

The
NEW
TESTAMENT
BASIS OF
PACIFISM

G. H. C. MACGREGOR, D.D.,D.Litt.

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New and Revised Edition

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Disclaimer

I have tried to reproduce the book as true to the original as possible, I have left the archaic English coming from the King James version of the Bible. Some spelling mistakes have been corrected. It is possible that I have overlooked some mistakes made by my Optical Character Recognition program for which please accept my apologies. I hope my Greek spelling is correct.

Dave D'Albert 11 December 2012



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BASIS OF PACIFISM

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THIS is not a book on the practical issues involved in the problem of Peace and War. It is possible today to advocate Pacifism on any number of grounds ; for all sensible people now realize that modern war on a large scale has become a weapon far more dangerous than any of the evils from which it is supposed to defend us. But for the Christian war is primarily a moral problem? and every moral problem is ultimately theological. For this reason it is greatly to be desired that an adequate study might be made of the theological basis of Pacifism. It is not the aim of the present volume to do this, though the fringe of the subject is touched in Chapters V and VI. Much less is it our main object to argue why and how Christian Pacifism might well prove to be practical politics in the present situation. All these problems can be intelligently discussed from the Christian standpoint only when we have first asked, What, as a matter of fact does Jesus Himself teach? What is the bearing of New Testament doctrine as a whole on this particular question of war ? Pacifists are perhaps too apt to assume without sufficient proof that Jesus' ethic is incontestably "pacifist", and that, even if so proved, He intended that pacifist ethic to be applied to the wider sphere of social and national politics. Our opponents still more light-heartedly deny this, with an even greater lack of demonstration. This little book is offered in the hope that it will provide all Christians who are sincere workers for peace - whether they be "Pacifists" or not - with the material necessary for thinking through for themselves this greatest of all modern ethical problems,

G. H. C. MACGREGOR

Glasgow,
September, 1936

PREFACE TO NEW EDITION

It is now sixteen years since the publication of the first edition of this book. In the interval it has enjoyed a considerable circulation on both sides of the Atlantic, and apparently it is still found to be of some value in the great debate. Accordingly, on the invitation of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, this new edition has been prepared. The world of 1952 is a very different place from that of 1936. But the message of the New Testament, like the Lord and Master whom it reveals, is "the same yesterday and today and for ever". I have therefore not found much in the book that I should wish to alter. But the final chapter has been rewritten in order to place the argument in its contemporary setting, and to deal with the latest defences of Christian non-pacifism as erected by theologians of the school of Reinhold Niebuhr. Once again the book is offered with the prayer that it may continue to be useful in the cause of peace.

G. H. C. MACGREGOR

*Glasgow,
September, 1952*

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

It is greatly to be desired that some other word than "Pacifism" might be discovered to describe the faith which includes among the first principles of its creed the total renunciation of war. In the popular mind "Pacifism" is equivalent to "passivism", and the consequences of not resorting to war are readily made to appear intolerable, because it is habitually assumed that the only alternative to going to war is doing nothing. But, whatever be true of other brands of Pacifism, that is not the Christian Pacifist position. For the Christian Pacifist the negative prohibition, which he places upon war, has its source in the positive imperative of the Christian ethic, which demands that every valid means must be used to set wrongs right and build human relations on a new foundation, and yet forbids the use of such means as will by their very nature stultify the end in view. It follows that the Christian Pacifist position must be based, (a) not on the repudiation of all use of force in the dealings of man with man either as individuals or as units in the community; yet it is almost universally assumed that such a repudiation is the Pacifist position, and once the absurdity of that position is proved - often an easy enough task - the question is considered settled. Nor (b) is our position based on a literalistic interpretation of either the Sixth Commandment or certain sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, though due weight must, of course, be given to those sayings in the context of Jesus' whole teaching. Even the Devil can quote Scripture, and to cite isolated passages wrested from their context is to use a boomerang which is apt to recoil on the head of the user. Rather must our position be based (c) on certain essential *basic principles* of the Christian ethic as set forth in Jesus' teaching and illustrated by His example. What these principles are is the question now at issue. But, subject to confirmation by our study, the following postulates may be provisionally stated for an adequate treatment of our subject.

- (1) The first principle of Jesus' ethic is love towards one's neighbour. ¹

¹ In the broad sense in which Jesus uses the word in e.g. Luke x. 29 ff. Matt. Vii. 12 further defines this principle.

(2) This ethic is in turn based upon belief in a Father God who loves all men impartially and sets an infinite value on every individual human soul.¹

(3) All the teaching of Jesus must be interpreted in the light of His own way of life, and above all of the Cross by which His teaching was sealed.

The issue before us is therefore best framed, not by asking, Does the New Testament ethic ever allow the use of force in the resisting and conquering of evil? So to pose the question is to invite that unfortunate confusion of "Pacifism" with "passivism". We shall rather ask, What is the specifically Christian way of meeting and overcoming evil, as set forth in the teaching, example and Cross of Jesus Christ? Can war under any circumstances be held to be consistent with that way? When the question is thus stated, and our three postulates are kept in view, it becomes evident that, in order to find a place for war within the New Testament ethic, it is not enough to prove that Jesus recognizes the place of law in an ordered society, that He permits a moral use of force to uphold Justice, that He might even allow the use of a "sword" in self-defence against bandits. This may all be true; and yet war, as we have come to know it, may so violate Jesus' essential principles, and so stultify the specifically Christian method of meeting evil, that its one certain issue will not be justice but moral and spiritual death. In a word, the Christian Pacifist position must rest in the main on a discrimination, in the light of the teaching and example of Jesus, between moral and non-moral uses of force, and on the affirmation that when called to the bar of the New Testament ethic, whatever may be said of certain exercises of force, war at least is seen to be under a final prohibition.

It should be hardly necessary to insist that, inasmuch as our problem is one not of political expediency but of moral obligation, the final court of appeal is the New Testament. Yet, as concerns this particular problem, the average Christian is still in such bondage to the traditional dogma of Church and State, so painfully evolved by orthodox Protestant theology,² that one feels a good deal of sympathy with the outburst of G. J. Heering: "If the pure and exalted ethic of the Gospel is to come into its rights, it will have to hold dogmatics at arm's length for the present, to prevent the latter from paralysing it before it has been able to display its power and aim."³ The purpose of the following pages is to allow the authentic accents of the New Testament to be heard.

¹ Matt. v. 45 ; x. 29-31 ; xvi. 26.

² For this see Chapter Seven.

³ G. J. Heering, *The Fall of Christianity*, p. 10.

One would have hoped that, whatever our difference of opinion as to the validity and practicability under modern conditions of Jesus' teaching, it would at least be possible to reach agreement as to what the teaching actually is, even in its bearing upon so complex a problem as that of Peace and War. Yet the most sincere Christians still find themselves poles apart in their interpretation of the evidence. Few will deny that war as *an instrument of national policy* (the qualification is often important) is a complete denial of the teaching spirit and methods of Jesus. But there agreement ends, and generally speaking Christians may be grouped according as they hold one of three views.

(1) Firstly it is urged that the teaching and example of Jesus are essentially "Pacifist" and reveal, above all in the Cross, an alternative method of meeting and overcoming evil which renders all violent methods obsolete. War as we know it today, involving as it does an utter prostitution both of moral values and of the Christian conception of personal relationships, cannot under any conditions be brought within the orbit of the Christian ethic. The Church, if she is to be true to her function as the Body of Christ and His organ in society, is under all circumstances bound by that ethic, however impracticable it may appear when judged by considerations of prudence, expediency and probable result: "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." ¹ This is the Christian Pacifist position and admits of no ambiguity.

(2) Many equally sincere Christians, among them, it must be admitted, not a few eminent dogmatic theologians, argue on the contrary that the teaching of Jesus is not necessarily "pacifist". Pacifism indeed appears as a dangerous modern "heresy". The New Testament ethic is based on the law of righteousness as well as on the law of love, and the besetting sin of Pacifism is to exalt love at the expense of righteousness. The Law is the basis of the Gospel, and even in the New Testament it remains not merely as so much scaffolding, to be scrapped (as is done, it is alleged, by the pacifist) when its purpose is served, but as an integral part of the completed building. There are elements in both the teaching and the example of Jesus which suggest that He would approve the violent application of force in restraint of evil, and once this is admitted the line cannot be drawn even at war. The pacifist's absolute prohibition of war rests upon a basis which is sentimental rather than ethical, and can find no support in the New Testament, which nowhere forbids the taking up of arms in a Just cause. In all of which there is much truth, of which the Pacifist does well to be reminded. But is the scope of Law adequately delimited, or its final sublimation and

¹ I Cor. I. 25.

"fulfilment" in the Gospel sufficiently realized? These particular questions will be fully dealt with in Chapter Six.

(3) It is possible, finally, to take a middle position: Jesus' teaching, if taken at its face value and consistently applied, with due weight given to that which is distinctively His own in His method of dealing with evil, undeniably implies what today would be called the "Pacifist" attitude. But Jesus' ethical teaching, as we have it briefly reported in the Gospels, cannot be held to cover the whole field of moral obligation with which mankind is confronted today. Conditions have arisen in State and Society which were not before the mind of Jesus, who was legislating for an ideal "kingdom", and not for the imperfect world in which we live. In such a world situations are bound to arise in which the use of the war method is the lesser of two evils, even if it conflicts with Jesus' method. The Christian's duty as a citizen justifies him in refusing to take literally an ethic which he might feel constrained to obey if the Kingdom of Heaven had come on earth. According to this third point of view the debate should not be concerning any ambiguity in Jesus' teaching, which is admitted to be unequivocally Pacifist, but rather concerning its comprehensiveness, its practicability, the point at which for the Church it becomes fully applicable in our slow progress towards a completely Christian social and international order. The ethic of the Sermon on the Mount must be acknowledged to be unambiguous: but meantime circumstances compel us to declare a "moratorium" upon it.

It is perhaps not entirely without significance that, over against the purely dogmatic theologians, with their possibly exaggerated deference to traditional Church dogma, this is the position adopted by several eminent New Testament scholars who are not themselves pacifists. Professor H. Windisch, one of the foremost modern continental New Testament scholars, will serve as an example: "Condemnation of all forms of war is the only attitude congenial with the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount." ¹ "The critic must concede to the objector to military service that his exegesis is the more accurate. He cannot defend himself against Tolstoyan practice by any dogmatic exegesis." ² Windisch further quotes with full approval the opinion of Professor Baumgarten, which is all the more impressive as both are non-Pacifists writing during the First World War: "Not only the war of aggression but also defensive warfare is ruled out by the Sermon on the Mount.... We have primarily to recognize, however hard it may be at present (1915) to do so, that the waging of war has no place in the moral and spiritual teaching of Jesus." ³

¹ Der Sinn der Bergpredigt, 1929, p. 150.

² Theol. Rundschau, 1915, p. 288.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 338, 348.

Similarly Harnack: "It requires no further proof to establish firmly that the Gospel excludes all violence, and has nothing in common with war, nor will permit it."¹ Yet Harnack vigorously defends participation in war by Christians! In a word, the view of such scholars is that the ethic of Jesus is indisputably Pacifist, but it is not comprehensive enough to be applicable to the affairs of the modern state and nation. While acknowledging the scientific honesty of such a position, which is greatly to be preferred to that of the apologist who seeks to discover loopholes through which war may actually be brought within the pale of Christian ethics, we shall have to ask whether such a compromise either does justice to the New Testament imperative, or can permanently satisfy the enlightened Christian conscience.

¹ Militia Christi, p. 2. I am indebted for these quotations to G.J. Herring, The Fall of Christianity, pp. 31, 35, 63, 64.

CHAPTER TWO

DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT SANCTION WAR?

BOTH sides to the present controversy must plead guilty to the unfortunate practice of quoting isolated texts, often wrested from their context ; and in view of the constant and light-hearted misapplication of certain well-known passages, it will be well to deal with them, before entering upon a more positive and constructive study of the New Testament evidence. The passages will first be quoted from the Revised Version; the use made of them by certain apologists for militarism will then be indicated, and, where necessary, a corrective will be provided. We shall confine ourselves to the New Testament. Admittedly much use is made in certain quarters of passages drawn from the more war-like sections of the Old Testament; the question whether the will and the hand of God are to be traced in the aggressive wars of Israel is one that must be frankly faced. ¹ But our present task is not the philosophy of history but the interpretation of Scripture, and if the New Testament is always to be understood in the light of the Old, rather than the Old Testament re-interpreted in the light of the New, then we may well despair of any progress towards the truth. "For the man who relates the question of Christianity and War to the whole Bible, while regarding the Bible as a unity, the whole of which lies on one level, the problem is insoluble. But he for whom the Scriptures are not a static unity, but an organic (for an organism passes through phases of growth), a progressive and ever fuller revelation of God's being and will, he will be able to see an ascending line, which finds its goal and zenith in Jesus Christ." ² MoreOver it often seems to be forgotten that Jesus prefaces the most crucial of all our passages with the words, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time. . . But I say unto you. . ." ³ Could Jesus have possibly indicated more clearly that He claimed, and was indeed exercising, the right to correct the misconceptions even of the Old Testament Scriptures themselves? As Windisch again well says: "The brutal dictates of War and State in the Old Testament simply do not arise for the man who has grasped the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount." ⁴

¹ This subject is touched upon in Chapter Five.

² Herring, *The Fall of Christianity*, p. 19.

³ Matt. v. 21, 27, 33, 38, 43.

⁴ *Der Sinn der Bergpredigt*, 1929, p. 154.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE¹: especially John ii. 15, "**And be made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple both the sheep and the oxen.**" Jesus, it is argued, was no pusillanimous pacifist, but a man capable of righteous anger, which expressed itself in an act of aggressive personal violence against the desecraters of the Temple. What better Justification does a Christian need even for aggressive warfare in a Just cause? This scene admittedly indicates a reaction against evil on the part of Jesus much more strenuous than the meek acquiescence which is commonly misrepresented as Pacifism. But we are not concerned to deny that there is room in Jesus' ethic for a discriminating use of force. Note, however, the following points:

(1) It is the Fourth Gospel alone which mentions the "scourge". Jewish tradition held that the Messiah at his coming would bear a lash for the chastisement of evil-doers (cf. the "fan" in Matt. iii. 12), Scholars are agreed that the whole significance of the scene in this Gospel is Messianic, and the Evangelist's well-known love of symbolism suggests that the "scourge" is to be regarded as an emblem of authority rather than as a weapon of offence. But even if the word is to be taken literally, a correct rendering of the Greek makes it clear that the whip was used only on the animals ² Finally, the word ³ which in its English dress "cast out" gives the impression of extreme violence, is frequently used in the New Testament without any such suggestion, e.g. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest." ⁴ The parallel verse in Mark might quite legitimately be translated without any hint of exceptional violence: "He entered into the temple, and began to *send out* them that sold and them that bought in the temple." ⁵

¹ Mark xi. 15-18; Matt. xxi. 12-13; Luke xix. 45-6; John ii. 13-17.

² The Greek here is: πάντας ἐξέβαλεν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ, τὰ τε πρόβατα καὶ τοὺς βόας.

Note (a) a common and correct use of the particles τε . . . καὶ is to subdivide a subject or object, previously mentioned, into its component parts. Here "πάντας", all of them" (i.e. all the animals), is further defined as consisting of "sheep" (πρόβατα) and "oxen" (βόας). Cf. Matt. xxii. 10: πάντας οὖς εὖρον, πονηροὺς τε καὶ ἀγαθοὺς. Another good example is Rom. ii. 9-10, where the construction occurs twice. Cf. also Luke xxii. 66.

(b) It is sometimes objected that, if πάντας referred only to the animals, it should naturally be in the neuter gender agreeing with πρόβατα (the nearest word), rather than masculine agreeing with βόας; being masculine it must refer to the men. But the grammatical rule is that, when one adjective qualifies two nouns of different genders, it will agree with the masculine or feminine noun rather than with the neuter noun, irrespective of position. A good example is Heb. iii. 6: εὐάν την παρρησίαν καὶ τό καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος μέχρι τέλους βεβαίαν κατάσχωμεν.

³ ἐκβάλλειν

⁴ Matt. ix. 38.

⁵ Mark xi. 15.

(2) Had Jesus used violence, He must inevitably have provoked retaliation and been overpowered by superior numbers. Much more probably it was the compelling "authority" of His words which overawed His opponents; their conscience condemned them, and they withdrew in disorder. Moral authority, unarmed, triumphed where violence would have been futile. There would seem to be an argument here for Pacifism at least equal to that against it.

(3) In any case the passage has no relevance whatever to war. "My house", says Jesus, "shall be called a house of prayer *for all the nations*, but ye have made it a den of robbers." ¹ Probably the scene of the desecration was the outer Court, which was open to Gentiles. The foreigner was being robbed of his right of approach to Israel's God. An incident which is so often adduced as an apology for war can in fact be read as a protest by Jesus on behalf of international goodwill.

THE CENTURION AT CAPERNAUM ²: **"Jesus marvelled and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."** It is pointed out that Jesus commends the centurion, and never hints that there is any- thing wrong in the occupation of a soldier, or that the centurion should give up the profession of arms. Jesus, then, would give no countenance to Pacifism. A similar use is made of Luke iii. 14 ff., where John the Baptist answers the soldiers' questions without condemning their calling. Thus Augustine, quoted by Calvin with approval: "If Christian discipline condemned all wars, when the soldiers asked counsel as to the way of salvation, they would have been told to cast away their arms. . . . Those whom he orders to be contented with their pay, he certainly does not forbid to serve:" ³ In reply we may note:

(1) It was the centurion's faith, not his calling, which Jesus commended. Moreover this is one of the very few occasions on which Jesus is said to have "marvelled". The chief impression left by the story is that Jesus was greatly surprised to find faith in so unlikely a quarter, though doubtless this was chiefly because the man was a heathen.

(2) An "argument from silence" is always precarious, and never more so than when applied to the Gospels. Modern scholarship is insisting more and more that only an exceedingly limited number of motives has

¹ Mark xi. 17.

² Matt. viii. 5-10 ; Luke vii. 1-10.

³There is a certain unconscious humour in the fact that in the *Westminster Confession*, Chapter XXIII, the first New Testament authority cited in support of the proposition that "Christians... may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasions" is Luke iii. 14: "And soldiers also asked him saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man. . ."

determined the selection of material which has found a place in the earliest collections. Even sayings of Jesus would tend to be excluded, if they appeared irrelevant to the main end in view, however useful they might prove today for the solution of our modern problems. That end was the proclamation of the Christian Gospel of salvation. As Dr. Martin Dibelius says, "The first Christians had no interest in reporting the life and passion of Jesus objectively to mankind. . . . They wanted nothing else than to win as many as possible to salvation in the last hour just before the end of the world, which they believed to be at hand. This salvation had been revealed in Jesus, and any morsel of information about Jesus was full of meaning for them *only when it pertained to salvation.*" "The aim of the Gospels is to furnish proof of the message of salvation which has been preached." ¹ Moreover, the story of the centurion belongs to a group of what have been called "Pronouncement Stories", whose "chief characteristic . . . is that they culminate in a saying of Jesus which expresses some ethical or religious precept". ² In other words the interest of such stories is focused upon one particular motif, in this case upon the centurion's faith and Jesus' response to it. We have no right, therefore, to expect to find in it an estimate by Jesus, either favourable or otherwise, of the supplicant's military calling, nor to deduce anything from His silence. In the same chapter in Luke ³ Jesus commends "a woman in the city, which was a sinner", but He is not supposed to condone her prostitution because He is silent about it. He commends Zacchaeus the tax-collector ⁴ without referring to his profession: must He be held therefore to condone "graft"? The New Testament contains no word of protest against slavery: are we to conclude, therefore, that slavery is in accordance with the Christian ethic, and that those who led the protest against it were perverting the Gospel?

(3) The question of war hardly arises here. The Roman soldiery in Palestine corresponded rather to a police-force; and Jesus could not have publicly condemned such service, even had He desired to do so, without coming into premature conflict with Rome, and ultimately identifying Himself with violent revolt, to the stultification of His own Pacifist ethic. There is much about which both Jesus and the early Church were silent because of their eager expectation of the "Kingdom's" imminent coming, which would render obsolete any denunciation of Rome and her ways.

(4) It should surely be obvious that one may gladly recognize splendid qualities in individual soldiers, as in all other professions, without

¹ *Gospel Criticism and Christology*, 1935, pp. 16, 31. Italics mine.

² See Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, pp. 63 ff.

³ Luke vii. 36 ff.

