a thing stolen is what it is, the property of another." Modernism has sought to combine all these non-Christian motifs. Some years ago, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick appealed to young men to live a beautiful life if not what is conventionally called a good life. He thought he was getting deeply into things when he appealed to something that sets men in harmony with the music of the spheres.

Over against this whole tendency of modern ethics and all non-Christian ethics, we ought to make it clear to men that we hold all authority to have disappeared in the realm of ethics unless one places the transcendent God back of all ethical law. There is, at most, ethical advice, but no ethical coercion, if Christian theism be abandoned. All the efforts to get away from naturalism and utilitarianism are in vain unless one returns to the theistic position. Preachers complain again and again that respect for authority has disappeared in the modern day. The complaint is based upon truth. Only it should be remembered that we have no right to complain with respect to the matter unless we do all we can to remedy the situation. The only way in which we can hope even in the least degree to remedy the situation is by starting from the bottom up. We must instruct the children in a

truly theistic conception of authority such as we have been discussing. We dabble too much in half-way measures. We make many lame excuses about the necessity of an external revelation of the law of God. We plead the low estate of morals among heathen, etc., to show that there was a good reason for God to reveal himself externally. All this is true, but it is much more important and basic to bring out that even before the entrance of sin, before there was any question of a low state of morals, God was man's absolute authority, and the will of God was the last court of appeal, whether that will was externally or internally made known to man. Man can not, in the nature of the case, breathe one good moral breath except for the authority of God.

### Moral Sanctions

A word must now be said about the matter of moral sanctions. It is well known that Kant has severely criticized Christianity's conception of moral sanctions. He said that we intuit what is right and should obey the right, no matter what the consequences. We should not be good because we do not wish to go to hell or because we wish to go to heaven. This problem is immediately related to the question of the externality or the internality of the law. Kant claims, and many after him claim, that if we have an internal conception of the moral standard instead of an external one, we shall live on a much higher plane. Much as a child has to be coaxed into being good by rewards or punishments, while a full grown man does the right because it is right, so many hold that Christianity's conception of eternal weal or woe is indicative of a lower and earlier underdeveloped stage of ethical speculation.

It is plain that if we may believe the Genesis account, God, at the beginning of history, began by offering to man a reward and by threatening punishment. The whole of Scripture is in perfect accord on this matter, from the earliest part to the latest part of the history of revelation. But we are now more directly concerned to point out that this Scripture principle is nothing but what we would expect if we were to try to work out a consistent theistic scheme of interpretation. In the first place, the kingdom of God could not be envisaged in all its length and breadth without a special revelation with respect to it. Accordingly, God gave to man something of a vision into the remote consequences of his every ethical deed. Moreover, the rewards and the punishments were a part of the ethical program itself. It would simply be impossible for man to intuit ethical conceptions of right and wrong without seeing them in relation to rewards and punishments, because these rewards and punishments had been made a part of the created ethical situation by God. Hence the attempt to intuit ethical laws without rewards and punishments is only another evidence of the persistent effort on the part of man to get God out of the picture. Still further, the reason why ethical laws were a part of the created ethical situation is that the whole

created ethical situation was meant to be a finite replica of the infinite glory of God. If we separate the idea of rewards and punishment from doing good or evil, it would mean that a man who did good might be rewarded with evil. And this would be contrary to the moral glory of God. Suppose that, instead of sinning, man had been obedient in paradise. In that case, man would certainly have to be thought of as being established in the good and as suffering no evil, or there would be evil that is as basic as the good. Such evil could destroy the ultimacy of the good in God.

It should be noted, however, that this point of view precludes the possibility that man should do something good for the sake of reward apart from God. The scorn poured upon the Christian motives as being selfish is altogether beside the point. If Adam and Eve had been obedient to God they would have been obedient to God because they loved God first of all, and not first of all because they wanted to get some reward. They knew right well that their whole joy consisted in their being in the presence of God. The tree of life was but a symbol of that presence. Paradise would be nothing in itself unless God were there. It is only because in the course of a perverse historical development man has begun to depersonalize his utopias that he could ever raise such an objection as Kant raised.