⁴ Luke xix. 9.

thereby committing oneself to approval of their calling. It is interesting to find the militaristically minded, but honest, Harnack writing thus of the three centurions in the Gospels: "These stories are not told with a view to glorifying the soldier's profession. . . . In all these cases it is of secondary importance to the narrative that the men were soldiers. It is very true that these stories have since been exploited again and again in the interest of the profession of war." ¹ And Windisch concludes a reference to our passage by re-marking: "Here again the attitude of Jesus gives no sanction to militarism." ²

"Think not that I came to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" ³ It is often argued from this saying that Jesus foresaw the inevitability of war under the Christian dispensation, and indeed conceived that the purpose of His mission would find its fulfilment in war rather than in peace. It is part of the presumption of Pacifism to assume that the Kingdom must be one of universal peace. But:

(1) Does this verse really express *purpose*? More probably it is a good example of a common Semitic idiom whereby what is really a consequence, especially a tragic one, is ironically expressed as a purpose ⁴. Jesus means, "I came on a mission of mercy, and the only result, alas, is a 'sword'."

(2) As a matter of fact there is no reference whatever in the verse to war. Are we seriously to picture the daughter using the "sword" upon her mother? Instead of "sword" Luke here much more literally has "*division*" (διαμερισμός), the same word as in Hebrews iv. 12: "The word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the *dividing* of soul and spirit." Just as the word of God is said to sift the component parts of a man's being, so will Jesus' mission sift the true from the false in human society. The context shows that the "division" in question has nothing to do with war, but refers to the misunderstanding and even persecution to be endured by the loyal Christian at the hands of those who should be his best friends. The words might find a true illustration, not in a war supposedly sanctioned by Jesus, but far more fittingly in the conscientious objector to war, ostracised by society, disowned even by his own family, on account of loyalty to Jesus' teaching as he understands it.

¹ *Militia Christi*. p. 52.

² *Theol. Rundschau*, 1915, p. 343.

³ Matt. x. 34; cf. Luke xii. 51.

⁴ A good example from the Old Testament is Hosea viii. q: "Of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off," i.e. "with the result that they have been cut off".

“When ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be not troubled: these things must needs come to pass.” ¹ With this saying may be compared the various prophecies of war in the Apocalypse ². What right, it is asked, has the Christian to renounce war, when Jesus Himself foretells that "it must needs come to pass"? "I would very much like to know", runs a typical "letter to the Editor", "what Justification writers have for their extreme Pacifist views. Whether we wish it or not, we still have the Battle of Armageddon to face. Will these friends then, when the great battle of Christ's forces against anti-Christ takes place, be Pacifists?" ³ We may remark in reply:

(1) It is hardly necessary at this time of day to caution the intelligent reader against fantastically literal interpretations of the Book of Revelation. The saying of Jesus Himself, if such it is, requires much more careful consideration. But it is probable that here, too, we have a highly-coloured picture, characteristic of Jewish Apocalyptic, of the catastrophes which are to precede the end of the age. It is very doubtful whether Mark xiii. 7-8 can be considered as belonging to the authentic teaching of Jesus. Modern scholars are almost unanimous in regarding this chapter as a composite section consisting of a short independent Jewish, or Jewish-Christian, apocalypse, which has been combined with genuine sayings of Jesus. The Jewish stratum appears to consist of verses 7-8, 14-20, 24-7, which if read consecutively will be found to hang together to form an independent unit. It is in the intervening verses that we may expect to find genuine sayings of Jesus.

(2) The warning of a dire succession of wars has proved only too tragically true. But, even if we should feel compelled to accept this as an authentic saying of Jesus, it is not necessary to conclude that, contrary to the whole trend of His teaching, Jesus has laid upon His disciples the obligation to take part in such wars, which are due in part, as He Himself suggests, to the emergence of "false Christs and false prophets" who will "lead astray, if possible, even the elect." ⁴

(3) As for the warlike passages in the Book of Revelation, we may allow G. J. Heering to give us a summary of his own conclusions and those of other scholars: "Christian apocalyptic was built up in the first century on the Jewish model, and largely out of Jewish materials, of which the Revelation of St. John is the biblical example. Harnack writes: 'The apocalyptic eschatology preserves traces of the warlike Messiah by taking them over to its portrait of Jesus,' but 'one notices that the warlike element is wholly

¹ Mark xiii. 7, and parallels.

² Rev. vi. 4-8 ; xi. 7 ff. ; xii. 7 ff. ; xiii. 7 ; xvi. 16; xvii. 14; xix. 11-21.

³ *British Weekly*, August 30th, 1934.

⁴ Mark xiii. 22.

confined to the apocalyptic eschatology, and does not extend to the figure of Christ outside it.' And as the Messiah of apocalypse fights with angels at his side, and not with men, this action in no way affects the example which the Christ of the Gospels has left behind. 'Heavenly beings and superhuman heavenly powers alone wage war on God's behalf. When men fight, they are doomed to destruction; only the devil lets men fight for him. ' The author of Apocalypse is convinced of that," ¹

"But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his cloke and buy one. For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me. And he was reckoned with transgressors: for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said, It is enough." ²

A typical comment from the anti-pacifist viewpoint is that of the German theologian Spitta during the war: "See! Jesus has summoned His followers to armed defence! He was no tender Pacifist:" ³ Is there any reply?

(1) It must be frankly confessed that the passage is one of the most puzzling with which we have to deal, and it has always perplexed scholars, even when they have no axe to grind in connection with the present controversy. Thus Weiss writes in his famous *Commentary*: "The martial note in this word is in direct contradiction to many others which definitely forbid resistance. It is in direct opposition to the whole spirit of primitive Christianity." If Spitta's comment is Justified, then it is very hard to explain Jesus' complete change of front when His disciples take Him at His word and put up an armed defence in Gethsemane: "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." ⁴

(2) Short of a definitely Pacifist explanation, much the best interpretation is one suggested to me by my colleague, Principal W. A. Curtis: "It is evident that Jesus had not forbidden the disciples in their Journey from Galilee to Jerusalem to carry weapons, and that these weapons were nothing but the customary means of protection which travellers have always used *when beyond the reach of law* and armed protection. In Jerusalem they were *under the shadow of the law*, Jewish and Roman, and their arms were in abeyance. In the passage quoted the traveller's sword is like the purse, and the wallet, and the sandals, and the cloak, a symbol of

¹ Heering, *The Fall of Christianity*, p. 30, quoting Hamack, *Militia Christi*, p. 6, and Windisch, *Der Mess. Krieg*, p. 76.

² Luke xxii. 36-8.

³ *Theol. Rundschau*, 1915, p. 235 ; quoted by Heering, op. cit. p. 24.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 52.

homeless wandering on an urgent and dangerous mission, far more formidable than their shorter and safer errands hitherto at His bidding. It may be inferred that Jesus had taken no exception to them bearing the ordinary means of self-defence when travelling in bandit-infested country *beyond the protection of armed authority.*" (Italics throughout are mine.) The point of this interpretation is the distinction drawn between Jesus' permission of arms when "beyond the reach of law", and His prohibition of them "under the shadow of the law". This is thought to explain Jesus' apparent *volte face* at the arrest. It is also assumed that Jesus envisages henceforth a more "dangerous and urgent mission", which will take the disciples to a greater extent than hitherto beyond the pale of law, and therefore Justify the bearing of defensive arms. This exegesis is admittedly attractive: but there are serious difficulties:

(a) The command to "buy a sword" appears to be given with the prospect of Jesus' coming arrest and death definitely in view, and with the purpose of meeting some eventuality connected with this coming crisis: verse 37, "For. . . that which concerneth me hath fulfilment," makes this quite plain.

(b) Yet, if anything is certain, it is that the command cannot have been given with a view to resistance at the arrest; Jesus' rebuke, "Put up thy sword again into its place,"¹ rules this out.

(c) It is difficult, again, to see how the approach of Jesus' death, or even the Crucifixion itself, should be thought of as so altering the disciples' circumstances that, whereas formerly they travelled under the protection of common law, where no "sword" was needed, they would henceforth be travelling (as this interpretation assumes) "beyond the protection of armed authority", where possession of arms might be permitted. The interpretation seems somewhat arbitrarily to read into the passage this distinction between two environments, one "under the shadow of the law" and the other "beyond the reach of the law". The distinction is, of course, a real one; but it is doubtful whether it is implied in this passage.

(3) Many modern scholars have accordingly suspected the passage, and even the connection of verse 36 with verse 38 is questioned. The incident occurs only in Luke, and it is perhaps suggestive that in the sequel² this Evangelist tones down Jesus' sharp rebuke as recorded by Matthew³ into the ambiguous words, "Suffer ye thus far." It is not a little tempting to guess that our crux is simply an awkward attempt on the part of the "Lukan editor" to prepare the way for the sequel in Gethsemane, and so to Justify the disciples' attempt at violent resistance. It is significant that else-where

¹ Matt. xxvi. 52.

² Luke xxii. 51.

³ Matt. xxvi. 52.

Luke tends to slur over the shortcomings of the Twelve. For example, white Mark tells frankly of the unworthy claim made by James and John to places of special honour in the Kingdom,¹ and Matthew begins the white-washing process by transferring the blame to their mother,² Luke tactfully omits the incident altogether. (4) If this be considered too drastic a cutting of the knot, we are left with three alternatives. The command to "buy a sword" must be taken either:

(a) Quite literally and seriously, as the opponents of Pacifism assert. But, as J. M. Creed in our foremost commentary in English on St. Luke's Gospel puts it, "It is unlikely that Jesus seriously entertained the thought of armed resistance, which indeed would be in conflict with the whole tenor of His life and teaching."³ Similarly F. C. Burkitt: "It is impossible to believe that the command to buy a sword was meant literally or seriously."⁴ It should perhaps be remarked that neither of these scholars is a Pacifist.

(b) Seriously, but metaphorically. "It seems better", writes Dr. Creed, "to assume that Jesus intended the words of verse 36 to be accepted in a general sense as a warning that disaster is coming,⁵ and that the disciples misunderstood Him."⁶ Then Jesus, in despair at the denseness of His hearers who have taken Him up literally and produced two swords, breaks off the conversation with the common do!"

(c) Literally, but ironically-the words being spoken by Jesus in what Dr. Burkitt calls a mood of "ironical foreboding". The words it is enough" might then be taken as a semi-playful reminder to the literally-minded disciples. The absurdly inadequate "two swords" are "enough" with which to resist the might of Rome! So far from being a summons to armed defence, Jesus' words are rather a wistful reminder of the utter futility of armed resistance.

Our conclusion then is that these words have been made to carry much greater weight than is legitimate. But it must be allowed that, so far as this context goes (if it is read apart from the sequel in Gethsemane), we cannot cite Jesus as definitely discountenancing the recognized habit of carrying arms in self-defence. But, even so, is it necessary to suppose that, where a Livingstone was content to go armed only with the Gospel of love, the Master Himself and His company, in contradiction to the whole spirit and trend of His teaching, would rely upon "swords"?

¹ Mark x. 37.

² Matt. xx. 20.

³ *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, p. 270.

⁴ See *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, pp. 140 ff.

⁵ Cf. Matt. x. 34 ; Luke xii. 51.

⁶ Creed, op. cit. p. 270.

⁷ See Deut. iii. 26; and cf. the similar phrase in Mark xiv. 41.

“All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” ¹ This is quite commonly interpreted as meaning that the aggressor, no doubt, is to perish; but how, if not by the “sword” of the defender? It is argued that Jesus thus sanctions defensive warfare as an instrument necessary for the accomplishment of God’s just and holy purpose.

But the saying can be thus misused only when it is wrested from its context by the omission of the first clause, **“Put up again thy sword in its place!”** For it is precisely the *defensive* “sword” which is here coming under condemnation. The sword, even when used in defence, will recoil upon him who uses it. There are not two swords” in view, the unrighteous sword of the aggressor and the righteous sword of the defender. The “perishing by the sword” is inherent in the very use of the sword, not a penalty exacted by a third party. It is true that there is an echo of this saying in the warlike Book of Revelation, where it appears to be misunderstood in much the same way as it is by our militarists: “if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed.” ² But the words as spoken by Jesus are regularly interpreted by early Christian writers as an absolute prohibition of military service. Here, for example, is Tertullian: “Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword?” ³

When the strong man armed guardeth his own court, his goods are in peace” ⁴ from which it is argued that according to Jesus Himself the only true security is to be armed to the teeth. To refute such exegesis it is only necessary to read on: **“But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him his whole armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.”** If security lies in arms, then it is only when each man is stronger than all his neighbours! The whole stress is upon the futility of “the armour wherein he trusted”. In any case there is no reason to suppose that Jesus blesses war merely because He uses a simile drawn from arms. Is He to be thought to bless burglary when He compares the coming of the Son of Man with the breaking in of a thief? ⁵

If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.” ⁶ Jesus is explaining that a Kingdom such as His is not one which is defended by force of arms, for “it is not of this world”. Yet the inference has actually been wrung from the verse that conversely, when the issue is one of loyalty to a worldly kingdom, Jesus *would* have His servants fight.

¹ Matt. xxvi. 52.

² Rev. xiii. 10.

³ de Corona, xi.

⁴ Luke xi. 21 f.

⁵ Matt. xxiv. 42 ff.

⁶ John xviii. 36.

Even Luther argues from this passage that Jesus had no quarrel with war itself, provided it were waged by the Sovereign for just ends. Were Jesus a worldly Sovereign, He would do the same.

But the saying begins, **“My kingdom is not of this world.”** One might as well argue that, if Jesus' view of His mission and purpose were the opposite of what in point of fact it is, then His ethical teaching would be likely to suffer a similar metamorphosis - which is obvious, but not very helpful! The very essence of the New Testament challenge is surely that the Christian is to practise here in the world an ethic which is not of the world.

“But the king was wroth; and he sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.” ¹ Together with this verse we may consider other similar parabolic illustrations. ²

It is sometimes argued that various allusions in Jesus' parables, for example descriptions of kings and masters inflicting severe penalties on offending subjects, must be held to imply that Jesus would approve a similar application of armed violence and other forcible social sanctions to wrongdoers in real life. A correct appreciation of the whole trend and method of Jesus' teaching will decisively negative any such suggestion. In His parabolic illustrations Jesus can be held neither to approve nor condemn the actual practices from which they are drawn. He always uses these illustrations to underline some one fundamental moral or spiritual truth. For example, Luke xvii. 7- 10 has as its central thought the truth that the Christian is always on duty. It does not teach that the Christian himself may own and overwork slaves!

“Put on the whole armour of God,” ³ and numerous other Pauline military metaphors. ⁴ Surely, it is argued, Paul must approve of warfare, or else he would not so constantly use military metaphors to describe the Christian way of life.

Once again a study of the context is sufficient refutation. The emphasis is regularly upon the contrast between ordinary warfare and the Christian way of life: **“Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood.”** ⁵ The Christian will fight only with the weapons of the Spirit. It would be truer to argue that Paul deliberately uses the figure of military warfare in order to stress the point that the warfare of the Christian is something wholly

¹ Matt. xxii. 7.

² Cf. Matt. xviii. 34 f. ; xxiv. 50 f. ; xxii. 13 ; xxv. 30 ; Mark xii. 9; Luke xix. 27, etc.

³ Eph. vi. 10-17.

⁴ Cf. Rom. xiii. 12; 2 Cor. vi. 7 ; 1 Thess. v. 8; 1 Tim. i. 18 ; vi. 12 ; 2 Tim. ii. 3 f.

⁵ Eph. vi. 12.

different. The Christian must discover “the moral equivalent of war.” It is **“the good fight of faith”** which is in question.¹ No early Christian would have dreamed of appealing to such metaphors in Justification of war ; the very reverse is the truth. “I am a soldier of Christ,” cried a soldier-convert martyred for refusing military service, “and may not fight; the weapons of blood are discarded, that the weapons of peace may be girded on.”²

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,”³ War may sometimes be Justified, so it is said, if only because it calls forth the supreme expression of this Christ-like love.

This argument must be dealt with more fully in Chapter Six. But meantime, we may remind ourselves:

(1) Jesus did *not* say, “that a man kills his enemies for the sake of his friends”. Reverently though one acknowledges that multitudes have so laid down their lives in battle for the sake of their friends, so to do is not the aim and object of the soldier's training and profession. The soldier is trained to protect himself and to kill others, and the better soldier he is, the more successful will he be in doing both. The self-sacrifice is but an inevitable by-product of the soldier's main task, and we must not allow sentiment to blind us to that fact.

(2) An even higher expression of this Christ-like love is envisaged in the great words of Paul: “God commendeth His own love towards us, in that, while we were yet *sinner*s, Christ died for us.” Jesus died not only for His “friends”. “When we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.”⁴

(3) The essence of this Christ-like sacrifice is that it should be wholly voluntary: “Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life. . . . No man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself.”⁵ Though one humbly, yet proudly, agrees that thousands have died on the battlefield in such a spirit, what can there possibly be in common between such an ideal and a war-system which conscripts free human personalities to be the instrument of mass-slaughter and in the end to become themselves “cannon-fodder”? We gain nothing by mincing words.

(4) It is easy to come perilously near to blasphemy when we thus appeal to the Cross in the name of Mars. “The Cross”, says Erasmus, “is the banner and standard of Him who has overcome and triumphed, not by fighting and slaying, but by His own bitter death. With the Cross do ye deprive of life your brother, whose life was rescued by the Cross?”

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 12.

² Quoted by Heering, *The Fall of Christianity*, p. 53.

³ John xv. 13.

⁴ Rom. v. 8, 10.

⁵ John x. 17 f.

Two other much-quoted passages should perhaps fall to be dealt with here: Mark xii. 17, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's"; and Romans xiii. 1-7, where Paul writes as if he considered the "higher powers", that is to say the "civil authority" or the "civil magistrate", to be a Divine institution to which loyal obedience is due. It will be better, however, to reserve both passages for treatment in the Chapter on "Christ and Caesar".

CHAPTER THREE

THE WAY OF JESUS IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

WHERE are we to look for that which is specifically distinctive and original in Jesus' teaching and example concerning personal relationships, particularly with reference to the meeting and overcoming of evil? We might perhaps summarize thus: The essence of His teaching is distilled in His "Golden Rule", "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them."¹ It is crystallized in two commandments on which He declares the whole Law to hang, complete love of God, and unfailing love of neighbour.² His blessing is for the peacemakers.³ He holds it to be nearer His own spirit to suffer wrong than to inflict it, even when the suffering is undeserved.⁴ Instead of seeking revenge He calls on His disciples to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecute them.⁵ Not only His teaching but also His life bears witness that error must be overcome not by violence but by truth, hatred not by enmity but by love, evil not by its own weapons but by good. Finally His acceptance of the Cross was a summary in action of all that He had taught in word. And, most important of all, His ethic is founded throughout on His distinctive belief about God. The peacemakers are blessed because they are the children of God and share His nature.⁶ His disciples will love even their enemies, in order that they may be "sons of their Father who is in heaven".⁷ They will strive to be "perfect", because "their heavenly Father is perfect".⁸ We have here morals founded on theology, an ethic of the Brotherhood of Man founded on a theology of the Fatherhood of God.

Let us follow Jesus in His application of this ethic. It is no part of our aim to argue that this specifically Christian ethic was intended by Jesus either to annul the sanction of law, or to render obsolete a civil authority capable of a moral use of force. But it does suggest that Jesus had a profound mistrust of all forcible methods of righting wrong, and that He consistently urged upon His followers a new and better way. If relationships should become strained by some matter of personal dispute, then every possible

¹ Matt. Vii. 12.

² Matt. xxii. 35-40.

³ Matt. v. 9.

⁴ Matt. v. 10-12. Note the word "falsely".

⁵ Matt. v. 44.

⁶ Matt. v. 9.

⁷ Matt. v. 45.

⁸ Matt. v. 48.

effort must be made towards conciliation and agreement before appeal is made to the common law: "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art with him in the way." ¹ If an individual disciple should feel himself to be wronged by a "brother", that is by a fellow-believer, what is he to do? His first duty is that of forgiveness unconditional and without limit: "Peter said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." ² But, though for the wronged man forgiveness is a duty unconditional and unlimited, forgiveness can never be complete until it wins a response in the repentance of the wrongdoer, until the wrongdoer is won over and reconciliation is achieved. How is the wronged man to attain to this, in Jesus' eyes the only worth-while, "redress"? In another passage we have a hint: "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear thee, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican." ³ That is to say, the wronged man is not hastily to claim his right to the justice of the civil courts. Best of all, the initial act of forgiveness being assumed, he will by a personal approach remonstrate with his "brother", seek to clear away the misunderstanding, and thereby "win his brother" to his own viewpoint. Here we have the first hint of a truth to which we shall recur again and again: justice is truly vindicated, not when the wrongdoer is compelled to make reparation, but when the unjust will is "won" to justice. ⁴ If this best of all ways fails, the wronged man will seek a settlement by arbitration, preferably in private by one or two friends, if necessary through the mediation of the congregation of believers - but still without any recourse to the forcible sanctions of civil law. Only when all these efforts have failed is the wronged man to regard and treat the wrongdoer "as the Gentile and the publican".

Now what is the meaning of this last very puzzling injunction? For it is, difficult to believe that Jesus is using the words "Gentile" and "publican" in their commonly accepted opprobrious sense. I am again indebted to Principal Curtis for a very attractive suggestion: Only when all attempts at reconciliation have failed is the wronged Christian to "invoke the common law, which deals alike with Gentiles, tax-gatherers, and believers. Let the

¹ Matt. v. 25.

² Matt. xviii. 21 f.

³ Matt. xviii. 15-17.

⁴ This "redemptive" element in the way of Jesus will be fully discussed in Chapter Six.

law take its course in defeat of wrong only when religious instruments have failed. The Jew and the Christian should settle their differences without recourse to secular law; they have a higher standard of right. When Jesus says, 'if he refuses to listen to the congregation let him be unto thee as a Gentile or a tax-gatherer', it is impossible to construe His mind in terms of an attitude to those men which He did not countenance or share, the ordinary Pharisaic attitude of excommunication or ostracism. He can only mean, 'descend to the common level of secular justice'. This corresponds to the repeated appeal which He makes that a Jew or a Christian will surely rise above the level of the standards in force among the people they have been taught to regard as below them, the Gentiles, sinners, and publicans." ¹

If this is permissible exegesis, then the passage may be not unfairly used to prove that Jesus did recognize the place of law in an ordered society, and under certain circumstances would approve appeal to its sanctions. But it is only as a last resort, when all the appeals of religion have been exhausted, The passage is chiefly significant as emphasizing that the distinctively Christian way of reacting to a wrong against oneself is very different from the instinctive demand of the natural man that "the law" should protect "his rights".

So much for the disciple's treatment of a "brother" who has wronged him. But everything which is most truly distinctive in the ethic of Jesus comes out most clearly when He lays down the principles which are to govern the Christian's reaction to a wrong against himself done not by a "brother", whom he may be expected to love, but by an "enemy", whom he may be supposed to suspect and dislike. Even here the second of the two "great commandments" ² is to apply: even the "enemy" is a neighbour to be loved. As Joh. Weiss well says, "This is the highest demand that can ever be made. . . the love of enemy is not Just one virtue among many, but the fairest flower of all human conduct." ³ It is the "fruit" by which it shall be known whether or no Jesus' ethic is ruling a man's life . ⁴

We thus arrive at what is admittedly the key-passage for our study, the "non-resistance" and "love-your-enemy" sections in Matthew v. 38-48: "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil. . . . Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that you may be sons of your Father which is in heaven." Reserving meantime the

¹ Matt. v. 46 f.; vi. 32 ; Luke vi. 32 f., etc.

² Matt. xxii. 36 ff.

³ *Commentary*, on Matt. v. 43 ff.

⁴ M8tt. vii. 20.

question of the relevance of these sayings to wider social and national relationships, we shall probably be agreed that the primary reference is to the *personal* enemy, and that, however the words are to be interpreted, Jesus is here laying down, and consciously and deliberately doing so, a new principle, distinctively Christian and alternative to the commonly accepted one, which is to govern the meeting and overcoming of evil in our personal relationships. This can hardly be denied without evacuating what we have called the "antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount" ¹ of all their meaning. Evil is now to be overcome, not by all those forcible methods which are commonly slumped together under the definition of "resistance", and by which it is thought that an exact retributive Justice, a tit for tat, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth", will be exacted from the wrongdoer, but by the power of forbearing and, if necessary, suffering love. Paul perfectly paraphrases the Master when he writes: "Render to no man evil for evil. . . . Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." ² How this new and better way caught the imagination of the primitive Church appears from the constant echoes of Jesus' words in the Apostolic writings. ³

We note first that the two paragraphs, Matt. v. 38-42 ("resist not him that is evil"), and Matt. v. 43-8 ("love your enemies"), belong together as a single whole. The apparently negative injunction to non-resistance is immediately followed by the positive commandment of all-embracing love, No one who realizes this could caricature Jesus' words, as if He meant, "Acquiesce in evil. Be passively polite to wrongdoers. Tolerate vice. Allow the bully to rape his victim, and stand by with folded arms while he does so." The Pacifism of Jesus, if use the word we must, is never "passivism". And yet "resist not him that is evil", rightly understood, may be the indispensable prerequisite to "love your enemies". There are times when a resolute refusal, merely negative though it seems, is the only possible foundation for an act of positive obedience, when a "yes" to the commandment of love must be preceded by a "no" to certain means and methods which must inevitably render that obedience abortive. It is only, says Jesus, when the old way has been renounced, that the new way can be explored.

If we are willing to take these sayings at their face value, then the way of Jesus would appear so clear that the wayfaring Christian, even

¹ Above, p. 16.

² Rom. xii. 17-21. Some scholars think that the logic of Jesus' argument requires "retaliate not upon evil" rather than "resist not evil", and that the original Aramaic may have run: "You have heard that it was said, An eye in return for an eye, and a tooth in return for a tooth. But I say unto you, Do not render evil in return for evil." St. Paul's words would then be almost a literal echo of Jesus'.

³ See *Appendix*, p. 109 f., "Christ's Way of Meeting Evil."

though a fool, could hardly err therein. Yet this ethic-non-resistance, forbearance in the face of aggressive evil, love of enemies - is so sublime that we must all humbly confess with Heering that "only he who has believed in and experienced the redemptive love of God which Christ has revealed can truly understand and practise the Christian ethic; the two together make up the Christian life, one indivisible whole. Thus it is that the lofty and powerful claims of the Gospel ring out as self-evident truths. They are self-evident to the man who is laid hold of by God in Christ, even though - since his salvation is never finished on earth, but is always only 'in hope' - he can only live up to them in small measure, and follow Christ only from afar:"¹ Yet with reference to our present problem nothing is more important than that we should ask, "What *is* the teaching of Jesus?" before we confuse the issue by going on to ask, "Is it practicable for us today to follow that teaching?" It will therefore be useful to glance at some of the attempts which have been made to "water down" these "self-evident truths", and thereby to "keep on good terms with the Gospel",² while still countenancing methods which that Gospel has made obsolete. The fact that there is a certain measure of truth in some of these attempts will perhaps help us to correct and clarify our own interpretation.

(1) It is sometimes suggested that the "exaggerated" demands of Jesus are to be explained, if not explained away, on the ground of His "eschatological" outlook, that is His supposed belief in the immediate break-up of the present world-order. The injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount may be safely "short-circuited" once it is realized that they are inspired by the expectation of a speedy end to the world, that they contain only an ethic for the short time between Jesus' own day and that end, an "interim-ethic" as it is called, and that therefore they are not valid for those who do not share Jesus' historical perspective. But, quite apart from the fact that this argument, if valid, would foreclose our whole enquiry by denying that we can ever propound an ethic for today based on Jesus' teaching,³ modern scholars are inclined to agree that the supposed effect of "apocalyptic" upon Jesus' moral teaching has been grossly

¹ Heering, *op cit.* p. 26 f.

² The phrase is again Heering's, *op. cit.* p. 32.

³ "To argue that Jesus' more general principles. . . were so dependent upon the limitations of His historical outlook that they lose their validity for practical conduct as soon as those limitations are transcended, and must not be allowed to interfere with the supposed necessities of modern economics and political life, is virtually to deny that there can be any such thing as a modern Christian ethic founded on the teaching of Jesus." C. J. Cadoux, *The early Church and the World*, p. 13.

exaggerated.¹ It may even be argued that the vivid expectation of the end of the age, so characteristic of the years immediately after Jesus, is the effect rather than the cause of these "exaggerated" demands of the New Testament ethic: a world which contemptuously rejected them was bound, Christians felt, to meet its doom.² Moreover, it is surely significant that Jesus urges this distinctive ethic, not in view of the immediate end of the age, but, as we have seen, on the ground that it is consistent with His own conception of God's nature,³ surely a permanent element in His teaching if anything is. In any case the "interim-ethic" theory, even if valid, could at most suggest a doubt whether Jesus' teaching is valid under modern conditions. It does not touch our present question, What is that teaching? Indeed, so far as the question of war is concerned, the "eschatological" argument tells in a direction quite opposite to that intended by the critics of Pacifism; for it does much to explain some of the perplexing "silences" of Jesus and the early Church concerning social and political problems.⁴

(2) It is argued, secondly, that these crucial sayings, like so much of Jesus' teaching, were spoken *ad hoc*, with reference to particular individuals in particular circumstances, and are not to be exalted into general principles binding upon all Christians. Now this is undoubtedly true of some of Jesus' most drastic demands. The command, for example, to "go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor", is given specifically to the "Rich Young Ruler", for the special reason that in wealth Jesus saw for him the chief obstacle to discipleship.⁵ But a saying with its special setting in a "Pronouncement Story"⁶ is in a somewhat different category from those "timeless" sayings, without narrative framework, of which the Sermon on the Mount almost entirely consists, unless we go so far as to deny that Jesus ever laid down any general principles for universal application. It is noticeable that many of His most striking and compelling sayings have been

¹ 'The influence of eschatology on the ethics of the Gospel, especially on the Sermon on the Mount, is not so great as often even I myself have asserted it to be.' (Windisch, *Der Sinn der Bergpredigt*, p. 152.) So also C. G. Montenore: "It is an important fact, and one of which we must take adequate note, that there is a good deal of Jesus' religious and ethical teaching which was not directly related to, or dependent upon any eschatological conceptions, any belief in the nearing end of the world. . . a good deal in His finest religious and ethical teaching which can survive such conceptions and be easily detached from them." This Jewish scholar then adds: "What is remarkable about the sayings of the Gospels is that they are often applicable to wholly alien conditions, and true even without that belief in the end of the world which underlies so many of them. . . no surer mark of their genius and first-classness." (*Synoptic Gospels*, Vol. II, p. 114.)

² Cf. Col. iii. 6 etc.

³ Matt. v. 45, 48.

⁵ Mark x. 21.

⁴ "See below, p. 45, and above, p. 19.

⁶ See p. 19.

preserved in isolation without any narrative setting: they were felt to be so challenging, so universally binding, that no "story" was necessary to point the application.¹

(3) But, it is asked again, should not these sayings be considered as merely highly-coloured illustrations of a general principle, in this case the principle that "intensity" or "screwing up the standard"² is a necessity in all Christian practice? Now it must again be admitted that Jesus commonly made use of characteristic Semitic hyperbole; and this argument may possibly be valid in the case of an isolated and obvious verbal hyperbole (e.g. Luke xiv. 26, "If any man. . . hateth not his own father"), or when a proposition stated literally (e.g. Matt. v. 28, "Every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her. . .") is then pointedly illustrated by an obvious metaphor (e.g. "If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out"). But such an explanation is surely most unlikely in the case of teaching deliberately chosen to illustrate the "fulfilment" of the "law" by Jesus,³ and the showing forth of the Divine nature in human conduct,⁴ particularly (and this cannot be too strongly stressed) when that teaching is so entirely and literally in line with Jesus' own way of life. It may, of course, be freely admitted that "turning the other cheek" is a hyperbolic Semitic illustration of a general principle: but that principle itself is stated, as one universally valid, in the opening words of each paragraph, "Resist not him that is evil". . . "Love your enemies." Such considerations seem conclusive against all such attempts to suggest that Jesus' distinctive method of meeting evil, and the sayings which commend it, must be understood not literally but "spiritually", which really amounts to saying "*cum grano salis*". It is too often the case that "what is stoutly called the 'spirit' of the Sermon is rather its abrogation"; and with reference to our present problem such methods are only too apt to result in "war-exegesis".⁵

(4) It is suggested, finally, that we have here "counsels of perfection" intended to apply, not to the present world, but to the Kingdom of God which is still to come. They are valid only in a perfect society. Meantime we are living, not in the Kingdom of God, but in a national state, which is a mediating conception, a compromise if we will, maintained by the authority of law, between the anarchy of brute force and that regime of pure grace which is the ultimate Christian ideal. Meanwhile we must be content to follow the way of Jesus only to the extent that it is possible under the

¹ Cf. Matt. xi. 25-30; Mark viii. 34 ff. How the general saying about "taking the cross" is given a particular application in a "Pronouncement Story" is seen in Mark x. 2r.

² The phrase is Montefiore's; *Synoptic Gospels*, Vol. I, p. 25.

³ Matt. v. 17.

⁴ Matt. v. 45.

⁵ Baumgarten, quoted by Windisch, *Theol. Rundschau*, 1951, pp. 333, 345.

conditions of human existence which God Himself has created and still permits. Under these conditions the ethic of the Sermon, even if it literally represents the mind of Christ, is for the community as a whole so impracticable as to be utterly impossible of adoption as a practical way of life even by the Christian Church. In other words, the Church is Justified in postponing obedience to the way of Jesus until the coming of the Kingdom makes such obedience so easy that it becomes "practicable" for the whole community.

Now, apart from the fact that much of the Sermon would be irrelevant in a perfect society, where presumably there would be no wrongs to submit to and no enemies to love, ¹ this argument obscures one of the most characteristic features of all Jesus' teaching. Nowhere in the Gospels is it suggested that disciples are to postpone obedience until such obedience can be universalized. Rather are they definitely challenged to act in the spirit of Jesus in advance of the community. They are to go the "extra mile" ² along a road which the world may call illogical, impracticable, quixotic. Otherwise "what do ye more than others?" ³ Admittedly we do not live in that ideal world which would make easy the way of Christ. But, as someone has well said, "the Christian must learn to live not as a baffled idealist but as a rebel against the world as it is." The Gospel of the Kingdom is not only an ideal, but a method of attaining that ideal. For Jesus, too, the Kingdom was still in the future. But that did not prevent Him from preaching a "realized eschatology", ⁴ and bidding His disciples here and now order their lives by the laws of the coming Kingdom, promising them that if they did so the Kingdom would break in upon them and take them unawares. ⁵ As Heering caustically says, "There is no more effective way of disabling the Gospel than first to relegate the fulfilment of Christ's commands to the Kingdom of God, and then to read His saying, My Kingdom is not of this world, as if He had said, My Kingdom is not for this world" ⁶ That the primitive Church regarded Jesus' words as injunctions to be taken literally and practised here

¹ "It is impossible to love a person except by loving him now; a love which proposed to operate a few years hence, or 'hereafter in a better world than this', is plainly not love at all. . . Whence it follows that. . . this present world comes to have the most solemn significance as the scene where the obligations of the Kingdom of God in a personal order are laid upon us, and we must surrender ourselves utterly to God in their discharge." H. H. Farmer, *The World and God*, p. 216.

² Matt. v. 41.

³ Matt. v. 47.

⁴ See C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*, 1936, pp. 208 ff.

⁵ Matt. xii. 28 . Luke xi. 20.

⁶ Heering, op. cit. p. 34.

and now is perfectly clear from passage after passage. ¹ Did not Jesus in His own Person set such an example? ²

We turn therefore from Jesus' teaching to His example; for Jesus was what He taught, so that the best commentary upon His words is His life, Just as the best interpretation of His life is His words. How then do we find Jesus in His own Person meeting and overcoming evil? Though He consistently lived by a principle of "non-resistance", yet there was nothing negative about His life. He never belittled or condoned the stark reality of evil: but He never met it with its own methods and weapons. He overcame evil with good. Nowhere, with the very doubtful exception of the Cleansing of the Temple, ³ do we find Him using force to constrain men to desist from evil or to do good; nor, with the exception of one very ambiguous passage, ⁴ countenancing the use of force even in self-defence. On the contrary we see Him in His own Person proving again and again that active love can win moral victories where society, with its conventional methods of coercion and penalty, was helpless. We think of the Gerasene "demoniac", ⁵ the woman who was a sinner, ⁶ the woman taken in adultery, ⁷ Zacchaeus, ⁸ the dying thief. ⁹ Of this aspect of Jesus' teaching the famous French scholar Loisy writes, "A country where all the honest folk conformed to these maxims would be a paradise of thieves and scoundrels." He seems to have forgotten the actual effect on "thieves and scoundrels" when Jesus Himself so dealt with them. It is pertinent to ask whether Jesus could have so succeeded, if He had also backed righteousness by violent methods, if He had been ready to stone the adulteress and only afterwards to forgive her, to crucify the thief before He promised him Paradise. Would the world have hailed Him as Saviour if He had died leading the Jewish patriots against the Roman legions instead of forgiving His enemies upon a Roman Cross? For this positive redemptive method of overcoming evil, when carried to the uttermost, finds its supreme illustration in the Cross, where Jesus refused the method of force in dealing with the world's evil and prayed for His enemies instead, thereby setting forth in action the power of suffering and sacrificial love to vindicate the moral order and recreate a sinful world. ¹⁰

It is sometimes asked whether the verdict on Jesus' Pacifist teaching and example must not be qualified in the light of certain violently

¹ Cf. Rom. xii. 14 ff.; I Cor. iv. 12; vi. 7; 1 Thess. v. 15; 1 Pet. iii. 8 f.

² 1 Pet. ii. 21 ff.

⁶ Luke vii. 36 ff.

³ See p. 17 f. above.

⁷ John viii. 3 ff.

⁴ See p. 22 f. above.

⁸ Luke xix. 1 ff.

⁵ Mark v. 2 ff.

⁹ Luke xxiii. 39 ff.

¹⁰ The bearing of the Cross on our subject is fully discussed in Chapter Six.

denunciatory sayings against, for example, the Pharisees, ¹ Herod ² the man who "causes little ones to stumble". ³ Does not such denunciation show that Jesus was, to say the least, an inconsistent Pacifist? Does it not imply an attitude of anger and hatred which in appropriate circumstances might result in even acts of violence? We may take the denunciation of the Pharisees as a test case, and perhaps the following considerations will suffice:

(a) It is almost certain that these denunciatory sayings have been heightened by Jesus' reporters, particularly by Matthew, who is throughout his Gospel strongly anti-Pharisaic. A comparison of Matthew xxiii. with the parallel passages in Mark and Luke ⁴ shows that the Markan and Lukan versions are much briefer and much less "offensive". It seems clear that Matthew has sought to heighten the effect of the denunciation by adding other sayings of doubtful relevance. For example, the words in Matthew xxiii. 33, "ye serpents, ye offsprings of vipers", occur, according to Luke, ⁵ in an address of John the Baptist, and Matthew appears to have transferred them to Jesus. ⁶ Matthew, moreover, certainly records the denunciation in a vindictive spirit: "He detested the Pharisees, and gloried in the hard things Jesus had said about them." ⁷

(b) There is obviously an ethical distinction between the sternest rebuke and recourse to physical violence. Yet it may be fairly objected that consistent Pacifism implies the renunciation not only of violence but of the spirit of hatred which so often prompts it. Nevertheless, righteous anger is not inconsistent with a Pacifist ethic, when it is prompted not by malice but by a love which embraces within its redemptive purpose even the object of denunciation. It is clear that Jesus' anger here had two causes: the conviction, firstly, that Pharisaic hypocrisy (i.e. the contrast between profession and practice) was one of the most serious obstacles to the effectiveness of His own message, and, secondly, that it was leading the Pharisees themselves to destruction. The expression, "Woe unto you!" so far from being a "curse" is expressive, not so much of anger as of pity, and might well be translated, "Alas for you!" The aim of Jesus' denunciation was to turn His

¹ Matt. xxiii., especially verse 33, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgement of Hell?"

² Luke xiii. 32, "that fox".

³ Matt. xviii. 6 "It is profitable for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea."

⁴ Mark xii. 38-40 ; Luke xx. 45-7; xi. 37-52.

⁵ Luke iii. 7.

⁶ The metaphor is vividly apposite in Luke, where the crowds fleeing from "the wrath" are likened to snakes wriggling away from a fire in the heather. It is quite out of place when applied by Matthew to the Pharisees.

⁷ See an article by W. E. Wilson in *Reconciliation*, July, 1934, p. 183.

victims back from unreality to truth, and so to save not only their dupes but themselves.

(c) The denunciatory sayings must in their turn be qualified by Jesus' express rebuke of all censorious judgement.¹ True, the presence of these two strands in Jesus' teaching has sometimes been made the ground for charging Him with "inconsistency".² But the fact that our own anger is in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred tinged with censoriousness must not blind us to the possibility that He, who was Himself the "Truth" and the "Life", might be moved by an anger prompted by pure love of truth and a selfless passion to save those in peril of spiritual death.