We see then that at every point, and especially at the very beginning of the questions that must be raised in connection with the standard of ethics, we have to start from a foundation that is thoroughly Christian-theistic. If we see this clearly it will save us much trouble afterward. We do not then have to resort to all manner of questionable expedients in defending the doctrine of a specially and externally promulgated law of God as the standard for the ethical life of man. We have destroyed the foundation of the edifice of our opponents.

At the same time we have sought to build a foundation on which we can best understand for ourselves the later developments of the promulgated law of God to man. We cannot understand the law of God and the revealed will of God for man's ethical life in general unless we have first clearly grasped the matters that we have discussed in this chapter, and especially the point that the moral consciousness of man must rely for its functioning upon the more basic God-consciousness.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE REDEMPTIVE STANDARD: OLD TESTAMENT; NEW TESTAMENT

Having now discussed the standard of ethics as it was in paradise, we should naturally have to take up a chapter on the non-Christian standard, then one on the redemptive standard in general before beginning with the problem of the Old Testament. Since there is not time to do this, we have included in the previous chapter, in which we spoke of the standard in paradise, the main points on which the non-Christian standard is to be compared with the Christian standard, and will in this chapter discuss in a few words the general characteristics of the redemptive standard in general in order to devote the rest of the time directly to the question of the Old Testament and the New Testament standard. Moreover, since to a large extent the same principles must govern us in the study of a standard of ethics that has guided us in the study of the summum bonum, we can more easily be brief now than we could then.

We have emphasized the point that the whole redemptive program is a plan by which God is carrying out his plan which Satan was trying to break. Hence God carried through his absolute ideal by revealing it anew to man and by giving him ability through Christ with which to carry it out. Similarly we may say with respect to the standard of ethics that God carries forth his absolute standard in the fact of the effort on the part of Satan to lower that standard. Hence we have once more the following points to bear in mind. The redemptive standard is always the absolute standard. It is always presented as a gift of God's grace. It always demands the complete destruction of evil. Finally, it makes men look into the future for the realization of its own full demands. We need not discuss these points in detail right here.

In addition to remembering that it is these four points that we meet again, we should note the method by which God accomplishes his carrying through of the absolute standard. That method involves what we may call the principle of mediacy. By this we mean that after the entrance of sin the moral consciousness of man did no longer itself in its own immediate deliverances make known to man the absolute standard of life. By sin the consciousness of man has cut itself loose from God ethically. We say "ethically" because it goes without saying that man could not cut himself loose from God metaphysically. Then, after cutting himself loose from God ethically, man continued to depend upon the immediate deliverance of his moral consciousness for his moral guidance. And we may say that this is the basic difference between Christian ethics and non-Christian ethics as far as the standard is concerned, that all non-Christian ethics believe in an immediate while all Christian ethics believe in a mediate standard.

We have spoken of mediacy and immediacy rather than external and internal, because it does not quite cover the case to say that after the entrance of sin it became necessary for God to reveal himself externally while before the fall he could speak to man internally. It is true that the two contrasts are almost synonymous in practice. The whole thing practically amounts to this, that Christian ethics believes, while non-Christian ethics does not believe, that we must have our ethical standard in the Scriptures. Yet it is also true that even before the fall God gave some commandments to man externally. But this was not due to any inherent disqualification on the part of the moral consciousness of man to be the immediate agency of God in making known his will to man. It was due to the fact that it was not within the scope of the finite consciousness to know the will of God for the future. And man's whole ethical activity was related to the future. Hence the moral consciousness of man was never meant to function by itself. It was in the nature of the case correlative to supernatural positive revelation. But with the fall of man the finite moral consciousness has declared its independence from God. The fall itself was the setting aside of God as the absolute standard and goal for all of man's activities. In the fall, man put the word of God and the word of Satan in the balance, and found the word of Satan more trustworthy than the word of God. In doing so, he himself had to assume the role of judge between the two by attempting to stand above the two. In other words, he had to consider himself independent of God in the making of his moral pronouncements.

It was this sinful state of affairs that made necessary the giving of the mediate redemptive standard by God. The moral consciousness, or, if we will, we may say conscience, always tried to act independently of God. It refused to act correlatively to the supernatural positive revelation of God. Hence, though God still speaks to the sinner through his conscience the sinner always seeks to suppress this voice of God. He needs therefore to submit his conscience to the supernatural revelation of God, and this revelation needs, since the entrance of sin, to be redemptive. Hence, all that we can say with respect to conscience is that it still serves by God's common grace as a relative standard. The perverted moral consciousness of man has not been able to rid itself so completely of all remembrance of God, reminded as it is by the very works of nature of its own derivation, that it would dare to go the full length of all that is involved in its rejection of God. If we wish to call this the voice of God speaking through the conscience, it is well, if only it be remembered that we cannot mean what is usually meant by that phrase. What is usually meant by that phrase is that man has in conscience a sufficient guide for his life. At any rate, people hold that even if conscience is not sufficient for those who are able to get in contact with Scripture, it is sufficient for those who have not been given the light of special revelation. It is often said that everyone will be judged by the light that he has had. This is true, but it should be remembered that, according to Scripture, everyone has had the light, the true

light, when represented in Adam. Romans 5:12 is specific on this: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." Then when men had cast themselves into darkness, none of them deserved any light at all. Hence, they are all under judgment, irrespective of what God sees fit to do afterwards. When God sees fit to give to some the light of the gospel and to give to others no more than his common grace by which their conscience acts, the former will be judged more heavily if they neglect that great and gracious light than the latter, who, though they once have sinned against the light in Adam have not for the second time sinned against such a great light as the others have.

### The Denial of Redemptive Mediacy

We cannot discuss at length the many ways in which the principle of redemptive mediacy spoken of above is denied or ignored, but we can indicate one or two instances by way of example.

In the first place it is clear that all naturalistic ethics which frankly accept the evolution doctrine do not at all believe that man needs anything but the immediate deliverances of his consciousness to guide him in his ethical conduct. According to evolutionary ethics, conscience itself has gradually come out of the non-moral; what former generations regarded as postulates, we have gradually grown to regard as axioms.

It is more important to note that all idealist ethics, though opposed to the naturalist ethics of materialism, pragmatism, etc., is equally opposed to the principle of redemptive mediacy. We mention here the case of James Martineau, though he is not usually classed as an idealist. He would ordinarily be classed as a theist, and this makes it all the more important to note his attitude, since it shows that those "theists" whose epistemology is Kantian in principle cannot do justice to the Christian point of view. One cannot more definitely bring out the contrast between a truly Christian position and a naturalistic position than by showing that they differ radically on the point of the work of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit be thought of as coming directly into the heart of the person without reference to the substitutionary work of Christ, such a position has denied the principle of redemptive mediacy. And it is exactly this that Martineau tells us the Holy Spirit does. Without any regard to the work of Christ, he tells us: "Thus in the ultimate penetralia of the conscience, the Living Spirit of God Himself is met, it may be unconsciously, it may be consciously." Here exactly, lies the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian conception of conscience. According to the Christian position, God did once come to man in the penetralia of his conscience directly and fully, but since sin has entered into man's heart, God cannot dwell there with his Spirit till man's sin has been atoned for on the cross of Calvary. On the other hand, all types

of non-Christian ethics ignore all that and speak of God's revealing himself in the moral consciousness of man as though nothing had happened, as though the moral consciousness of man had not itself driven God out of its sanctuary.