What, then, is our conclusion concerning the way of Jesus in personal relationships? Though by no definite pronouncement does He either abrogate the function of Law in an ordered society, or explicitly refuse to countenance under any conditions a moral use of force, yet it is clear from both His teaching and His example that His distinctive method of meeting and overcoming evil rests upon presuppositions which are very different. Evil can be truly conquered only by the power of truth and goodness and self-sacrificing love. The moral order can be vindicated, not by forcible restraint and punishment of the evil-doer, but only when the will which has defied that order is redeemed from its evil purpose. In the light of Jesus' ethic of absolute love, of His theology of a Father God to whom every individual human soul is infinitely precious, and finally of this redemptive method of overcoming evil, it is obvious that His way will permit the use of force only within the strictest limits. Under such principles the very essence of ethical living is reverence for human personality and loving discrimination towards one's fellow-men. If under the ethic of Jesus force ever finds a proper place in personal relations, it can only be in a form which leaves ample room for this sensitive discrimination and this redemptive purpose of an all-embracing love. We are thus prepared to consider the wider application of this New Testament ethic, and its bearing upon the specific problems of war.

¹ Matt. vii. 1 ff.

² See, e.g. the charge made by the Jewish scholar C. G. Montefiore; *Synoptic Gospels*, Vol. II, p. 301.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WIDER APPLICATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ETHIC; JESUS AND WAR

Is there any evidence that this distinctive method of meeting evil, which is so clearly laid down for His disciples in their personal relationships, was intended by Jesus to cover also a wider field of social and even national relationships? This is quite commonly denied even by Christian expositors, and the argument usually takes one of two lines.

Sometimes it is argued that Jesus propounded this ethic as a rule of life to be practised within the community of His own disciples, but that He never contemplated that it should be unconditionally practised even by Christians in their contacts with the outside world. Or, to put it otherwise, the disciple *as a disciple* is bound by the "new way", but in the ordinary daily affairs of secular life, when he is acting not in the capacity of a disciple, but in the capacity of an ordinary "man in the street", there must be many occasions when he cannot be expected to practise this way. Or again, certain forcible methods are held to have been definitely renounced by Jesus so far as they might have been used *for the advancement of His Kingdom*, which is "not of this world": but such methods might still be legitimate in His eyes, and even necessary, if practised by the rulers of a worldly kingdom. To illustrate: when Jesus said, "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant" ¹ the standard set up is valid only *within the Christian brotherhood*, and has no relevance beyond it. Or when He repels the Devil on the Mount of Temptation, ² He is rejecting methods which He feels to be unworthy *for the furtherance of a spiritual Kingdom or for the sacred end He had in view*, but He is passing no judgement on such methods when used by earthly potentates. Or when He says, "The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you," ³ He is not in any way criticizing the kind of "authority" exemplified among the Gentiles, but is only insisting that *among His followers, in the Church*, brothers are not to exercise this kind of "authority," or "lord it" over their brethren. From this it is only a short step to argue that the words, "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that

¹ Matt. xx. 26.

² Matt. iv. 8 ff.

³ Matt. xx. 25 f.

take the sword shall perish with the sword,"¹ imply that it is fatal to use violent methods *to advance religious ends*, but have no relevance to the use of arms in ordinary life, much less to warfare between nation and nation. In a word Jesus' distinctive ethic is framed with a view to ruling man's *religious life*, not his everyday contacts with his fellows.

Now it cannot be too strongly insisted that this "sacred-secular" distinction would have been quite meaningless to Jesus; indeed it would have been so to any good Jew of Jesus' day. For if there was one thing characteristic of contemporary Judaism it was that religion was felt to be co-extensive with life. For the Jew his peculiar doctrine of revelation implied "the bringing of all life under the control of the revealed will of God. God had a word. . . for each aspect of life however trivial. There would logically be no distinction between the sacred and the secular. . . . It is an anomaly to speak of the social or the ethical implications of this religion, because Judaism held that social and ethical as well as 'religious' relations were explicit rather than implicit in revelation. In its main developments Judaism represents, accordingly, perhaps the most thoroughgoing attempt in all history to order the whole of life by religion."² Are we to think that Jesus confined "religion" within narrower limits than did the pious Jew of His own day? It is inconceivable that Jesus, as a Jew, should formulate an ethic for a "spiritual" kingdom within men's hearts, without contemplating that its imperative should be co-extensive with life itself.

But a much more common line of argument is that the Gospel of Jesus, or at any rate this particular ethic of "non-resistance" and "love of enemies", is absolutely individualist and has no reference to the wider relationships of the social community, least of all to the dealings of nation with nation. To many, perhaps most, interpreters of the Gospels it is almost a commonplace that Jesus had no concern whatever with the social problems and national politics of His day. His absorbing interest lay in the moral and spiritual life of individual men and women. So far as He sought to redeem society He did so exclusively by the indirect method of redeeming individual men. The idea of the "Kingdom" in Jesus' thought had no social or national reference whatever, but had to do with individual, inward, and spiritual realities only. Thus the State and all those problems which are our present study are held to be entirely outside the orbit of His thought, and similarly outside the scope of His ethic. This is the conclusion, for example, of Troeltsch: "From this point of view we can see plainly the attitude of

¹ Matt. xxvi. 52.

² Macgregor and Purdy, *Jew and Greek: Tutors unto Christ*, p. 73. Cf. Moore, *Judaism*, Vol.1, p. 112, etc.

Jesus towards the State. . . . There is no thought of the State at all. Jewish nationalism and all its expectations are ignored entirely, even though Israel appears as the germ of the new world that is to be." ¹ I am convinced that this is a disastrously mistaken conclusion, and that we shall never rightly evaluate the wider bearing of Jesus' ethic until we set it once again in its true historical perspective. If we are to do this, due weight must be given to the following considerations:

(1) By Jesus' contemporaries the "Kingdom of God" was undoubtedly contemplated as being the rule of God exercised over a concrete community, and was bound up with certain quite definitely national aspirations. We have no reason to suppose that John the Baptist departed in this respect from the current conception of the Kingdom, even though he warned his hearers not to presume upon their status as a chosen people. ² Indeed the reason why John's appeal evoked such immediate response was probably because it brought to a focus the generally recognized type of expectation, though certainly with an increased moral emphasis. Jesus undoubtedly during the course of His ministry introduced into His teaching about the Kingdom new elements which enlarged and ennobled the whole conception. ³ But the Gospels make it quite clear that at the beginning of His mission He carried forward virtually unchanged the main stresses of John's message. ⁴ And though Jesus, too, insisted that Jewish nationality alone was no guarantee of the possession of the Kingdom, He still declared that it should be "given to a *nation* bringing forth the fruits thereof". ⁵ Thus Jesus seems to have accepted and worked upon the universal assumption that the Kingdom would find its outward expression in a theocratic national community. Indeed, had He not done so, He must have been largely unintelligible. Had He taken over the idea of the Kingdom and read into it a completely other meaning, without having given clear indication that He was so doing, He could only have misled His hearers. Instead we find no evidence, at any rate in the earliest records, that He sought to disabuse His followers of the "delusion" that the Kingdom was to find its seat in a concrete community. However "spiritual" His conception of the Kingdom might be, His followers were still to pray: "May thy Kingdom come, may thy will be done, as in heaven, so *on earth*." ⁶ Clearly then it is perilous to underline

¹ *Social Teaching*, etc. ; quoted by C. J. Cadoux in an article on "The Politics of Jesus" in *The Congregational Quarterly*, January, 1936, p. 58. This is an admirable study to which I am much indebted.

² Matt. iii. 9.

³ For this see C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, especially Chapter 2.

⁴ Compare Matt. iii. 1 f. with Matt. iv. 17.

⁵ Matt. xxi. 43.

⁶ Matt. vi. 10.

the purely spiritual and inward element in Jesus' teaching to the complete elimination of the social and political elements, or to argue, as for example does Dr. James Mackinnon, that "Jesus was too spiritually minded to concern Himself with the crass politics of the time. His absorbing interest lay in the moral and spiritual life."¹ Certainly it did: but it was in the spiritual life of the citizens of a community renewed and transformed because obedient to the new ethic of the Kingdom.

(2) In line with this is the undoubted fact that Jesus addressed His teaching in the first instance to His own Jewish compatriots. He definitely confined His ministry and that of His immediate circle to Palestine.² His Twelve Companions are to "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel".³ Almost regretfully, but still firmly, He insists that He "was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel".⁴ We note, too, that Jesus had the habit of contrasting His followers, not with irreligious men in general, but simply with "the Gentiles": "If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Gentiles the same?"⁵ "In praying do not go babbling on, as the Gentiles do,"⁶ "Be not therefore anxious saying, What shall we eat. . .? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek."⁷ "They which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them. . . . But it is not so among you."⁸ As Dr. Cadoux well says, "The only natural antithesis to the Gentiles as such is Israel as such: and I can therefore make no sense of these passages except on the assumption that Jesus addressed His appeal to the Jews *qua* Jews, in distinction (for the time being) from the Gentile world."⁹ No doubt the whole spirit of Jesus' teaching was such that Paul and the Church were certainly reflecting His mind, when they stressed the universal significance of the Gospel, and its removal of all barriers between Jew and Gentile. Yet it is clear that Jesus had a plan for His own people which was integrally bound up with His idea of the Kingdom, that He must have been profoundly concerned in the social and national problems which were crucial for His people at the time, and that His ethical teaching must have been framed with those problems in view, and with a definite bearing upon them.

¹ *The Historic Jesus*, p. 49.

² Matt. x. 5 f.

³ Matt. xix. 28.

⁴ Matt. xv. 24.

⁵ Matt. v. 47 ; the word "sinners" in Luke vi. 32 ff, is clearly less original, and is in line with Luke's pro-Gentile bias.

⁶ Matt. vi.7.

⁷ Matt. vi. 32.

⁸ Mark. x. 42 f.

⁹ *The Congregational Quarterly*, January, 1936, p. 60.

(3) If one fact about Jesus is agreed upon by moderate scholars, it is that He thought of Himself as Messiah. Those who doubt this do so only because Messiah-ship for Him clearly meant so much more than it did to the average Jew, that the title might seem more likely to be bestowed upon Him by His disciples than appropriated by Himself. But this is virtually to reject the entire historical frame- work of the Gospels, and thereby foreclose our whole discussion. Now, to whatever extent Jesus may have modified, and did modify, the conception of Messiah-ship, of one feature He could not deprive it, without evacuating it of its whole significance and making its claim meaningless to His hearers: and that feature was the national character of the rôle. No man in Jesus' day could claim the title of Messiah without at once being brought face to face, by the pressure of public opinion and the eager enquiries of tentative followers, with a national and political problem of the first magnitude. And this must have been so even in the case of Jesus, however true it may be that "His absorbing interest lay in the moral and spiritual life". This problem was the attitude to be taken up by the pious Jew to the alien and hated rulers of his country. And while the whole nation, with the possible exception of the Sadducees and the Herodians, was keenly exercised by this problem-Zealots, Pharisees, the "quiet of the land" alike - it is really incredible that Jesus, as claimant to the Messiah-ship, could have ignored the problem so entirely as many scholars believe, or could have failed to suggest a solution of it, and indicate the bearing upon it of His general ethical principles. "It is no exaggeration to say that the mind of Israel was in Jesus' day obsessed with the political issue: and the only inference we can draw from the fact that Jesus had a plan for the Jews to fulfil on earth, is that *He had something to say to them about the political issue* that obsessed them. His acknowledgement to Pilate that He held a royal office surely puts this beyond question." ¹

(4) It is just at this point that we find justification for extending the scope of Jesus' distinctive ethic to cover the actual question of war, and indeed for believing that Jesus Himself must have consciously so applied it. "The most important characteristic of His Messiah-ship, speaking negatively, is to be found in His refusal to wage the Messianic war." ² And this, although leadership in such a war was precisely what His followers would expect of Messiah. Such an overthrow of the Gentile empire by the might of God's Anointed had been foretold both by the Old Testament prophets and by the Jewish Apocalyptic writings; and however opinions differed as between Zealots, Pharisees and the "quiet of the land" as to the best way to hasten such a victory, it was universally associated with the appearance of

¹ Cadoux, in loc. cit. p. 61.

² Windisch, *Der Mess. Krieg*, p. 95.

Messiah. And in Jesus' day, to quote Cadoux once more, this expectation "was still further supported by the normal human view of tyrant empires and unwilling subjects: no one could deny that there was a good *casus belli*. Whatever, therefore, was the solution Jesus offered, it must have been fashioned in some direct relation, either positive or negative, to the prevailing expectation regarding the conquering Messiah's rôle." Yet Jesus utterly refused to contemplate such a war: His solution was that Israel should "turn away from desiring vengeance against Rome and destruction for the Gentiles, should meekly submit for the time being to servitude and injustice, and, trusting wholly to deeds of love and words of truth, should undercut pagan hostility, outmanoeuvre political Lordship, convert enemies to friends, and stand forth in the name and power of God as the heralds and propagators of the one true religion." ¹

Why, we may ask, did Jesus thus renounce the expected Messianic war? Not merely, we may be sure, because He was convinced that such an appeal was doomed to failure. He was obviously willing to die for His cause. Why not in arms, if He knew His cause to be Just and believed that the war-method might be right? Not even, as has often been argued, because such action might seem to be a pre- sumptuous anticipation of the expected supernatural breaking-in of the Power of God, who was Himself to "give the Kingdom". ² The good Jew never fought the less valiantly himself because he believed that Yahweh alone could give the victory. ³ No! so far as we can see, the refusal of Jesus to wage war as Messiah was due first and foremost to the fact that, in spite of all the precedents provided by the Old Testament, He regarded the war-method as inherently evil, a violation of His own supreme commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself, and a *reductio ad absurdum* of His basic principle that the motive of all Christian discipleship is to be "a son of your Father which is in heaven", ⁴ and so to reflect in some poor measure the nature of the God who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good" alike.

¹ Cadoux, in loc. cit. pp. 61, 62.

² Luke xii. 32.

³ It may, however, be noted that the apocalyptic expectations both of Jesus and of the early Church have a real bearing on the comparative silence of the Gospels concerning the applicability of Jesus' ethic to social and political questions, a silence which our opponents have not been slow to turn to account. "The eschatological outlook. . . resulted in Christianity not demanding the realization of its principles in society and State for fear of destruction or failure. Had the first missionaries been told that the world was to go on existing for long, long ages yet, and that Christ would not return though centuries pass, they would not have been able, with good conscience, to let the world go on taking the course it did take." (Harnack, *Militia Christi*, p. 50).

⁴ Matt. v. 45.

(5) Thus to place the great sayings of Jesus against this wider background of the life of His nation is not to rob them of their higher spiritual qualities: it is only to insist that one cannot rightly interpret them till they are first set in their true historical perspective; and it is to discover additional point and colour in passage after passage. Even when the main bearing of a saying is upon the ordering of life within the Fellowship, there is an inevitable side-glance at the current national situation, and this very fact suggests that the sayings themselves are of wider application than is often admitted. For example:

(a) Though the chief importance of Jesus' Temptation is that it shows Him to us reaching the full realization of His "Son-ship", and the conviction that for Him Messiah-ship must mean something very different from the popularly expected rôle, yet it is surely significant that Jesus defines to Himself the meaning of His mission by reference to the kind of dominion which He felt compelled to renounce: "The devil showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." ¹ If there be any force in the argument of this chapter, then Jesus *did* feel Himself called by God to exercise authority over the life of the nations *as such*, and not only to wield a purely spiritual rule in men's hearts; for wide-world rule over the nations was the Messiah's recognized destiny. ² To refuse to "worship Satan" must then mean, not to renounce a national kingdom *simpliciter*, but to renounce "satanic" methods of winning that kingdom. What Jesus turned from, as morally wrong and disloyal to His vocation, was the one and only recognized way to empire in His own day, the way of the sword.

(b) Similarly, when Jesus sets up a new standard of greatness among His disciples with the words, "The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. . . . Not so shall it be among you," ³ it is impossible to admit that He is not at the same time passing judgement on the kind of dominion exemplified by the pagan empire, a dominion won by warfare, exercised over unwilling subjects, and maintained by the power of armed force.

(c) The same background appears to lie behind the crucial sayings of the Sermon on the Mount. It has become a commonplace to assert that all the sayings in the section beginning, "Resist not him that is evil," ⁴ are meant to govern the disciple in his private capacity, and leave untouched his duty as a member of society and of the nation. But this is hardly consistent with the facts that all three illustrations relate to *social* sanctions - the Lex Talionis which Jesus

¹ Matt. iv. 8 ff.

² Isa. ilx. 3, etc.

³ Mark x. 42-5.

⁴ Matt. v. 38 ff.

claims to transcend; ¹ the right to Justice in the public courts; ² the liability to compulsory state labour. The last reference in particular - "whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile" ³ - vividly suggests the domineering bearing of the Roman or Herodian official. Indeed the background of the whole "non-resistance" section stares one in the face. Jesus' fellow-countrymen are to pursue the policy of reconciliation and peace with the foreign ruler, even at the risk of temporary submission to injustice.

(d) The same is true of the next paragraph containing the "love-your-enemy" sayings. ⁴ Once again it is commonly argued that the word "enemy" must be limited to the private enemy, or at any rate to the fellow-Jew-enemy. ⁵ The word used, it is pointed out, is not *polemios*, the foe in time of war, but *echthros*, one who stands in a relationship of personal hatred. This linguistic argument has little force, for *polemios* is nowhere used in the New Testament, whereas *echthros* is used both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament for the public as well as the personal enemy. ⁶ When we remember how Jesus extends the scope of the parallel word "neighbour", ⁷ it seems likely that He similarly enlarges the idea of an "enemy". If it be argued that the word "neighbour" in Leviticus xix. 18 (of which Matthew v. 43 is apparently an echo) is a technical term for a compatriot or fellow-Israelite, then it follows *a fortiori* that the command to love not only "neighbours" but "enemies" is a command not only to love compatriots even when enemies, but to love even the foreign enemy himself. The same inference may be drawn from the implied antithesis in verse 47, for "brethren" regularly means "fellow-Israelites", and suggests as its converse the "stranger" or "foreigner". Moreover all these sayings must be interpreted with reference to the environment in which they were presumably spoken; that is in Galilee, the hot-bed of revolutionary nationalism, where armed resistance to the hated dominion of the foreigner was the burning question of the hour. Are we to believe that Jesus, claiming Himself to be Messiah, had nothing to say concerning the bearing of these crucial sayings upon this inter-racial enmity? Thus Professor Windisch again, though himself no Pacifist, can write: "When Jesus bade His followers love their enemies, do good to them, pray for them, endure their attacks and provocations with meekness. . . He stifled every thought of rebellion and national

¹ Matt. v. 38-9.

² Matt. v. 40, which Paul accepted as something more than a hyperbolic Semitic metaphor, as seems clear from 1 Cor. vi. 7.

³ Matt. v. 41; literally "impress"; cf. Mark xv. 21. of Simon bearing the Cross.

⁴ Matt. v. 43-8.

⁵ see, e.g. Montefiore, *Synoptic Gospels*, Vol. II, p. 85.

⁶ See Windisch, *Theol. Rundschau*, 1915, p. 345,

⁷ Luke x. 29 ff.

war" ¹; and, even in the heat of war-time, he feels compelled to admit that "it must not be overlooked that Pacifism, in applying the principles of the Gospel to the national enemy, seems better to agree with the spirit of Jesus".²

(e) Finally, many of the premonitions of national disaster, which the Gospels so often put upon Jesus' lips, take on a new and a much more vivid colour, once we realize that Jesus is contemplating, not only the penalty of rejecting His spiritual Gospel, but also the dire consequences which are bound to fall upon His people, if they prefer militant nationalism to His own Pacifist policy of patience, peace, and reconciliation. We may instance the lamentation over Jerusalem ³; the woes pronounced over the unrepentant Galilean towns ⁴; the warning concerning the reading of the signs of the weather ⁵; the advice to seize the first chance of reconciliation with one's adversary ⁶; the urgent call to repentance, driven home by the reference to Pilate's brutal massacre ⁷; the parable of the unfruitful fig-tree, ⁸ and of the wicked husbandmen ⁹; the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem ¹⁰; and finally Jesus' ominous reply to the women who wept after Him on His way to the Cross, ending with the words, "If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" ¹¹ Jesus unquestionably foresaw untold disaster for His people as a result of their rejection as a nation of His own Pacifist ethic: and, doing so, can He possibly have omitted to apply that ethic explicitly to the national situation in His own day?

(6) The place of the Cross in Jesus' redemptive purpose, and in the Christian doctrine of reconciliation and the conquest of evil, must be more fully discussed in Chapter Six. But the Cross has first to be considered as an event in history. And, historically speaking, the Cross was the direct consequence of Jesus' Pacifist ethic alike in teaching and in practice: in teaching, because His Pacifism towards the Gentiles in general and Rome in particular would undoubtedly arouse the patriotic animus of the multitude, and so explain the sudden waning of His popularity and His ultimate betrayal to the authorities; in practice, because the same principles which forbade rebellion against Rome also forbade violent resistance to His enemies on Jesus' own part. It was this that brought Jesus to the

¹ *Der Mess. Krieg*, p. 31.