A particularly vicious way in which the principle of redemptive mediacy is ignored appears when men avowedly write words on Christian ethics and not merely on general ethics, and still do not really bring Christianity into the picture. So, for instance, Newman Smyth speaks constantly of pagan ethics as but a little lower on the ladder of general ethical progress than biblical ethics. Or, rather, he speaks of a general legal epoch "which historically was sharply defined in Judaism and Stoicism." Smyth ignores completely the difference between the specially revealed will of God as it appears in the law to Israel and the "natural law" in which the Stoics believed. Again the denial of the principle of redemptive mediacy appears in Smyth when he regards it as a general indication of a lower type of morality if men think of their conscience as condemning them before God. Paul's experience of retributive conscience as related in the seventh chapter of Romans is to him an indication that Paul was dwelling at that time on a pre-Christian level of ethical experience. Here Smyth openly denies that the moral consciousness has broken away from God through the fall. According to the Christian position, it is characteristic of all those who recognize their sin that they will abhor themselves and trust in the merits of their Redeemer for acceptance with God. Still further, the same denial of redemptive mediacy appears in a contrast that Smyth makes between law and God. He says that according to the Old Testament as interpreted by Rabbinism God and law were separated, and the main concern of men was with the law and not with God. Now it is true that Rabbinism did misinterpret the Old Testament in this way, but the point is that, according to Smyth, every conception of a forensic relationship between God and man involves a low conception of God. The "legal epoch" is, to him, pre-Christian. "The time for such essentially Calvinistic conception of the sovereignty of the law of God is just before Christ." All this indicates only that a man like Smyth, while writing on Christian ethics, has thrown overboard the foundation of Christian ethics, that is, the principle of redemptive mediacy.

We see then that it is quite possible and quite common, even for those who make much of the Bible and profess to be writing specifically Christian ethics, to assume that God speaks immediately through the consciousness of man. Even those who claim an objective standard by seeking eternal laws in the universe, or by directing the moral consciousness to the Bible as the finest of religious and ethical literature, have in reality maintained the principle of immediacy.

The Roman Catholic and Arminian conception of the natural man as more or less autonomous involves a compromise with pagan immediacy.



### Mediacy and Interpretation

The principle of redemptive mediacy is frequently said to be unintelligible, since in every case an external or mediate standard has to be interpreted by the moral consciousness itself. We need not dwell long on this point since we have discussed it in the chapter on the epistemological presuppositions of Christian ethics. We saw there the objection made by A. E. Taylor. All we need now to do is to apply what was said there to the specific problem in hand. The main point is that Christian ethics is based upon the ideal of an absolute God, and on the creation of man in the image of the Absolute. With these presuppositions it is not possible to maintain that subjective interpretation lowers or annuls the absoluteness of the will of God transmitted. With these presuppositions man's activity is at the very outset reinterpreted. Even in paradise man's activity was reinterpreted. When the principle of redemptive mediation became necessary on account of sin, man's thought needed not be any more interpretative than it already was. No change took place on that score at all. It was the same God speaking to man before and after the fall of man. Both times it was the transcendent God speaking to man. In both cases, therefore, God was "outside" of man when he spoke to man. The only difference was that after sin's entrance this same God spoke to man redemptively while before the fall he spoke to man non-redemptively. Then, too, it should be remembered that after the fall, God, though speaking to man by redemptive mediacy, sends his Spirit by which men will accept the redemptive mediate speaking of God. This Spirit, with his activity, terminates immediately upon the consciousness of man as he did in paradise, so that in this sense we may say that God speaks immediately to man both before and after the fall. Yet he does not speak to all men this way. Hence we cannot say that in general God speaks immediately to man. Moreover, even to those to whom he thus speaks immediately, he never speaks in independence of the objective, redemptive mediate revelation that he has given. In short, he does not speak immediately in the sense of giving revelational content to individuals, apart from the Bible.

We see then that there is no valid objection to the principle of redemptive mediacy from the facts of common grace, from the necessity of interpretation, or from the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. With respect to the first, we hold that the conscience of man when not regenerated is no more than a relative standard. With regard to the second we hold that interpretation always should be reinterpreted, and it is for the purpose of keeping it so that the principle of redemptive mediacy is introduced. By sin man refused to be any longer a reinterpreter, but attempted to become an original interpreter, and it is this false independence that the principle of redemptive mediacy is given to overcome. This holds too with regard to the work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of believers. The Holy Spirit seeks to have us submit our consciousness to a standard outside itself. Hence its work too is in the interest of establishing the princi-

ple of redemptive mediacy and not that of immediacy. It is only those who deny the necessity of the regenerative work of the Spirit who deny mediacy.

### The Principle of Redemptive Mediacy in Scriptures

What we now need to do is to inquire in what way the principle of redemptively mediate revelation of the standard of ethics appeared in the time of the Old Testament. In answer to this question we naturally tend to think at once of the decalogue. We often speak of God's revealing himself in the Old Testament through the law and in the New Testament through the gospel. There is much truth in this contrast, but as it stands it is misleading. In the first place it is misleading because God did not make his standard of life known to man by the law only in the Old Testament. In the second place, the law in the Old Testament cannot be contrasted to grace in any absolute way, because it is itself a part of the covenant of grace. We should be clear on both points if we wish to see the relation of things correctly.

In the first place, it is clear that God not only spoke to the patriarchs but to Adam immediately after the fall, long before he gave the law in the form of the decalogue. It is of great benefit to note the difference between God's speaking to Adam before the fall and God's speaking to Adam after the fall. Before the fall God spoke to Adam both directly and internally, and indirectly and externally. It might appear as though there is no difference at all between the way in which God spoke to Adam after the fall and the way in which he spoke to Adam before the fall. The difference is, however, very great. God spoke redemptively to Adam after the fall, and non-redemptively before the fall. After the fall, God spoke to man only upon the basis of his own promise of redemption. The protevangelium is evidence of this. God could not speak to man except upon the basis of the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace was given in order to re-establish the covenant of works. It was only by the promise of the Redeemer that God could continue to make his will known to man. The natural consequence of sin would be that God would leave man to his own devices and let him experience the dire consequences of the effort by which he tried to set aside the absolute standard of God. We see then in the protevangelium first, that God plans to carry on the realization of his absolute ideal for man by giving him anew the revelation of the absoluteness of his will which man himself cannot fulfil and which must therefore be fulfilled by the "seed of the woman." A relative goodness cannot stand before God, and man could not even be relatively good in himself. Secondly, this absolute standard is to be given to the race anew, and is at once given to the race anew as a gift of the grace of God. It is utterly impossible that any man should ever be able to live the perfect life once sin has got into the universe. It is therefore utterly impossible that God should ever offer man eternal life through keeping the law in his own strength. God may say to man that he must be perfect. He may say to man that he must keep the law perfectly. He may in the earlier stages of revela-

tion, when the notion of the free grace was only beginning to dawn upon the consciousness of God's people, inculcate this doctrine of free grace slowly by first showing them their own inability to keep the law when he tells them that they must do it. In a similar way, God tested the faith of Abraham when he asked of him to offer his own son. All this does not in the least detract from the principle that the law itself as later given to Israel was a means by which God wanted to lead men to the recognition of the necessity of the grace of God. When Paul says that we are under grace and not under the law, he only contrasts our greater apprehension of the grace of God to the lesser apprehension of the grace of God in the Old Testament times, but does not in the least deny that the law itself was a taskmaster to Christ. The third point already made clear from the protevangelium is that the standard of perfection can be realized only if evil is destroyed. And we have here the whole matter in comprehensive compass. It is Satan himself, the source of all the evil, whose head shall be demolished. And this in turn establishes the absoluteness of the standard since it was just before this that man had made good and evil relative by putting the voice of the devil at least as high as and even higher than the voice of God. God now condemns the alliance of man with Satan. He condemns relativistic ethics and reestablishes the absoluteness of the good and the independence of the good. Finally, this protevangelium, by establishing the absolute control of the good over evil, at once points to the future for the realization of the absolute summum bonum through complete obedience on the part of man to the absolute standard of God.