² *Theol. Rundschau*, 1915, p. 346.

³ Luke xix. 41-4.

⁴ Matt. xi. 20 ff. ; Luke x. 13 ff.

⁵ Luke xii. 54 ff.

¹¹ Luke xxiii. 27 ff. ; "I understand the obscure closing sentence to mean: If the Romans practise such cruelties as this crucifixion of me when peace is flourishing, what atrocities will they commit when it has withered away amid the storms of war?" (Cadoux, in loc. cit. p. 64.)

⁶ Luke xii. 58.

⁷ Luke xiii. 1 ff.

⁸ Luke xiii. 6 ff.

⁹ Mark xii. 1 ff.

¹⁰ Mark xiii. 1 ff. and the parallels.

Cross, while His own people yelled, "Not this man, but Barabbas; preferring the champion of armed revolution to the Lord of love."¹ The plain fact is that, because Jesus was *not* a Barabbas, He went to the Cross. It is probable indeed (to Judge by such passages as Mark viii. 31, Mark ix. 31 etc.) that for some time before the crisis Jesus had already seen what His fate was bound to be, so that the Cross may well have presented itself to Him as the direct alternative to the waging of the Messianic war. By dying, and not by the warlike methods of popular expectation, would He proclaim to His nation His conception of Messiah-ship.²

This, no doubt, is a line of argument from which some will vigorously dissent. Christ died on the Cross, we are told, not as a result of His Pacifist ethic, but simply as the world's predestined Redeemer; He died "in obedience to the requirements of God". This may be perfectly true; but we may not for that reason, by way of a facile theological truism, take a short cut past the factors which determined the Cross as an event in history. Jesus knew it to be His vocation to lead men to God, and to demonstrate His power to overcome evil, by the preaching and practice of an ethic of absolute love. He had set this before Himself as a definite alternative to the waging of the universally expected Messianic war. And by His death, not on the battlefield but on a Roman Cross. He sealed and consummated that alternative.

If our reasoning has been valid, then we must recognize that the principles which we have been studying, integral and fundamental as they are to Jesus' ethics, were consciously intended by Himself to have an application far wider than has often been admitted. Politics, the State, international relations all come within the orbit. In particular it may be suggested that an Historical Religion, at the centre of whose doctrine of reconciliation stands the Cross, can have no excuse for excluding from its ethics, national no less than individual, that distinctive method of confronting evil which brought about the occurrence of the Cross as an event in history. The Pacifism which led Jesus to the Cross is so integral a part of His whole attitude

¹ The Greek word for "robber", which is used of Barabbas in John xviii. 40, is the word used most frequently by Josephus to describe the armed Zealot "revolutionaries".

² "He would have ruined His mission if He had encouraged the war-fever. The quickening of conscience which He invoked would have been lost. But He took upon Himself the consequences of the decision which, in opposition to the national ideal, He had arrived at. He endured, He suffered, He went to His death. And in spite of the Jews He became the Messiah triumphant. Without strife of arms, though He, too, was a fighter, the Galilean had conquered," (Windisch, *Der Mess, Krieg*, p. 80.)

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towards the life of individuals and of the nation alike, that it must also be recognized to be an integral part of any ethic which can in the full sense of the word claim to be Christian. ¹

¹ Dr. Cadoux concludes the article to which reference has been made thus: "The politics of Jesus were no mere incident or accident of His, ministry; they were interwoven with the most central things in His Gospel. It was His politics, more than anything else, that brought about His death; and it was by and through the temporary defeat of death that His ultimate and eternal victory was won. That is why Christians believe His death to be the most central and important fact in history. But if they are right in so emphasizing the significance of His death, then surely the ethical principles, from which both the politics and the death resulted, ought to be emphasized as of central importance also." See also Dr. Cadoux's book *The Historic Mission of Jesus*, Chapter VI,

CHAPTER FIVE

THE "WRATH" OF GOD

At this point we pass from questions mainly of interpretation to those which are more strictly theological. And here we meet the challenge, which it has become fashionable for highly-placed ecclesiastics to Ring at us, that Pacifism is a modern heresy". On the face of it the charge is surprising, for "heresy" strictly speaking means false doctrine which has been formally condemned by the Church, whereas the facts are that the earliest Church was almost universally Pacifist, and Christians have always assumed that it is not the pacifist, but rather the militarist, position which, from the Christian standpoint, requires to be defended as "under certain circumstances" justifiable. Yet the late Archbishop William Temple has argued ¹ that Pacifism is a recrudescence of three ancient Church heresies: "Manichaeism", because the Pacifist "makes a sharp contrast between spiritual and material forces, and holds that the material cannot be completely subordinated to the spiritual"; "Marcionism", because he holds "a view of the New Testament as so superseding the Old Testament as to abolish it"; and "Pelagianism", because he believes in "man's capacity apart from conversion and sanctification to obey the Counsels of Perfection. . . a view which regards man as capable by the action of his own will of living by love only." The first of these three "heresies" need not detain us, for if it is relevant at all it is so only to pure Tolstoy-ism (i.e. the complete renunciation of every kind of force), a creed which we believe to be an over-simplification of our own particular problem ²; and in any case it is surely not "heresy" to "deny that the use of matter for the indiscriminate murder of human beings is or can ever be a manifestation of the Spirit" ³. The other two charges, however, bring us to the heart of our problem and must be frankly faced ; but perhaps we may first reformulate this charge of "heresy" in plain English under three counts:

Firstly, Pacifism misrepresents the character of God, and the revelation of Him in Jesus Christ, by slurring over the sterner side of the divine nature.

¹ *York Diocesan Leaflet*, 1935.

² For this see C. E. Raven, *Is War Obsolete?*, pp. 150 ff.

³ C. E. Raven, in *Reconciliation*, December, 1935 p. 321.

Secondly, the Pacifist ethic unwarrantably exalts love at the expense of righteousness and justice;

Thirdly, Pacifism misinterprets the true significance of the Cross.

We shall deal with the first of these three charges in the present chapter and with the other two in Chapter Six.

Firstly, then, it is argued that Pacifism gives a one-sided picture of the Divine nature. Are there not, we are asked, certain aspects of God's character which may not be wholly revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ, and certain factors in God's way of dealing with evil which are not wholly evident in Jesus' way of meeting it as evidenced in the New Testament? And may we not therefore be justified, in certain circumstances, in departing from the love-ethic, for which a warrant has been found in the New Testament - such departure even on occasion taking the form of participation in war? In a word, are we not entitled to stress God's "wrath" as well as His love, to offer ourselves as the instruments of His punitive as well as of His reconciling activity? It is clear that there are really two questions here: (1) What is the truth about this "sterner" side of the divine nature? What does the New Testament mean when it speaks of the "wrath" of God? (2) In any case is it competent for the Christian to seek to imitate God on this side of His activity?

(1) First, then, what has the New Testament to tell us about the sterner side of God's nature? It is perfectly true that there are sayings of Jesus which suggest His belief in a God of stern justice as well as of infinite love. Does He not teach that there is a place for terrible severity as well as for long-suffering forbearance in the Divine providence? "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels" ¹; "I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" ²; "Whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea" ³; "Rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." ⁴ We think, too, of expressions like "our God is a consuming fire". ⁵ And through Paul's letters, especially that to the Romans, there run like a recurrent refrain references to the Divine "wrath": "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" ⁶; "Thou treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous Judgement of God; who will render to every man according to his works" ⁷;

¹ Matt. xxv. 41.

² Luke xiii. 27 f.

³ Matt. xviii. 6.

⁴ Matt. x. 28.

⁵ Heb. xii. 29, taken over, of course, from Deut. iv. 21.

⁶ Rom. i. 18.

⁷ Rom. ii. 5 f.

"For which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience" ¹; "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." ² As we shall see, the crux of the problem is the correct understanding of the meaning of this word "wrath".

Over and above the Scriptural evidence we are quite fairly bidden by our critics to take account of the witness both of nature and of history to the stern retributory Justice of God. Both these aspects of the problem must be more fully dealt with below. But first it will be well to lay down certain general principles; and to begin with, as to our method of approach. Instead of asking, "How are these sterner elements in the Divine nature and Divine activity to be explained consistently with the revelation given in Jesus Christ?" we shall do better to ask, "What are we to conceive to be the nature of God's purpose in creation, and of His problem in dealing with evil in general and human sin in particular?"

Now from any theistic, not to say Christian, standpoint, must we not define this purpose and this problem as the creation of a moral universe of free persons, and the bringing of these persons into a right relationship both to their fellow-men and to God Himself? Moreover, if men are to be so trained and disciplined, and yet at the same time are to remain free, it would appear that both in the environment or "field of operations" in which this education and development are to take place, and also in the working out of these mutual relationships, there must be elements and factors "independent", so to speak, of the immediate and moment-by-moment control of the will of God. That is to say, there may be, for example, catastrophes in the world of nature, and events in the field of history, which, while they happen within God's world and therefore must be said to be "permitted" by Him, yet cannot be ascribed to Him as the direct result of His immediate volitional purpose and activity. The necessity of this for the safeguarding of human freedom and human personality would appear to be less obvious in the world of nature than in the sphere of human relationships; yet it must be insisted that it holds good in both alike. This truth has nowhere been put better than by Professor H. H. Farmer: "From the human side, we may say that it is essential to man's status as a personal being and to his sense of the significance of his moral life, that he should be called upon to make choices and decisions which make a difference and are not merely play acting. . . that he should be able to refuse to do God's will. . . in such wise that his refusal involves that *pro tanto* God's will is not done. . . . It would seem to be necessary, therefore, that there should be a *world which in some way stands over against both the will of God and the will of the*

¹ Col. iii. 6; cf. Eph. v. 6.

² 1 Thess. ii. 16.

individual, having significance for both as that in and through which cooperation can be attained, and genuine son-ship on the part of the latter achieved. Or stating it from the divine side, we might say that. . . God was under necessity to set man in a world which in a sense was as yet uncreated, a world in which the full working out of His will would depend upon the responses and decisions of man. It is confirmation of this that those religious philosophies which have failed to insist on *the world of nature and history as having significance for, and a relative independence of, the will of God*, nearly always end in a thoroughly depersonalized conception of man's relationship to God. *Minimize the independence of the world, and nothing can save the independence of man.*" ¹

We may put this in other words by saying that in any moral universe consisting of free persons there must be room left for an impersonal law of cause and effect working itself out in a manner relatively independent of the personal and immediate "fiat" of the Divine will. And God must be held to "permit" this for the sake of the safeguarding of human freedom and the development of human personality. This principle ordains that consequences shall always follow acts, and in particular that tragic consequences shall follow certain gross infringements of the laws of God's moral universe. And this surely means that, over against the apparent "sternness" of a God who seems to castigate man with punitive retribution, must be set the fact that there are certain happenings for which God may be said to be responsible, not because He directly wills them, but only because they take place in a universe for which He is ultimately responsible, and which He permits to work itself out according to certain definite laws of cause and effect. This would seem to be the only valid solution of our problem on the basis of a theistic rather than a mechanistic conception of the universe.

Furthermore, this principle of cause and effect, functioning in a sense "independently" of God's immediate will, must hold good even in the spiritual realm, and in the most intimate relations of man with man and man with God. ² "The wages of sin is death", ³ even though God "desireth not

¹ H. H. Farmer, *The World and God*, p. 69; italics mine. The present discussion is, of course, grossly inadequate to the magnitude of the problem, but may serve to indicate the lines along which a solution may be sought. Much the best modern treatment of the problem of Providence is to be found in this book by, Professor Farmer.

² "The man who sins must get the soul of a sinner. If a man could sin and keep the soul of a saint and the bliss of a saint, that would mean the end of all moral distinctions altogether. It is quite impossible to see how a God of love or any other sort of God can run life on any other terms than this of the strictest consequence. By the reliability of consequence we live, and by the discipline of it we learn our errors and find the truth which makes free." H. H. Farmer, in *Reconciliation*, November, 1928, p. 209 f.

³ Rom. vi. 23.

the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live." This spiritual law of cause and effect may be amplified by saying that, not only does sin bring forth punishment, but almost invariably sin also brings forth more sin. The moral universe in which we live is so constituted that when man asserts his independence of God, his right, if he so wills, to live for self alone, then he finds that his way of living tends to call forth a similar way of living in other men. ¹ We thus arrive at the paradox, most important for our particular problem, that even that which appears to be Divine punishment for sin-and indeed is, inasmuch as God permits sin to reveal its true nature by reproducing its natural results in men's lives-may often itself have to be called sin. Thus even the punishment of sin, in so far as it may itself be sin, may and often does itself fall under God's condemnation.

Does not this line of thought compel us to modify our pre-conception of a stern and angry God meting out merciless punishment to His sinful subjects? For the Divine punishment, we have seen, is not to be thought of as something external to the sinning, but is to be found in the tragic fact that the regular consequence of sin is to create its own punitive consequences, which are often themselves sinful. What, then, do we mean when we speak about "punishment" inflicted by an "angry" God? Simply that God's "anger" against sin is revealed by the fact that He has set us down in the kind of world where His love does not mechanically save us from the consequences of our sin. As Principal James Denney has put it, "The divine punishment is the divine reaction against sin expressing itself through the whole constitution or system of things under which the sinner lives." ² Thus there seems to be no need to speak about God's "anger" and "punishment" as if they implied direct and personal retaliation by God upon the sinner. A Divine will against sin there certainly is, revealed in the creation of a moral order which inexorably attaches consequences to it. But we must not think of the Divine "anger" as if God, so to speak, personally reacted against the sinner with explosive ire and "took it out of him" in punishment. ³

This argument may have seemed somewhat abstract and remote from the New Testament, and yet it has a completely adequate New

¹ This thought would seem to underlie the saying, "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword"; Matt. xxvi. 52.

² *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 203.

³ "What happens to the sinner is simply due to the fact that a moral universe, created by a moral will, is true to itself and affirms itself steadily to the personality which it is seeking to educate into harmony with itself." (H. H. Farmer, in *Reconciliation*, November, 1928, p. 210.)

Testament basis in the Pauline doctrine of "wrath", which we must now examine in some detail. ¹ In the opening chapter of Romans Paul writes: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." ² Does this mean that God is "angry" with men in an immediate and personal sense, and therefore brings down upon them vengeance and retribution by a specific and deliberate act of the Divine will? It has been pointed out that, strangely enough, Paul never uses the verb "to be angry" with God as its subject, though when speaking of "love" he uses not only the noun but the verb. ³ It is curious moreover that, although the word "wrath" occurs in Paul's writings no less than twenty-one times, the expression "wrath of God" occurs only three times. ⁴ Much more often Paul uses the word in a curiously impersonal manner; frequently he speaks absolutely about "the Wrath", almost as, if it were a proper noun ⁵; and in one passage in particular ⁶ - which means literally, "Is God unjust who *brings upon us* the Wrath?" - he uses with it a verb (ἐπιφέρειν) which, as Dodd says, suggests that "to Paul 'the Wrath' meant, not a certain feeling or attitude of God towards us, but some process or effect in the realm of objective facts." ⁷ From all this it seems clear that Paul does not think of God as being actively angry in quite the same immediate and personal sense as he thinks of Him as actively loving. Dodd points out that Paul is here in line with the Psalmists and Prophets: "It would be fair to say that in speaking of wrath and judgement the Prophets and Psalmists have their minds mainly on events, actual or expected, conceived as the inevitable results of sin; and when they speak of mercy, they are thinking mainly of the personal relation between God and His people. Wrath is the effect of human sin: mercy is not the effect of human goodness, but is inherent in the character of God." Similarly Paul, so far as he retains the idea of "wrath", does so, "not to describe the attitude of God to man, but to describe an inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe", ⁸ that is to say, the principle of retribution, relatively independent of God's immediate volition, which is inherent in such a universe - exactly the position which we had already tentatively reached.

That "wrath" for Paul does mean this working out of the law of cause and effect is suggested most clearly when he writes: "After thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of

¹ See an admirable note by C. H. Dodd in his *Commentary on Romans*, in the *Moffatt New Testament Commentary*, pp. 20-4.

² Rom. i. 18.

³ e.g. Eph. ii. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 16.

⁴ Rom. i. 18; Col. lii. 6; Eph. v. 6.

⁵ Rom. lii. 5; v. 9; xiii. 5; 1 Thess. ii. 16.

⁶ Rom. iii. 5.

⁷ Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁸ Dodd, *Romans*, p. 23.

wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God ; who will render to every man according to his works." ¹ And the further truth, noted above, that the retribution, though in a sense Divine punishment, may in itself involve sin, appears when Paul, immediately after his reference to the revelation of "the wrath of God", adds the words "wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness". ² It is worth noting here, with reference to our own particular problem, that both the effect of law in general and the punitive action of the civil magistrate in particular are defined as "wrath"; that is to say, so far as the law is the instrument of God and the civil magistrate His agent, they are so, not as agents of His immediate personal will, but because through both alike the working out of the inexorable principle of retribution is illustrated. ³

If our argument thus far is valid, it provides a real safeguard against the undue exaggeration of the sterner side of the Divine nature. We may now very briefly apply these general principles in the realms of (a) nature, and (b) history.

(a) First then, is God to be held immediately responsible for the sternness and violence of nature, which, it is suggested, are an indication of certain similar elements in God's own nature? Must we not take account of the fact that Scripture insists that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, and that in His "marvellous works" His own nature is shown forth? ⁴ And it is not only the kindly side of nature which is associated with God; not only is He the giver of corn and oil and wine, the One who sends down the rain in due season: He is also the Controller of nature on her destructive side. Now Pacifism, it is alleged, ignores this side of nature and the light it throws upon the character and the ways of God. For how cruel and violent nature can be, a world full of creatures evolved through the stern discipline of struggle, a world where earthquake and flood and pestilence deal with those creatures with a frightful and seemingly mechanical relentlessness, a catastrophic world, it sometimes seems, inhabited by combative creatures and governed by an awfully castigating God. What sort of a world is this in which to practise the ethic of absolute love? Can the God who created it and rules it Himself be a God of absolute love?

Well, what does Jesus say? Certainly He accepts nature as reflecting the will of God. The sparrow that falls to the ground and dies does not

¹ Rom. ii. 5 f.

² Rom. i. 24.

³ Rom. iv. 15: "What the law produces is the Wrath," i.e., the process of sin followed by retribution. Rom. xiii. 4: the magistrate is "a divine agent bringing the penalty of Wrath upon the evil-doer".

⁴ Cf. for example Ps. cvii.

do so "without your Father". ¹ But the amazing thing is that Jesus uses this to illustrate, not the sternness, but the absolute love of God. To Him there was no contradiction between natural catastrophe and a God of absolute love, surely because He realized, as we all must, that in a moral universe, whose end is to train human personalities to love one another, so far from natural calamity running counter to the governing principle of love, it must be an almost essential part of it. For how should men learn to love one another in any deep way, except in a world where sometimes circumstances so challenge us that we are thrown back on one another's sympathy and protective care? ² But it is a very different matter, as we shall see later, to find in the fact of natural calamity, as an element in God's training of us, a justification of violent methods in our own "chastisement" of one another.

It is suggestive to trace, particularly in Scripture, the way in which, as religious ideas develop, men have related natural calamity to the "wrath" of God, and sought from it to draw deductions as to His character. In the most primitive stages thunder and earthquake will be regarded as direct manifestations of the Divine "Mystery", however it be conceived, in its most vindictive and destructive form. Once personification of natural forces takes place, such phenomena are explained as signs of the anger of personal gods. Thus in the earliest strata of the Old Testament the anger of Yahweh is seen in earthquake, pestilence and the like. But often it is still an indiscriminate and irrational anger. "The prophets took up this idea, but rationalized it by teaching that disaster is not an outbreak of irresponsible anger, but an expression of the outraged Justice of God. There is no disaster but deserved disaster; . . . sin is the cause, disaster the effect." ³ In Jesus we reach a stage at which even this comparatively high level of thought is transcended. He clearly teaches that there *may* be disaster which is *not* deserved disaster, and that suffering is not necessarily a sign of the Divine displeasure. "Those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay:" ⁴ "His disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." ⁵ That is to say, men may undergo

¹ Matt. x. 2g.

² "I do not see that the deeper exercises of love, heroic self-sacrifice, tender protectiveness, mutual helpfulness, could ever begin, much less grow, in a world where there were no final hazard like that of death, and no trouble came to us at all except as a just punishment for our sins." (H. H. Farmer, in *Reconciliation*, November, 1928, p. 209.)

³ Dodd, *Romans*, p. 22 f.

⁴ Luke xiii. 4 f.