We see then that the principle of redemptive mediacy is carried out along the whole front of the ethical principle. And this is true of the whole of the time that preceded the giving of the law on Sinai. It was quite possible that God should use the memory of paradise as a means by which to inculcate the idea of absolute standard anew. When Adam and Eve had just left paradise, they knew right well that the summum bonum was that which God had placed before them. They also knew right well that God's revealed will was meant to be for them the standard of their ethical life. It was only after the race had demonstrated that this memory, together with the promise of God of the Messiah, was not sufficient to bring men back from the relative standard to the absolute standard, that God revealed the absolute standard in the form of a detailed and externally promulgated law. Even so, he did not do this till after he had formally established his covenant of grace with the father of the whole of the people of God, in order to make it abundantly plain that the law was a part of the covenant of grace. Paul refers to this in Galatians 2:17 when he says: "And this I say that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." He tells us that if the law could have given life, "verily righteousness should have been by the law" and the whole idea of the gospel of grace would drop to the ground.

Accordingly, when we come to the law itself as given on Sinai, we

must still remember that it was not the comprehensive expression of the will of God. The ten commandments are only a principle summary of the expressed will of God to man. It must always serve a twofold use. In the first place it must lead men to Christ. It must be a taskmaster to Christ by showing us the impossibility of living up to its absolute demands. We are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our minds, while by nature we are prone to hate God and our neighbor. Now, since this is the substance of the whole law, since the whole law can be summed up in the commandment of perfect love and obedience to God, it can and must be preached through all ages as the source of the knowledge of sin. Again it must be preached as such, not in the sense as though our knowledge of sin cannot be brought about otherwise than by the detailed preaching of the ten commandments. The law must always be regarded as the summary of the expressed will of God. Hence, this summary must always be interpreted in the light of the fullest revelation of the will of God that we have in the New Testament. In other words, we are still preaching the law of God if we hold up to men the demands of Jesus in the sermon on the mount. Jesus has never asked anything higher than that men should love God with all their hearts, and their fellow man as themselves. He could ask nothing higher than the law asked. When we speak of the necessity of preaching the law in our day so that men may acquire a knowledge of sin, we mean that we should hold before men the whole will of God as expressed summarily in the ten commandments and as illustrated and explained in many ways by the deeds and words of Christ, as well as the prophets and apostles.

In the second place, as the whole expressed will of God must be preached in order to bring men to a consciousness of sin, so also this same whole will of God, of which the decalogue is only a summary, must be preached as a rule of life by which men may regulate their life of gratitude. And since the decalogue is a convenient summary of the whole expressed will of God, it can most profitably be used as a basis of preaching on the ethical standard of the Christian life. Particular mention should be made of this fact since many orthodox ministers seem to think that when they go back to the law, they go back to something with which the Christian has nothing to do. Christ said that he came to establish the law. He himself said what had been said before, that if a man should really live up to its demands, he should certainly inherit eternal life. Hence, he himself came to bring nothing higher, and could bring no higher standard.

### The New Testament Standard

We may bring out this point by discussing briefly the section of Scripture found in Matthew 5:21-48. It is to this section particularly that appeal is made to prove that the New Testament standard of ethics is really a quite different standard from the Old Testament standard.

With respect to this, we note that the presumption would be wholly against this. The Old and the New Testaments present not two Gods, but one God. The Old and the New Testaments base all their teaching with respect to redemption upon the background of the creation story. Hence they both hold that God did originally demand of man absolute perfection. For this reason, we have seen, there is on this score no difference at all between the Old and the New Testaments. We would have the picture of a changeable God if we had to believe that he set essentially different standards at different times. In the second place, if we should say that in the Old Testament the law was given to man as a way of life, it would mean that there would be no teaching about Christ and salvation by grace in the Old Testament. Yet we know that the Old Testament is full of teaching with respect to Christ. The law itself was given in close conjuncture with the sacrifices that pointed to the Messiah.