⁵ John ix. 2 f.

suffering which has no relation whatever to their deserts: yet once we grasp the aim and end of the Divine purpose in their lives, we shall see that everything may be comprehended within the all-embracing love of God.

Finally, when we say that God is "responsible" for this undeserved suffering, we must do so always remembering that (in line with the general principles already laid down) there is a sense in which the world of nature must be thought of as relatively independent over against the immediate will of God. So far as catastrophe is "an act of God" it is not an ethical act, but rather what might be called a "cosmic" act, for which God is responsible only in the sense that it takes place within a world created by Him; and as such it is no real indication of God's ethical character, and no real contradiction of His absolute love. Each happening in the world of nature is not to be ascribed to the direct initiative of God. Rather may He be thought of as the ground of this whole moral order, which has been created for His purpose and is eternally being preserved to carry out His ends.

(b) The same considerations hold good in any attempt to trace the will of God in history. Nothing, of course, is more characteristic of the Old Testament than its recognition that in history are to be found the best illustrations, not only of God's love, but also of His righteous "wrath". Indeed the Prophets read Israel's history as a constant disciplining by God of His people. We think of Isaiah's indictment of Israel's sin in a poem with the refrain, "For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still."¹ Moreover, God uses human instruments to carry out His Judgments: "Ho, Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation."² "The Lord that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure . . . whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him."³ God raises up enemies to oppress His people, and then, when He has done with these weapons, He breaks them also and casts them away: "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth; he breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariots in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God."⁴

What is the Christian Pacifist to say to all this? Doubtless we shall point out that, just as in the case of nature, so in that of history the Hebrew thought naively about the activity of God and the manifestation of His "wrath". But, even so, as Christians we cannot acquiesce in any view that bows God out of His own world and denies that there is a Divine Providence at work in history. We shall also perhaps console ourselves that

¹ Isa. xix. 12, 17, 21.

² Isa. x. 5.

³ Isa. xlv. 28 f.

⁴ Ps. xlv. 8-10.

probably the plainest of all the lessons which the Old Testament teaches us from history is that God works out His purpose through a "remnant", a minority ready to think and act ahead of the community as a whole, and so to keep alive the vision of God's redemptive way. But the argument remains, and must be frankly faced, that history sometimes seems to show war to be a divinely, sanctioned way of meeting and overcoming evil. Even if our opponents waive their right of appeal to the "righteous" and "God-approved" wars of the Old Testament, not to speak of modern times, they can still argue that war, though the consequence of human sin, is also the divinely permitted remedy for sin. Measured against the absolute perfection of the ethic of the Kingdom of God war may never be right: but, since man is a fallen creature, it may be relatively right in God's sight, and as such a necessary and legitimate expression of one side of the Divine nature. Have we any answer to this?

Following the general principles laid down in this chapter, we shall reply that, just as there are elements in the world of nature, so are there elements in the world of history which, if the freedom of human personality is to be safeguarded, must be considered to be relatively independent of the immediate will of God. There thus may be much in history which cannot legitimately be claimed as a revelation either of the will of God or His essential nature. "It is not unimportant to realize", writes Professor Farmer, "that to speak of a general revelation of God in all nature and history is . . . almost a contradiction in terms." "The notion that faith should be able to discern the active presence of God in all events and all situations is merely pietistic; it is neither supported by experience nor necessitated by the thought of God and His intercourse with man."¹ It is true, of course, that nothing can be held to be entirely outside the sphere of Divine Providence, since God cannot be other than the Lord of His world; but this does not permit us to take any particular line of human activity, either in the past or in the present, and withdraw it from the scope of the principle that human freedom is permitted and retribution follows human sin, as if we were then entitled to say, "This is, or was, the Lord's doing". We are not reduced to a choice between a theory of blind chance and the theory that every separate event must be ascribed to the immediate will of God. There is a third possibility, namely that God does not directly cause the separate events, but that they do all lie within the all-embracing power and wisdom of His providence.

Furthermore, when we recall that the result of sin is commonly to bring forth not only, punishment but also more sin, so that sin is chastened

¹ The World and God, pp. 85, 90.

by sin, new light falls upon some of the seemingly strange ways of God in history, as for example when He is said to use the ruthless methods of the heathen Cyrus for the punishment of His own people, ¹ Here is the "wrath" of God making even evil sub-serve His purpose, so that "surely the wrath of man shall praise thee". ² The punishment of sin by sinful men using sinful methods can in this sense be God's punishment, but the methods do not thereby cease to be sinful, nor can God be held to will or to sanction such methods for our imitation. We are, of course, merely groping on the edge of an impenetrable mystery, and we may venture once again to quote Professor Farmer, whose book has been found so helpful in this discussion; "That events should be really the result of the interplay of intra-mundane causes, including the choices of beings who are free to resist God, and yet also be controlled and directed by His manifold wisdom and sovereign will; that God has a purpose which He is working out in history . . . yet which, being God's purpose, transcends history altogether so that man cannot interpret it adequately in terms of this life; that in spite of all the confusion and heartbreak and frustration of life . . . every individual may, if he will, not in imagination but in fact, rest upon a love which numbers the very hairs of his head - that is a conception before which the intellect sinks down to complete paralysis. It is only possible to maintain because in the religious awareness something deeper than intellect is involved." ³

(2) We are now in a position to answer the second half of our original question. Even granted that there is indeed a "sterner" side to the Divine nature, is it ever competent for the Christian, in his ethical dealings with his fellows, to seek to imitate God on this side of His activity? Enough has been said to indicate how perilous would be such an assumption. Turning now to the New Testament we may make these preliminary observations:

(a) True to the Old Testament, Jesus evidently regards punitive justice as being specifically a function of God Himself, not to be usurped by man: "Shall not God avenge His elect, which cry to Him day and night, and He is long suffering over them?" ⁴ And Paul strikes exactly the same note: "Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto wrath (i.e. stand aside and allow God's 'Wrath' to have its way): for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me ; I will recompense, saith the Lord." Then immediately there follows the great pacifist watchword: "But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of

¹ Isaiah xlv. 28 f.

² Ps. lxxvi. 10.

³ *The World and God*, p, 100 f. I wish to acknowledge much helpful suggestion, both in this section and the next, from conference with several friends, in particular Prof. Norman W. Porteous, Rev. Oliver Dryer, and Rev. A. C. Craig.

⁴ Luke xviii, 7.

fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." ¹

(b) Though, as we have seen, Jesus certainly does not close His eyes to the stern side of the Divine nature, yet it is *the e other side* which is always held up to men for imitation, if they are to be "sons of the Father", that is to say reflect in their own conduct that which is truly characteristic of God: "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." ²

(c) As has been suggested in a previous chapter, ³ in this matter of the right to inflict penalty the gulf between God and man is so great that we cannot regard Divine methods of Justice, even when parabolic-ally illustrated from human life by Jesus Himself, as *ipso facto* approved by Jesus for human imitation. We cannot possibly argue from God's way to what ought to be man's way until we have shown that the enormous dissimilarity between God and man makes no difference. Our duty as Christians is not to imitate God, but first to realize God's redemptive purpose towards ourselves, and secondly so to act towards our fellows as to make credible and effective that way of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

To turn now to more specific questions concerning this suggested "imitation" of God:

(a) If God in nature can use destructive violence and yet remain loving, may not we do so also, even to the extent of war? Does the fact of natural catastrophe, as an element essential in God's training of us, provide any Justification of violent methods in our dealings with one another? Surely not. for the one justification we were able to find for the unkindness of the natural world was that it does as a matter of fact teach men to love one another and provide opportunities for mutual help. It may be argued, no doubt, that war does at least as one of its by-products, ⁴ have the same noble consequences. But it would be preposterous to claim that generally speaking war educates the human race in love and fellowship and mutual helpfulness. On the contrary it is both the product and the cause of hatred and division and mutual destructiveness. The question appears closed when we remember that natural calamity has been shown to be a "cosmic" rather than an ethical act of God, and that there cannot possibly be any human parallel to such "cosmic" activity. ⁵

¹ Rom. Xii. 19-21. ² Matt. v. 44 f. ³ See p. 26. ⁴ For this see pages 75 f. below.

⁵ "Obviously you cannot argue straight away from the Deity making a suitable cosmic setting for the education of the race in love to one or two members of that race dealing with one another. Obviously the fact that One is the Supreme Educator and the others a few of the very immature educatees makes all the difference." (H. H. Farmer, in *Reconciliation*, November, 1928, p. 209.)

(b) Because God permits the working out of a moral law of cause and effect in the punishment of sin, must we not, however unwillingly, acquiesce in men suffering for our sins and their own, and indeed consent to play our part in the punishment of those sins? May not war, for example, be regarded as society co-operating with God in affirming the moral order? Such an argument seems to me undoubtedly to justify certain restrictive and even forcible social sanctions. Just as God's universe has laws which react against the evil-doer, so must our society have laws which similarly react and similarly demand penalties. Otherwise no moral order of society could exist. But what do we really mean when we speak about "affirming the moral order"? Presumably we mean "demonstrating it to be what in point of fact it is". And if, as the Christian believes, the moral order is one whose basic principle is love, then only such social sanctions are justifiable as shall result in just such a demonstration; that is to say, they must be ultimately not merely punitive but "redemptive", designed to win men back from evil to good by evoking from them a response to the appeal of love. Any sanction which in its essential nature contradicts this principle is wrong: and *that is why war is wrong*. We shall never "affirm" to a man that the moral order in which we live is one of love by blowing him in pieces with high-explosive, however clearly we may have first represented to him that our action is the inevitable consequence of his own previous wrong-doing. This line of thought must be more fully developed in the next chapter.

(c) Because in history God has apparently used human instruments for the accomplishment of His righteous will, as for example in the case of Cyrus, are we therefore justified in regarding our-selves, and even offering ourselves, as the agents of God's punitive retribution - once again even to the extent of war? That might seem to be human logic. And yet this is surely just one of those situations in which Paul sometimes felt compelled to call a halt to the arguments of human logic with a "God forbid!"¹ There are some conclusions which it would be a sin against the Gospel of God's love to draw. God Himself may be able to do or "permit" certain things, which men can never do, without stultifying His ultimate aim of redemption, because God is Holy and we are not. And in order to "affirm the moral order" of love even God had to add to His inexorable law of retribution, and to His human agents for the chastisement of sin, a Saviour who came and bore in His own Person the worst consequences of sin, and broke the vicious circle of cause and effect by leading men to repentance. And that is why - quite apart from the fact that there is in truth no punitive activity of

¹ e.g. Rom. iii. 4, 6, 31, etc. ; Gal. ii. 17, etc. I owe this thought to Prof. Porteous.

God which we can imitate, seeing that God's punishment is "Wrath" in the sense already defined, to which there is no possible human parallel - our duty in this connection is not to try to imitate God. Our duty is rather to point men to God's "redemptive" way, and so to act towards our fellows as to make that Divine way credible. The faith of the Christian pacifist is that war is the greatest of all stumbling-blocks in the way of belief in the credibility and effectiveness of God's redemptive method of overcoming evil, as He has revealed it to us in Jesus Christ, and that the refusal to meet force with force would do more than anything else to make the Gospel credible to a world in bondage to cynicism and fear. We men cannot set ourselves up as petty gods seeking to "imitate" certain mysterious cosmic functions of the Divine activity; we can imitate the way of Jesus, who, even though it were admitted that He does not fully reflect all the attributes of God, does by His teaching and example give us all the guidance necessary for the ordering of our relations with our fellow-men.o

CHAPTER SIX

THE LAW, THE GOSPEL, AND THE CROSS

IN the last chapter we dealt with the charge that Christian Pacifism fails to do Justice to the sterner side of the Divine nature. A second count in the charge of "heresy" is that Pacifism unduly exalts the Gospel of love at the expense of righteousness and law. Sometimes the charge is made on the ground of an alleged misinterpretation of Scripture, as for example when Dr. Temple accuses Pacifists of the "Marcionite" error of so interpreting the New Testament that it wholly supersedes the Old. But there is a Gospel vein in the Old Testament also. Even as far back as the eighth century we meet Hosea, the prophet of God's love; and as Israel advances towards a truer understanding of God, her thinkers pass beyond the crude "Justice" of the books of Joshua and Judges to the profoundly "Christian" standpoint of the book of Jonah: "Doest thou well to be angry? . . . Thou hast had pity on the gourd . . . and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city?" ¹ On any modern understanding of the relation of the Old Testament to the New, and of the growing revelation of God and His purpose which we have in both, it must surely be admitted that the method of the Law, as set out in the Old Testament, is a noble but an essentially pre-Christian and sub-Christian attempt to point the way to a right relationship between man and God and between man and man, and that in the New Testament there is revealed to us "a more excellent way". ² It is as *Christians* and not otherwise that we accept the Old Testament as well as the New Testament as God's Word, and we are therefore entitled to take to the interpretation of the Old Testament the insight which has come to us from the New. For this we have sufficient warrant in Jesus' own words, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, . . . : But I say unto you". ³ It is because Jesus Christ came that the Old Testament still makes sense. We have Jesus' warrant, too, for believing in a progressive revelation of God's ways, as men grow in their capacity to understand them, and for the conviction that certain aspects of truth, only implicit even in Jesus' own teaching, are bound to become more and more explicit to the Christian conscience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear

¹ Jonah iv. 9-11.

² Cor. Xii. 31.

³ Matt. v. 21 f.

them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth; . . . for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you," ¹

But the argument usually takes a more theological form; the Law, it is asserted, must always precede the Gospel, and remain as its indispensable foundation. Again we may quote Dr. Temple: "Sound doctrine and experience alike assure us that the stage of the Law must precede that of the Gospel, and that, though the Gospel carries us far beyond the Law, we need the foundation provided by the Law to be secure before we can truly respond to the Gospel. . . . It was to a people long disciplined by the Law that the Gospel was proclaimed." Just how easily such an argument can be turned to account by the militarist will be seen if we re-write it in militarist terms, as has been done by Professor C. E. Raven, who himself, of course, dissents: "Justice is the essential preliminary to peace; and justice can be established only on the basis of acknowledged law. In human history Moses preceded Jesus, and it was upon the foundation of legalism that the superstructure of the Gospel was built. We must proceed by the same sequence. The machinery already exists; and if another generation has to be immolated before it can be set to work, the sacrifice may be inevitable and justified by its results. Let us prepare for another war to end war." ²

Now Dr. Temple's statement just quoted, though it contains of course a large measure of truth, is also quite dangerously misleading. If he is right in insisting that the Law must always precede the Gospel and must remain as its permanent foundation, then not only must the argument of most of Paul's Epistles go by the board, but the Apostle had no right to presume to proclaim the Gospel to Gentiles without first thoroughly training them under the discipline and the sanctions of the Law. It is the very essence of New Testament teaching that the grace of God in the Gospel is operative towards men who are unrighteous and not yet obedient to the Law's discipline: "God commendeth His own love towards us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us." ³ It has been the evangelical experience of all the great Christian saints from St. Paul downwards to be reduced to despair just because they could not obey the Law and thus "qualify" for the Gospel; and it is the experience of all Christian teachers that it is fruitless to try to inculcate the Christian ethic before the heart has been

¹ John xvi. 12 ff.

² C.E. Raven, in *Reconciliation*, March, 1936, p. 60.

³ Rom. v. 8.

changed by the Gospel of the grace of God. ¹

In reply to the charge that Christian Pacifism, by exalting the Gospel of absolute love, dethrones the conception of law and Justice taken over by Jesus Himself from the Old Testament "Law" and "Prophets", and thereby undermines the very foundations of righteousness, we may now note the following points in greater detail:

(1) Jesus' new and distinctive ethic, *and in particular the definitely pacifist features in it*, is specifically stated by Himself to have as its aim not the "destruction" but the "fulfilment" of the Law. The whole section begins with the statement: "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." ² And at the end of the section we have the "non-resistance" and "love-your-enemy" sayings as the culminating illustrations of what Jesus means by "fulfilling the law". To "fulfil the law" in Jesus' thought evidently means to "give the full content" to the older conception of Law, "to draw out its underlying intention", "to make explicit that which hitherto has been only implicit". Just how His pacifist ethic achieves this we shall discuss in a moment. Meantime it is important to note that Jesus Himself, though definitely claiming to modify and in a sense even to supersede the Law, just as definitely denies that He is "destroying" it.

Paul, too, frankly admits that in large measure the Gospel, when rightly understood, has superseded the Law - but always in the sense not of "destroying" the Law, but of accomplishing that at which the Law aimed, but failed to achieve. ³ We are guilty of "heresy", not when with Paul himself we recognize and insist upon this kind of super-session of the Law by the Gospel, but when like Marcion and Dr. Temple himself we set the way of justice and the way of love in so sharp an antithesis as to suggest that when we choose the one we necessarily "destroy" the other. Neither Jesus' teaching nor Paul's means that Justice has been dethroned by love ; it does mean that all human relationships must ultimately be based on the Gospel of love; that justice truly "fulfilled" is an outcome of love, rather than love a mere by-product of justice; that if we aim at love we shall establish justice by the way; that we can in fact secure justice only when we aim

¹ "The Gospel is not a postscript to Christian ethics, but their presupposition and preface; the love of God in the Gospel precedes the righteousness which makes it possible, and not *vice versa*. . . . If the foundation of Law had to be secure before we can truly respond to the Gospel, Christianity is a fair-weather religion, and its distinctive ethic cannot get started at all until it is no longer needed. If you must not begin to love your enemies until there are none, Christ's command is rendered meaningless." (J. S. Whale, in *Reconciliation*, April, 1936, p. 93.)

² Matt. v. 17.

³ *Romans* throughout, especially Chapters VII and VIII.

primarily not at it, but at the love out of which it springs. Paul feels the same about peace: like love it is one of the "fruits of the Spirit", ¹ the reward of a whole way of life, to be attained not by aiming at "peace" alone, but as one of the "by-products of a larger quest".²

(2) Before we ask how the pacifist ethic of Jesus does actually thus "fulfil" or, to use more modern language, "sublimate" the conception of law and righteousness, it will be well to recall what was said above ³ about "affirming the moral order". Jesus does not think, as do we too often with our academic ways of thought, of a "moral order" in the abstract, which evil, again in the abstract, has invaded, and which has to be "vindicated" by resistance to evil as a thing *per se*. That is to use legal and political analogies, and results in the misconception that God is concerned with abstract "law" rather than with persons, and that His chief end is to "vindicate the moral order of the universe", and to "uphold His own righteousness", rather than to fulfil His purpose of redemption towards mankind. Jesus on the other hand is dealing always, not with such an abstract "moral order", but with a world consisting of persons in relation to one another and to God ; and in such a world Justice can be truly "vindicated", and God's own righteousness "upheld", not by the mere restraint and punishment of evil, but only by making evil persons see the sinfulness of their ways, ⁴ through the employment of a redemptive method which will change the evil will, and restore right personal relationships, "so making peace".⁵ For peace in the international sphere also depends upon something much more than the restraining of an "aggressor" or the vindication of a "righteous cause". Peace depends upon right relations between persons, upon mutual confidence in the common honesty, upon co-operation by all for the service of all, upon

¹ Gal. v. 22.

² The phrase is Raven's: *Reconciliation*, March, 1936, p. 61.

³ P. 63.

⁴ The common fallacy here in much of our thinking is that "the moral order, as inherent in the divine justice, appears as something standing over against the individual's inner life, capable of affirming itself and achieving its sovereign rights whether the inner life is redeemed or not." "But what if the moral order be, in the last analysis, nowhere save in the purposes and volitions of persons in relation to one another? In that case only in so far as those purposes and volitions are not merely checked and defeated, but also recreated into what they ought to be, can the moral order be said to be victorious in any sense that really matters. For only then will it have reaffirmed itself at the precise point where it has been negated and denied. We affirm, then, that a moral order which merely checks and annuls is not one which has at the heart of it an absolute valuation of the individual person as such; it is not the sort of moral order which is known to the Christian in and through his reconciliation to God through Christ." (H. H. Farmer, *The World and God*, pp. 252, 249 f.)

⁵ Eph. ii. 15.

something far deeper than mere Justice in the abstract, however ingeniously worded out by international "formulae". There can be no peace in any sphere at all which is not also what Paul calls "the peace of God which surpasses all human ingenuity".¹

(3) How, then, does Jesus' Pacifist ethic redeem the will from evil to good, restore right personal relationships, and thus truly "fulfil" and sublimate the Law? It does so because it offers, not merely negative passivity in the face of wrong, but an alternative, positive, and redemptive method of overcoming evil, which renders all violent and punitive methods obsolete. The injunction to non-resistance,² which is so often taken to represent the whole pacifist ethic, is immediately followed by the positive commandment of all-embracing love. Retributive Justice, which merely checks and punishes evil, is supplanted by active and self-sacrificial love, which redeems and changes the evil will, so "vindicating righteousness" in the only true sense of the word, and thereby "fulfilling the Law". This, and not mere non-resistance, must always be the foundation of the pacifist position when adopted on specifically Christian grounds. For the Christian, if he renounces war, will do so, not because he denies that to react against evil by way of war may sometimes be better than not to react at all, but because he is convinced that to use such methods is equivalent to trying to cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils,³ and must stultify at the outset every effort to make credible and effective this alternative and positive method of sacrificial and redemptive love, to which as a disciple of the Crucified he is called.