In the second place, we note that in the introduction to this section Christ says specifically that he came to fulfil the law (v. 17), even to a jot and a tittle (v. 18). And this statement applies not only to the prophecies about himself, but about the least of the commandments.

In the third place, the "archaioi" the "Sopherim" cannot refer to Moses. Jesus plainly does not set his teaching over against the teaching of Moses, but against those who had received the teaching of Moses and had perverted it. What Jesus spoke against was said by those who perhaps claimed association with Moses, but who twisted the meaning of Moses' words, and it was said to their descendants, who carried the program of perversion farther.

In the fourth place, we can note what has happened. The Old Testament quotations given are: (a) sometimes limited to the letter when they should have been taken according to the spirit; (b) sometimes given with unwarranted additions; (c) sometimes given with false antithesis; or (d) sometimes they lift the Old dispensation into a principle. All this is in each instance done in the interest of toning down the rigid demands of the law, which incidentally shows again that the demands of the law, as such, were absolute. We may briefly note the various instances in which this is done.

Verse 21. Here they give the quotation from Exodus 20:13. "Thou shalt not kill" and add to it "and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment." This addition was inserted in order to teach that anyone who had not actually slain someone was not guilty. Jesus here makes plain that the internal attitude of the heart makes a man guilty as well as the external deed.

Verse 27. Here the quotation given is verbally correct: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The Jews had limited the meaning of this commandment. They limited the meaning of the words till it meant no more than un-

faithfulness on the part of a married woman. Jesus brings out again the internality, and the complete comprehensiveness of the principle.

Verse 31. Here the Old Testament quotation is "Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement," to which Deuteronomy 24:1 adds "because he hath found some unseemly thing in her." This latter phrase the Sopherim omitted. By omitting this part, they made a general rule out of a particular case that was unique, in order to give latitude to everybody with a pretext. Here Jesus brings back the original purity of the law by limiting the right of divorce to those who could claim fornication as a reason. Jesus points out that the liberty with respect to divorce was a dispensational something, since from the beginning it was not so. Hence even the liberty that is actually found in the Old Testament should no longer be tolerated in the New Testament, Jesus says. He goes back to the original state of affairs. And this shows again that, according to Jesus, man was originally given an absolute command.

Verse 33. Here the Sopherim said: "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thy oaths." Leviticus 19:12 says: "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God. I am the Lord." The meaning of Leviticus, according to the Sopherim, was that as long as you did not swear falsely directly by Jehovah, you needed not to worry so much about swearing falsely by other things. If you had made an oath to Jehovah, you should keep it, while if you had made an oath to your brother you needed not necessarily to keep it. Over against this, Jesus put the more rigid standard that it was a sin if you swore falsely by your brother, as well as when you swear falsely by the Lord, since at bottom you are, in any case, swearing falsely by the Lord. Jesus therefore said, in effect, that men should never swear falsely. Jesus did not mean that for legitimate purposes and before proper authorities we may never swear. He himself took the oath before Pilate.

Verse 38. Here the Old Testament quotation given is that of Leviticus 24:20: "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." But under the law this was to be done by the judges. Instead of justifying revenge, as the Sopherim interpreted it, this very rule was given to prevent revenge. The Jews wanted the freedom of lynch-law; Jesus reinstates justice. Jesus does not for a minute mean that justice is not to be done. He himself has come to establish the law, to bear its penalty. Hence it is not possible to distinguish between a law of justice on the one hand and a law of liberty on the other hand that you may follow out, but need not follow out. We must be perfect, that is our duty; supererogation is out of the question. Even if we have done the whole law we are still unprofitable servants in the sense that we have done no more than our duty. Hence Jesus did not set Moses aside, but established him, and shows in addition that the manner of administration of justice had to be external, in the Old Testament dispensation, while in the New dispensation,

since religion is to be separated from the State, the external administration of justice is to be limited to the activity of the State.

Verse 43. Here Leviticus 19:18 says: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The Jews had simply perverted this to say: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemies." Here Christ restored the true Old Testament teaching as is found, for example, in Proverbs 25:21: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty give him water to drink." In addition to this, Jesus brings out that there was, to be sure, a command in the Old Testament given at various times to destroy the enemies of God, but that these were then to be destroyed because they were pointed out by God himself as his enemies. Now in the New Testament dispensation God does no longer point out to us men who are his enemies. The New Testament is the spiritual dispensation. We have already seen that this does not mean that we may now freely love the devil and all his host. It simply means that in the new dispensation we are to seek to follow Christ's own example in offering salvation to all.

Our conclusion, then, with respect to this whole section can be no other than that it corroborates what we have said above, that is, that the New Testament only brings out more fully than the Old the absoluteness of the standard of ethics.

Jesus does this by showing that the concession with respect to the Old Testament standard, such as we have in the case of divorce for other reasons than fornication, should no longer be tolerated. He expects his New Testament children to live at a higher ethical level so that he can carry his program through further with them than he could with his Old Testament children. Jesus does this again by showing that the demand of perfection extends even to the inmost depths of the heart. The Old Testament had already demanded this in its command that men should love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul. Yet there were, at times, concessions on this point, and Jesus points out that things out to be carried out now more fully in accordance with the original creation ordinance than they could have been in the old dispensation.

We may say that just as Jesus brought the vision of the absolute summum bonum more intensively and more extensively before man's eyes again, so he also interpreted the law in all its intensity and in all its extensity as the means by which men are to reach the summum bonum. If we preach the law as Christ preached it, there is no territory of life that does not fall under it. And what applies to Christ applies equally to Paul. All that Paul has said can be subsumed under what Jesus said: "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." And what Jesus said here is nothing more than what Moses said in Deuteronomy: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." It is utterly false and unbiblical to contrast the New Testament with the Old as far as the standard of life is

concerned. Both seek to bring to man the expressed will of God. The expressed will of God for man is simply that man shall reflect the moral glory of God on a finite scale. This is what God asked of man in paradise. That is what God asked of man in the Old Testament. That is what God asks of man in the New Testament. The only difference is that God has himself brought this demand to the consciousness of his people gradually, as they were able to bear it. In the Old Testament times, the believers were fed with milk, while in the New Testament times we are fed with meat. Both milk and meat can nourish and feed us.

At this point we should insert an exposition of the decalogue in accordance with the principles we have outlined. However, we have a special course for that purpose in the curriculum, and there is not time to do it here. Suffice it to have discussed briefly the main principles that must be borne in mind with respect to the standard of ethics. On that question, just as on the question of the summum bonum of man, both the Old Testament and the New agree together, and together stand opposed to all non-Christian-theistic theories. As both present an absolute summum bonum, so both present an absolute standard. No other system of ethics presents either an absolute summum bonum or an absolute standard. As both maintain that the absolute summum bonum must be a gift of God's grace to man, so both teach that the very revelation of the absolute standard is a gift of God's grace to man, while certainly the ability to live up to it must be given us in Christ, who, by his substitutionary atonement, must fulfil the law for us. No other system of ethics says that either the summum bonum or the standard is a gift of grace, and no ethics teach that we need to seek the power outside ourselves in a substitute for us in order that we may fulfil the law's demands. As both the Old and the New Testaments teach that the summum bonum cannot be reached except by the complete destruction of all evil, so both give us a standard in which not one bit of evil is tolerated, but evil must be completely destroyed. No other system of ethics ever demands the complete destruction of evil. Finally, as both teach that the summum bonum cannot be fully reached till some time in the future, so both give us a standard that none can fulfil in the present, that can be and is fulfilled in the present in a substitutionary way alone, but that will be fulfilled by us in the future. No other system of ethics promises the fulfilment of their ideals in the future, as none of them come from above, so none of them look above.

We are now ready to begin our journey toward the goal of the summum bonum outlined, guided by the revealed will of God as our standard.