It is unnecessary to repeat here what was said in Chapter Three about how Jesus in His own Person and by His own example proved again and again the power of active love to overcome the evil in men's lives. And in the Cross the method of non-resistance finds its complete and final illustration, and the redemptive way of sacrificial love its perfect example. For Jesus deliberately willed to endure the Cross rather than prove false to His chosen redemptive way, believing that He and His could overcome the evil in men only by being willing to suffer to the uttermost rather than betray that way; and at Calvary we see Him laying down life rather than take it, in His own Person meeting the wickedness of violent men, Himself bearing sin's utmost penalty, the Just for the unjust, and yet overcoming that sin by the power of active, forgiving love. It is important, too, to remember that Jesus never sought to avoid the application of these principles because that way might lead to suffering and danger for others as well as for Himself. He never promised immunity even from death itself to those who accepted His

¹ Phil. iv, 7: again the phrase is Raven's; *Reconciliation*, March, 1936, p. 61,

² Matt. v. 39.

³ Matt. xii. 24.

way: "If any man would come after me, let him . . . take up his cross, and follow me." ¹ When He "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem", ² He risked His followers' lives as well as His own. If He had been swayed by considerations of their safety, there would have been no Cross. But there would also have been no Resurrection, and no releasing into the world of the redemptive power of love.

What is it that gives to the Cross, and to the whole way of life of which it is the symbol, this unique "redemptive" power, that is the power to defeat evil by changing the evil will and winning it to good? I know of no finer statement than this: "God's purpose is to win men's hearts to Himself. . . . Obviously there is only one method of winning such a victory when methods of force are ruled out, and that is simply to love; to love so passionately, so utterly, that even the most brutal and seemingly triumphant violence of sin leaves it still love, unchanged except in the increasing agony of its disappointed desire to bless and to redeem. The only qualification for victory required of love is that it should be able to endure its most shattering defeat and yet still remain love. If it does that, it has still got the whip hand; for in its very weakness of defeat it has within it the invincible strength of remaining itself, and it will yet win its victory. As someone has said, 'You cannot defeat defeat'. . . . Let men take every advantage of the seeming weakness of love, let them bruise and batter and seek utterly to smash it, as they did at the Cross; but let it still remain love, and in the end they will have to give up, and look upon what their hands have done, and break down in its presence. At some time or other the very weakness of love will cut them to the centre of their being with more power than a two-edged sword - only it will be spiritual power. I am sure that is so, human hearts being what they are. The weakness of a God of love is stronger than men." ³

We shall no doubt be met with the rejoinder that only a sentimentalist would dream of trying to apply the method of redemptive love to international affairs. This is what Dr. Temple apparently has in mind when he accuses Pacifists of a "Pelagian" heresy. "Man;" he writes, ⁴ "is incapable of living by love unless the grace of God has both converted and sanctified him; so that the law of love is not applicable to nations consisting in large measure of unconverted or (as is the case of most, if not all, of us) very imperfectly converted citizens." We would prefer to believe that Dr. Temple merely means that the perfectly converted alone can love perfectly, and

¹ Mark viii. 34.

² Luke ix. 51.

³ H. H. Farmer, *Things not Seen*, p. 32 f.

⁴ York Diocesan Leaflet, 1935.

not, as might appear at first sight, that the way of love can be effective only when directed towards the perfectly converted. For to say that love has a saving and redeeming power only when directed towards the wholly converted and sanctified is surely a denial of the whole of the New Testament. If the last part of Dr. Temple's statement is true in that sense, then both Jesus and Paul were manifestly sadly at fault. The Jews were a very imperfectly converted nation in Jesus' own day, yet "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son;" ¹ and Jesus so loved His people that He died for them at Calvary. Was His Cross after all inapplicable? Was Paul merely presumptuous when he preached "a more excellent way" ² to folk at Corinth who were still heathen? Was he deceiving himself when he wrote "God commendeth his own love towards us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us" ³ But, taking Dr. Temple's words as they stand, his inference apparently is that in matters affecting the relations of nation with nation the Church must be content to fall into line with the State in reverting to a sub-Christian ethic. A more legitimate inference would surely be that the Church must refuse to collaborate with the State in so far as the State still finds itself unable or unwilling to apply an ethic which is binding on the Church. "Love is not applicable to nations," says Dr. Temple, "therefore Christians, when they act as members of their nations, are not bound by the law of love." "No!" replies the Christian Pacifist, "if nations cannot or will not act as Christians should, then Christians cannot conform to what the nation does." If this alternative is, as Dr. Temple asserts, "heresy", many of us would insist that his own alternative is Just as surely "apostasy".

The third and last count in the charge of heresy is that the line of thought which we have been following misinterprets the true significance of the Cross, and this in three ways:

(1) First, it is alleged, the Christian pacifist ignores the fact that the Cross is *theologically unique*. "Our Lord's death upon the Cross had relations and meanings to which nothing in our life corresponds. He died on the Cross as the World's Redeemer. This is the great message of the New Testament regarding His death:" ⁴ Though in large measure true, such a statement is just as perilous as are all half-truths, Similarly, it might be argued with much truth that Jesus, as only Son of God, had a sense of vocation also entirely unique, and a redemptive aim and purpose with which that of even the noblest of His martyr followers is in no wise comparable. This is the whole force of such sayings as, "Christ also suffered for sins *once*, the

¹ John iii. 16.

² 1 Cor. Xii. 31.

³ Rom, v. 8.

⁴ Isaac Jolly, *Pacifism at the Bar of Holy Scripture and History*, p, 18.

righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God",¹ or, "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*".² This is a sacrifice never to be repeated and never emulated. Moreover, we are reminded, Jesus Himself seems to have fully realized that there was something unique in the setting of His self-sacrifice both in time and in place. Hence the constant references to "His hour".³ "It is to be recognized that there was a place and a time which alone would suit the purpose of His suffering, so that man might understand it and take it to his heart and conscience. Other hands would inflict it, but only when He chose to exercise His determining power to give or to withhold. The narratives make it plain that Simon Peter's public recognition furnished a signal that His hour was at hand, since the Church's foundation of faith confessed had at last been laid as a living rock. Till the hour came which alone accorded with the fulfilment and secure recognition of His redemptive aim He had withdrawn, again and again, from the grasp of His enemies, thus plainly , showing that suffering and death were not of themselves sufficient apart from adequate recognition. But in Jerusalem, at a Passover season, in full view alike of disciples, people and rulers, He found His hour and His altar, and as a Lamb suffered Himself to be led to the Sacrifice, a Paschal offering, a Ransom for many."⁴ Jesus' unique redemptive purpose, the choice - not to say predestined appointment - of both time and place, gives His sacrifice a redemptive efficacy which does not in any comparable manner belong to the "method of sacrificial love", when adopted by His disciples as a professed and regular manner of life.

Now all this is admittedly and gloriously true. And yet the manner chosen by Jesus to fulfil His redemptive purpose must surely have been in line with His whole daily manner of life, and must have owed its efficacy precisely to that consistency. His final victory over evil on the Cross cannot have been by means inconsistent with those by which He won daily victories over evil in the men and women with whom He came into contact. His triumph over sin cannot have been won by a method out of harmony and incomparable with that method by which He bade His disciples overcome evil when they met it in their fellows. In other words, to amend our previous quotation: "Our Lord's death on the Cross had relations and meanings to which a *very great deal in our life corresponds*." Paul himself, though he

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

² Heb. x. 10.

³ This is, of course, chiefly in the Fourth Gospel, and may perhaps be held to reflect the point of view rather of the Apostolic Church than of Jesus Himself. See John ii. 4; vii. 30; viii. 20; xii. 23; xii. 27; xiii. 1; xvii. 1.

⁴ I owe this fine statement to my friend Principal W. A. Curtis

constantly emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice, insists, too, that the Christian must be "crucified with Christ", if the Cross of Calvary is to have an efficacy for him. ¹

Moreover if it be true, as we believe it is, that Jesus throughout His whole ministry was seeking "a place and a time which alone would suit the purpose of His suffering"; if it be true that it was the hour of the Cross which "accorded with the fulfilment and secure recognition of His redemptive aim"; and if it is these truths which give to the Cross its peculiar characteristics and its redemptive quality - then it must also be true that the Cross was the goal towards which Jesus' purpose more and more consciously moved throughout His entire ministry. And if the Cross had this central place in Jesus' whole Messianic consciousness, then we have no right to isolate it as a theological mystery which has no bearing on the ethic which He taught or the personal decisions which He made. indeed we seem to be driven back to our previous conclusion that Jesus, knowing Himself to be Messiah, knowing also what popular expectation demanded of Messiah, yet living always with His face set towards Calvary, must have seen in the Cross the direct Divine alternative to the eagerly awaited Messianic war.

(2) Secondly, we are told that Pacifists forget that the Cross is *ethically not for our imitation*. "Jesus, in His death on the Cross, is not in the New Testament held up chiefly as an example for our imitation, but as the object of our faith. We are not chiefly called upon to imitate Him, but to trust Him as Saviour." ² That is to say, Jesus, who discriminated so carefully in the occasion for His own sacrifice, left no example or rule to be followed blindly or without discrimination. Again this is in so large a measure true, and yet such a dangerous half-truth. Paradoxical surely, that our critics should be so ready for us to imitate the transcendent God in His cosmic "wrath", and so loath that we should imitate the Cross of God incarnate in the Man Jesus! There is a sense in which, none would deny, Jesus' redemptive sacrifice once for all for the world's sin need not and cannot be repeated. Yet, whatever be true of the New Testament as a whole, Jesus Himself does hold up the Cross for His disciples' imitation. There is no word of Jesus more often repeated in the Gospels than that in which He bids them follow Him along the road of the Cross. ³ Even if He was speaking only in metaphor, He could not have done so had He not seen in the way of life He set before them something in common with His own supreme sacrifice. And such a passage as the following shows that the early Church

¹ Gal. ii. 20; v. 24.

² Isaac Jolly, op. cit., p. 18.

³ Matt. x. 38; xvi. 24; Mark viii. 34; x. 31; Luke ix. 23; xiv. 27.

realized that Jesus did so call upon His disciples to follow Him: "For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps . . . who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree." ¹

This particular objection to the Pacifist position is perhaps due to a wrong idea of what "imitation of the Cross" implies. The Pacifist is sometimes accused of regarding the Cross as a mechanical device whose efficacy depends on the power of self-sacrifice *per se* and then of arrogantly presuming to "imitate the Cross" under the misconception that any such isolated and indiscriminate act of self-sacrifice will have a similar automatic redemptive power. But the Christian Pacifist position is exactly the reverse. Always it is not suffering as such that redeems, but the readiness to accept suffering rather than deny the Truth, obedience to a particular way of life with self-sacrifice, if necessary, as a possible climax. For Jesus the Cross meant risking everything on His conviction that God's way of overcoming evil would work. Therefore we see in the Cross, not a mechanical act of self-sacrifice which Jesus imagined would be effective *ex opere operato*, but the inevitable climax, under the conditions which confronted Him, to a consistent life-practice of meeting evil not by violence, not even by invoking law, but by the way of forgiving and reconciling love. Jesus died rather than betray that love method. So in our own problem: if there are circumstances in which there seems no alternative to self-sacrifice, it is precisely because any other alternative would be a betrayal of the specifically Christian method of overcoming evil by redemptive love. By "imitating the Cross" we mean, not presumption in martyrdom, but loyalty to the life-practice of redemptive love with its possible climax in a cross, that is to say a way of life which as a last resort is willing to sacrifice itself rather than betray itself.

So in our international problem. A nation, following the way of Christ, might feel called upon to adopt a policy of total disarmament. But it would do so, in the first instance, not with the deliberate purpose of courting martyrdom, but with the conviction that the best safety from the perils against which nations arm is to be found in a new national way of life, which would remove causes of provocation and lead progressively to reconciliation and peace. It, too, would risk everything on the conviction that God's way would work. But such a nation must also be willing, if necessary, to incur the risk of national martyrdom by refusing to equip itself against the possibility of aggression. And it may be that the world must wait for its redemption from warfare until one nation is ready to risk crucifixion at the hands of its possible enemies, it might lose its own national life; but it would

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 21 f,

set free such a flood of spiritual life as would save the world. To many of us this may not be a very welcome or comforting implication to discover in the Cross. Yet it may be well to remind ourselves that no interpretation of the Cross is likely to be a true one which is not to-day, as of old, an "offence" to the "Jew", and to all who like him are obsessed with "law" and "righteousness", and "folly" to the politically minded "Greek". The Pacifist interpretation of the Cross is certainly both. It may once again prove to be "the power of God, and the wisdom of God" ¹

(3) Lastly Pacifists are accused of unjustifiably narrowing the idea of "redemption", and appropriating the word "redemptive" to their own peculiar way of life. May it not be possible, we are asked, in a war waged on behalf of righteousness, for the soldier himself to become the embodiment of redemptive sacrifice, facing as he does at the call of duty and for love of a cause suffering, mutilation and death? And is there not a certain arrogance in claiming the title "redemptive", as if it were applicable only to the love which refuses to take part in warfare, because it believes that it knows a more excellent way, and refusing it to the love which lays down life on the battlefield in conflict with evil militant, because it chooses the highest way it knows and believes that love has nothing more to give? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." ² This is a fair question and must be frankly faced. Let it be sadly confessed that spiritual pride is apt to be the besetting temptation, if not the besetting sin, of Pacifists. And let it be humbly and gratefully acknowledged that such self-sacrifice on the battlefield for pure and unselfish ends may be the symbol of a love than which no man has a greater; let us even admit that in a broad sense it may be "redemptive". But it is clearly not "redemptive" in the particular sense in which we have been using the word. For we have been discussing two alternative methods or lines of action for the meeting and overcoming of evil; by "redemptive" we mean "possessing the power to win over the will from evil to good"; and the word has been used throughout our discussion in the more specific sense of "redemptive" of that particular evil against which action is being directed, in this case what we have just called "evil militant" in the person of my enemy. Now let me assume (*per impossibile*, it is to be feared) that my cause in battle is wholly right and my enemy's wholly wrong. Even so, will my self-sacrifice in opposition to him on the battlefield have any "redemptive" effect on the evil aggressive will of the enemy whom I am fighting? Possibly yes, if my main purpose on the

¹ 1 Cor. i. 23.

² John xv. 13.

battlefield was to "lay down my life" as a challenge to and protest against aggressive wickedness. However fantastic may be the idea of a "peace army" deliberately sacrificing itself between the lines, it is quite possible that its sacrifice might have some such moral effect on the spirit of aggression. But the soldier's main purpose in going into battle is not "to lay down his life for his friends". If while on active service he showed the slightest trace of such a desire for simple martyrdom, he would promptly be disciplined. He may be heroically willing to lay down his life; but his main purpose, the reason for which he has been enlisted, trained, sent to the front, is to win victory, and to do so by killing and wounding as many of the enemy as possible. It is not pleasant to have to make such statements, but the subject is far too serious to admit of any sentimentality. Now what I have to ask is whether that line of action on my part - not laying down my own life, but seeking to take his- can possibly have any "redemptive" efficacy, in the sense already defined, with respect to the particular evil against which it is directed, that is to say, the enemy I am seeking to kill. Even supposing that I am wholly right, and he is wholly wrong, can I possibly expect to "redeem" my enemy, win over his will from evil to good, by doing my utmost to kill him? It needs little knowledge of psychology to suggest that the result is certain to be the very opposite. And, however glorious the by-products of war in duty and courage and self-sacrifice, as realists we know that the soldier is on the battlefield to kill. It would seem that the apologist for war must be far more explicit in his definitions, when he claims to find, even in the by-products of such activity, something which is "redemptive" in the same sense as is the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Our study has seemed to prove that an essential element in the "Gospel" of Jesus Christ is that distinctive method of meeting and overcoming evil, which He set forth in His teaching and illustrated supremely in the Cross. By His words, His life, His death, He demonstrated the power of active and, if need be, sacrificial love to conquer evil, vindicate the moral order, and redeem the will from evil to good. In a word, He overcame evil with good. It is impossible to see how one can eliminate this from the Gospel without changing its whole character, or exempt the Christian from a like obligation without dismissing him forthwith from discipleship. The principle that one cannot cast out devils by the prince of devils is not a matter of opinion to be proved or disproved by cleverly manipulating texts: it lies at the very heart of the Christian ethic as proclaimed and lived by Jesus Christ Himself, He knew no other way of overcoming evil than by redeeming the evil will. Nor will the Christian willingly employ any methods which are not

ultimately redemptive. And here surely we have the canon by which we are to Judge whether this or that particular use of force can be brought within the orbit of the Christian ethic, the test by failure to pass which war is seen to be under a final prohibition. It comes under the ban mainly for two reasons: firstly, because there is in war as such no single element which is truly redemptive ; and secondly, because it results in a complete prostitution of those personal values, and a complete rupture of those personal relationships, apart from which. both the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man are reduced to a mere mockery. It is on this ground of the violation of human personality more than on any other ground that the Christian ethic must renounce war.

Perhaps we may state the case thus: Reconciliation and redemption, which are the supreme ends of the Christian love which is itself the essence of Christian living, can never be achieved by force pure and simple; for force in itself is much more likely to thwart than to fulfil these ends. If then force is to find a place within the Christian ethic, it must only be in a form which is limited by such sympathetic discrimination that it may be expected to prepare the way for the final appeal of redemptive love. Any use of force, therefore, which by its very nature escapes from such control, and renders such an appeal abortive, can under no circumstances be countenanced. It is obvious that war utterly fails to pass this test, and for these reasons: Firstly, no sooner has war begun than there automatically follows the prostitution of every conceivable moral value, truth, honesty, decency, upon which all stable personal relationships, and the only possibility of recovering them when lost, depend. Secondly, war has, particularly in its modern form, become so entirely mechanical and impersonal that one can engage in it only by totally depersonalizing one's entire relationship to the object of one's action. ¹ And thirdly, its main aim is to kill, and therefore to

¹ Attempts are sometimes made actually to defend modern warfare on the ground that it has become so impersonal: there need be no personal hatred of foe for foe; each is a machine destroying an unseen enemy, and often not even knowing whether he does so. Yet personality is the watchword of Christian theology; and right personal relationship is the key to Christian ethics. A true understanding of the mind of Jesus would suggest that there can be few actions more un-Christ-like than thus to depersonalize one's attitude to one's brother man. "War represents an anti-personalistic force which regards human personalities as so much cannon fodder, as material to be used for developing the power of the State. There was after all something personal in the idea of the warlike knight-it involved personal valour. Modern war is completely devoid of this element. Armaments and preparations for war, which serve to undermine the very states which adopt these means for the sake of greater power and emancipation, constitute precisely the forces which depersonalize and dehumanize man, This state of things is quite intolerable to the Christian conscience." (Nicolas Berdyaev, in *Reconciliation*, August, 1936, p. 207.)

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remove the presumed object of redemption entirely from that sphere of personal relationship wherein alone love can make its appeal. "War, in short, of necessity, and in its essential idea, is a use of force which, from the angle of the demands of love, is a hideous cul-de-sac in personal relations"¹ - a cul-de-sac surely up which no Christian can venture to go.

¹ H H. Farmer, in *The Christian and War*, p. 6.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHRIST AND CAESAR

We have already remarked that neither the teaching of Jesus Himself nor the New Testament as a whole throws very much direct light upon the duty of the Christian citizen towards the State of which he is a member ; and we have touched on one of the chief reasons for this fact. ¹ One is inclined to regret this silence all the more because it appears inevitable that the claims of Christianity and of the State, of God and of Caesar, should constantly be coming into conflict, and this for several reasons, Christianity, whose end and goal is the Kingdom of God, has its eyes fixed and its affection set upon things unseen and eternal: the State is inevitably concerned with worldly power and temporal ends. Christianity is a universal religion, knowing no national preference: the State in practice serves exclusively the interests of its own people. Christianity, as the life of the spirit, has its vital breath in freedom: the State has always found it necessary to find its ultimate sanction in coercion and force. Christianity ascribes to human personality an absolute value and independence of all that is of the earth. The State by its claim to ultimate loyalty is compelled to deny this priority and supremacy of the personal. "For the ancients a man was primarily a citizen of his State, first a member of a community and only afterwards a personality. If Christianity has done anything new for political science and Jurisprudence, it has been to reverse this order." ² To-day we have seen the tragic results of the pendulum swinging once again to the opposite extreme.

Hence the dilemma of the Christian pacifist. He may be first a Christian, but he is also one of the units which compose the community. Can he accept the privileges, and at the same time contract out of the obligations, which are due to his membership of the group? Must not the individual conscience be subordinate to the common judgement? When the State goes to war, must not the citizen, whatever his convictions as a Christian, acquiesce and co-operate? Must not personal responsibility be merged in civic solidarity? The Christian citizen is confronted by the sorest conflict of loyalties. "As the history both of Christendom and of Christians shows, the adjustment of the claims of these conflicting interests is a matter

¹ See above, p. 45.

² Scholten, quoted by Heering, op. cit. p. 172.

of the most acute difficulty. A freedom of conscience which shall escape moral anarchy, an obedience to State authority which stops short of acquiescence in evil, represent an ideal hard to define or sustain." ¹

The tension has become still more acute with the growth of the Totalitarian State", which has thus been admirably defined by J. H. Oldham: "The totalitarian state is a state which lays claim to man in the totality of his being; which declares its own authority to be the source of all authority; which refuses to recognize the independence in their own sphere of religion, culture, education and the family; which seeks to impose on all its citizens a particular philosophy of life ; and which sets out to create by means of all the agencies of public information and education a particular type of man in accordance with its own understanding of the meaning and end of man's existence:" As Mussolini himself has put it: "Fascism conceives of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals and groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State. . . . Nothing against the State; nothing outside the State; everything for the State." Now it is clear that a State which advances such claims is in fact declaring itself to be also a substitute for an authoritarian Church, and is advancing a view of life which is to be accepted, if not as an actual substitute for religion, then at least as its powerful rival. "Underlying the claims of the Totalitarian State are certain ultimate beliefs regarding the nature and destiny of man. In so far as these are incompatible with the Christian understanding of the meaning and purpose of man's existence, the Church must inevitably be involved in a life and death struggle for its existence. . . . It is clear that between the view that the racial and national soul is the ultimate measure of all values, and the view that all souls, individual and national, are judged by the Gospel, there is an irreconcilable conflict." ² Nor need we delude ourselves into believing that the danger is confined to countries under authoritarian rule. It is present also in Democratic States so far as such States are swayed by the doctrine of the sovereign authority of the State, a doctrine which really puts the State in the position of God, with complete control over the lives and liberties of its subjects, which it may use as it thinks fit for its own purely selfish and national ends. And there are few if any States which are not so swayed. When the threat is perfectly obvious, as in Germany yesterday and Russia to-day, the only answer may be martyrdom, and through martyrdom comes a new life. The danger is much more subtle when Christian people are unaware that their principles are

¹ C. E. Raven, *Is War Obsolete?* p. 65.

² See J. H. Oldham, *Church, Community and State*, pp. 9-12.

being undermined by the gradual paganizing of the mind of the whole community. The new absolutism of the State is a warning signal of dangers which confront the whole Christian Church. For it is diametrically opposed to the basic principle of the Christian ethic, namely the sovereignty of human personality. "Above all else our epoch stands in desperate need of learning to prize man more highly, of acknowledging the value of every man, even of the least, because every single man bears within himself the image and likeness of God. For this reason one can never regard man as a means to an end, or turn him into a tool in the hands of the State, so as to aid its expansion, or encourage its desire for national self-glorification. Such at least is the Christian point of view. For Christianity man stands far higher than the State and is far more precious than the State: he is unique, an unrepeatable personality."¹

G. J. Heering has suggested that one of the chief reasons for the failure of historical Christianity to uphold the full Christian ethic in the face of a State which still claims the right to enlist the support of the Church for war is "the suppression of primitive Christian values and the false exegesis of the New Testament concurrent with it".² An examination of our problem in the light both of the New Testament passages and of its treatment down the Christian centuries will show just how true this statement is.

Turning then, first to Scripture, we find that the claims of the State are in the main based on two New Testament passages:

Firstly there is Jesus' famous answer to the question whether or no He considered it to be lawful to pay tribute to Caesar: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."³ This saying is not seldom used as if it meant that according to Jesus the Christian must not allow religious scruples to interfere with his duty to the State. Such a misplacing of the whole emphasis of Jesus' words is possible only if we completely ignore the context. It is worth reminding ourselves:

(a) The "Caesar" in question is not the government which a patriotic Jew would recognize as having the right to claim his allegiance. He is the representative of a foreign State holding down a conquered people by force of arms. If the saying may be used at all to sanction an unconditional claim by the State upon its subjects, then the duty indicated is not that of taking arms in defence of one's own country's freedom, but the duty of submission to an undesired dictatorship.

¹ Nicolas Berdyaev, in *Reconciliation*, August, 1936, p. 207.

² Heering, *The Fall of Christianity*, p. 218. I am particularly, indebted to this book for much in this chapter.

³ Mark xii. 17.

(b) The whole point of Jesus' answer is that it enabled Him to escape the trap prepared for Him by the Pharisees, who wished to force Him either to damage His reputation in the eyes of His own people by advocating submission to Rome, or to compromise Himself with the government by advocating resistance. According to ancient ideas Caesar's "image and superscription" on a coin indicated that it was his own property. Well, then, says Jesus, it is surely fair enough to give back to Caesar what is already his own: but see that you likewise pay, your debts to God. So far from providing us with a proof-text in support of war, the words are really a Pacifist's disavowal of the policy of violent resistance to an, oppressor.

(c) The words have sometimes been turned into an actual apology for war. Thus Augustine, who was one of the first Christian theologians to try to harmonize war with the New Testament, comments: "For indeed tribute is brought with the very object of giving wages to the soldiers, who are indispensable, just because of the wars." ¹ But, quite apart from the fact that there is no reference either explicit or implicit to war, the impression left by the passage as a whole is that all the emphasis falls on the second clause, "and render to God the things that are God's". An excellent comment is that of the well-known French scholar Loisy (again no Pacifist): "Jesus emphasizes the lawfulness of political power and of tribute much less than the insignificance of these things in comparison with the Kingdom of heaven. . . . Let the things of this world be esteemed according to the smallness of their value, and let these duties be discharged as there is necessity; but let men know above all that the greatest things lie elsewhere, in fidelity to the heavenly Father. It would be to falsify the thought of Jesus to suppose that the debt to Caesar is on the same plane, or that it has the same absolute and definite character, as the duty towards God." ² At most Jesus suggests that civil obedience need not necessarily clash with the obedience due to God, provided that the claims of the State do not invade the sphere of duty owed to God.

(d) Even such a partial gesture of acquiescence in the claims of the State loses much of its force when we remember that Jesus' view of the Kingdom of God implied that the rule of Rome was doomed to destruction, and that it would be overthrown not by man's agency but by God's. Why then quibble over so small a matter as the payment of taxes? The head of Caesar on the coin stamps it as his own. Well, then, give him his own, for the time being. But the matter of real importance is your loyalty to God!

But the crowning proof-text of a militarist theology, and the basis of

¹ *Contra Faustum*, xxii. 74.

² Loisy, *Les Evangiles Synoptiques*, Vol. II, p. 336.

the whole traditional dogma concerning the relation of Church to State, has always been Paul's apology for the "higher powers", which must be quoted in full: "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God: and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves Judgement. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldst thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid ; for he heareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom . fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." ¹ We make the following observations:

(a) It seems not unlikely that Paul is here echoing the words of Jesus which we have just been discussing, and the passage must be read in the light of those words. For Paul is always to be interpreted by reference to Jesus, not Jesus by reference to Paul, It may be willingly conceded that Paul, who had himself experienced the benefits of Roman civil protection and seems to have been more than a little susceptible to the glamour of the imperial idea, ² puts a much greater stress than did Jesus on the duty of civil obedience. When we remember how he invoked the protection of Roman law, used the great military roads, relied for security and ease of travel upon the Pax Romana, it is little wonder that he saw in Roman law and order a divinely ordained instrument to assist the cause of his Master. Paul realized, too, the need of effecting a working understanding between Christianity and the civil authority, ³ and saw that this implied on the part of Christians a willingness to make certain concessions to the powers that be: they are to be loyal so far as such loyalty does not violate the higher loyalty due to Christ. It is interesting, however, to speculate whether Paul would have written in quite the same terms of the Roman "powers" if this letter had been penned at the close of his own life, still more if he had already seen

¹ Rom. Xiii. 1-7. Cf. also 1 Pet. ii, 13-14.

² He boasts of his Roman citizenship (Acts xxii. 28); he saw in Rome's discipline the force which prevented the final breaking in of the power of anti-Christ (2 Thess. .ii. 7) ; he turns Rome's political system into spiritual metaphors (Phil. iii. 20) ; the goal of his missionary efforts is the Imperial City herself (Acts xix, 21 ; xxiii. 11).

³ Similarly this appears to have been one of the motives of the author of the Book of Acts.

the beginnings of a general persecution of the Church. The Book of Revelation itself shows the revulsion of feeling of which the Christian Church was capable.

(b) When we base an argument on such words as "there is no power but of God ; and the powers that be are ordained of God",¹ it is important to be Quite clear, first about Paul's meaning, and second about what we are trying to prove on the basis of that meaning. Does Paul mean that the principle of ordered government for the protection of Justice is divinely ordained? Or does he mean that any particular government, which happens to be in power, is so because God Himself has ordained it? Clearly the former is the basic truth underlying his words. Yet it is perfectly obvious that the Apostle, believing as he does that on the whole the Roman government is a power for good, writes the words with the particular government of the day in view.² But when basing an argument upon Paul's words it is necessary for us to distinguish between the State as such, that is to say the body of citizens in their corporate capacity as the guardian of law and liberty, and the particular Government which happens to be in control at any given time. Some form of "State" we may well admit to be "ordained of God". But to insist upon a perfectly literal acceptance of the surface-meaning of Paul's words is to prove far too much, Not only would the existence of an ordered and authoritative civil government be proved to be been "ordained of God", but any gang which might set itself up as "the higher powers", and presumably any policy however godless, would likewise be declared to be "of God". Taking into consideration the circumstances under which Paul writes, and his desire that the infant Church should so far as possible keep on good terms with the civil authority, it is clear that these words of the Apostle must be used with no less careful discrimination than his much less tactful sayings about women and marriage. Yet traditional theology has again and again used the words to support the State's claim to unconditional authority over the will of its subjects.

(c) The use commonly made of the words "he beareth not the sword in vain"³ likewise results in proving far too much. The Apostle, it is argued, is here asserting that "the power" has an absolute and presumptive right to use what force he thinks fit (amounting if necessary to war) for the resistance of evil and the furtherance of State interests. But Paul was writing to the Christians at Rome, to subjects of an empire whose "higher

¹ Rom. xiii. 1.

² We feel the same difficulty with reference to the words which the Fourth Evangelist puts on Jesus' lips before Pilate; "Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." John xix. 11.

³ Rom. Xiii. 4.

powers" had no thought of limiting the use of force to what would now be considered moral ends. Our opponents cannot have it both ways. They may not claim the support of this text for an anti-Pacifist position, and then go on to explain that of course Paul, no less than they themselves, was thinking of the kind of force which a modern "Christian" government would employ. If the words sanction the use of force at all, then it is the kind of force with which Paul's readers were familiar, a use of force which included wars of aggression, the enslavement of captives, the martyring of Christians. which again suggests that it is well to temper our interpretation of Paul by reference both to Jesus' own teaching and also to the peculiar circumstances under which the Apostle was writing.

(d) In any case there is no explicit reference here to war: it is very doubtful whether it is even implicit; probably the question of war never entered Paul's mind as he wrote these verses. The issue before him is the attitude of the "power" to the good and the bad citizen. Clearly then the "power", as even the wording of the Westminster Confession implies, is the "civil magistrate", and the "sword" is the symbol of the "civil authority". No more may be deduced from the passage than the right of the civil authority to maintain order with a police force, which will restrain the evil-doer and bring him before a responsible Judge. The ethical distinction between such measures and the indiscriminate and irresponsible violence used in war, whereby the sword becomes an "avenger for wrath" not only to "him that doeth evil" but to the helpless and innocent, is basic to any sane Pacifist position. If it be objected that what is to-day the duty of a police-force was in the Roman world a military function, the reply is that the converse holds good also: it would be just as true to say that, so far as Paul himself had experience of it, the function of the military in the Roman world was the maintenance of civil order. It was thus that Paul knew the Roman soldier, and would doubtless approve of him.

(e) The whole passage must then be read as Paul's apology, written under the special circumstances which we have tried to indicate, for a system of civil government, which he admits indeed to be of Divine appointment, but would hardly allow to lie within the order of grace as revealed by Christ. Such a Christian order of society rests upon a different and higher principle, which is concisely stated in the very next paragraph; ¹ this may be summarized in its concluding words: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; love therefore is the fulfilment of the law." It is only in the light of what

¹ Rom. xiii. 8-10.

follows that we can see these verses, which we have just 'been discussing, in their true perspective.

(f) It is very important also to recognize the close connection of this section with the great Pacifist paragraph, ending with the watchword, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," by which it is immediately preceded.¹ Some of the older commentaries note this connection and explain it thus: the preceding "Pacifist" verses have suggested to Paul that he should next go on to safeguard the Christian Ethic, as intended by him to apply in the sphere of individual conduct, against possible misapplication in the sphere of civil obligation. "The idea of the civil power may have been suggested by verse 19 of the preceding chapter, 'Avenge not your-selves', etc., as being one of the ministers of the Divine wrath and retribution; . . . at any rate the juxtaposition of the two passages would serve to remind St. Paul's readers that the condemnation of individual vengeance and retaliation does not apply to the action of the State in enforcing law; for the State is God's minister, and it is the Just wrath of God which is acting through it."²

But it is hardly in the manner of the Apostle, first to expound the very essence of the ethic of Jesus, as he does in xii. 9-21, and then to proceed to qualify it. It is therefore not surprising that our most modern English Commentary on *Romans* treats the present passage not as a qualification of the way of life laid down in the previous chapter, but as an illustration of its application. Thus Professor C. H. Dodd,³ after quoting the words, "Be not overcome of evil. but overcome evil with good," as "the most creative element in Christian ethics; goes on to show how in the present passage Paul picks out the relation of the Christian to the State as one of the spheres within which he may practise that ethic. The famous words in Romans xiii. are in fact intended to urge upon the Church that same pacifist attitude to the State which was adopted by Jesus Himself. Incipient hostility on the part of the State is to be met not with resistance but with the submissiveness of those who know that "to them that love God all things work together for good".⁴ "We can hardly doubt that the possibility existed that the Church might be committed by Jewish-Christian enthusiasts to a disastrous policy of opposition to the Government." The verses in question are therefore "to be read, in the first instance, as a definite repudiation, on behalf of the Church, of the Zealot tendency in Judaism, which was already gathering strength for the final outbreak, and might well have repercussions among Christians. Paul makes his statement quite absolute.

¹ Rom. xii. 17-21.

² Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, in I.C.C., p. 366.

³ See *Romans*, in the Moffatt New Testament Commentary, pp. 202-4.

⁴ Rom. viii. 28.

Yet he was clearly prepared to disobey in the case of a conflict of loyalties. But he is thinking of contumacious defiance of the Empire such as was advocated by Jewish fanatics. Upon those who rebel, the legal penalty of rebellion will fall; and this, he seems to imply, is in fact the Divine Judgement on their action. It is tempting to see here a reference to the saying attributed to Jesus in Matthew xxvi. 52: 'Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish by, the sword'." We see, therefore, that these verses, which have too often been used to buttress the State's alleged divinely ordained authority to demand the citizen's service in war, might be much more aptly used to prove that Jesus' Pacifist outlook was shared to the full by His great Apostle.

(g) It is now possible to see how the passage fits in with what was said above ¹ concerning the "Wrath" of God. The traditional translation of verse 4, "he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil", is somewhat misleading. The magistrate is rather "a divine agent bringing the penalty of Wrath upon the evil-doer". "We then get Paul's theory of civil government in its true setting. It is part of the natural moral order, or divine appointment, but lying outside the order of grace revealed in Christ. It exhibits the principle of retribution just as it is exhibited in the natural laws of cause and effect to which the body and mind of man are subject. . . . The retributive system of Justice in a non-Christian society is also a manifestation of the same principle. . . . The Christian takes no part in the administration of a retributive system ; but, in so far as it serves moral ends, he must submit to it. ²

A study of the earliest Christian interpreters of Scripture shows without any ambiguity the relative value which they placed upon the claims of Caesar and the claims of God. They all echo the Apostles' cry, "We must obey God rather than men." ³ Admittedly, after the end of the second century the evidence of the Christian Fathers is much less unambiguous. The problem is further complicated by the fact that service in the army would involve, not only the violation of a Pacifist ethic, but also an oath of loyalty to the Emperor and participation in heathen religious rites. The latter, rather than any objection to war as such, is commonly stated by non-Pacifist apologists to be the chief reason for the refusal of Christians to take part in war. The question is much too involved to be treated fully here. ⁴ But the following two statements may be made with some assurance:

¹ Pp. 56 f.

² Dodd *Romans*, p. 204.

³ Acts v. 20.

⁴ See C. J. Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World*, for an adequate discussion.

Firstly, until about the close of the third quarter of the second century the attitude of the Church was quite consistently Pacifist. Harnack's conclusion is that no Christian would become a soldier after Baptism at least up to the time of Marcus Aurelius, say about A.D. 170. ¹ After that time signs of compromise become increasingly evident, but the Pacifist witness continues strong right up into the fourth century. Aristeides, Justin Martyr, Tatian in the second century, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Hippolytus in the third, Lactantius in the fourth, all make statements which show that they regard war as organized sin and a denial of the way of Jesus. In the Canons of Hippolytus it is stated that a soldier who confesses himself a Christian convert is to be excluded from the sacrament until he has done penance for the blood which he has shed.

Secondly, whatever influence the fear of pagan contamination may have had, when these writers give their reason for denouncing military service, it is nearly always the straight Christian-Pacifist objection which is stated; war is the antithesis of Christianity: "The weapons of blood are discarded, that the weapons of peace may be girded on." As Harnack again admits, and there is no greater authority on the age in question, the chief reason for the offence which the military profession gave to the earliest Christians was that "it was a war-calling, and Christianity had absolutely renounced war and the shedding of blood". Here are some characteristic statements; note how again and again the antithesis between Christian discipleship and the soldier's calling is underlined:

Justin Martyr (c. 150) declares that, while Christians will gladly die for Christ's sake, "We refrain from making war on our enemies, . . . For Caesar's soldiers possess nothing which they can lose more precious than their life, while our love goes out to that eternal life which God will give us by His might." ² Clement of Alexandria, though elsewhere he shows traces of ambiguity, says (c. 200) that Christ "with His word and with His blood gathers the army that sheds no blood". "We Christians", writes Origen (first half of third century) "no longer take up sword against nation, nor do we learn to make war any more, having become children of peace, for the sake of Jesus who is our leader." "As we by our prayers vanquish all demons who stir up war. . . we in this way are much more helpful to the kings than those who go into the field for them. . . . And none fight better for the king than we do. We do not indeed fight under him, although he require it, but we fight on his behalf. forming a special army, an army of piety, by offering our prayers to God:" ³ "Shall it be held lawful", asks Tertullian (c. 200), "to

¹ Harnack, *Militia Christi*, p. 47 f.

³ *Contra Celsum*, v. 33; viii, 73.

² Apology, 1, II, 39.

make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? And shall the son of peace take part in battle when it does not become him even to sue at law?" ¹ "How shall a Christian man wage war, nay, how shall he even be a soldier in peace-time, without the sword, which the Lord had taken away? For although soldiers had come to John, and had received the formula of their rule; although even a centurion had believed; the Lord afterwards, in disarming Peter, ungirded every soldier." ² Cyprian (died 258) protests against the dual standard of morality which brings it about that "if a murder is committed privately it is a crime, but if it happens with State authority courage is the name for it". ³ And as late as the beginning of the fourth century we find Lactantius declaring: "It will not be lawful for a Just man to serve as a soldier, for Justice itself is his military service, nor to accuse anyone of a capital offence, because it makes no difference whether thou kill with a sword or with a word, since killing itself is forbidden. And so, in this commandment of God, no exception at all ought to be made to the rule that it is always wrong to kill a man, whom God had wished to be regarded as a sacrosanct creature." ⁴ These statements will appear all the more striking if we remember that they are made by men for whom the Old Testament, with its frequent glorification of nationalism and militarism, was the Word of God in as full a sense as the New. "They were saved", writes Cadoux, "by the soundness of their own moral intuitions from drawing from these ancient precedents the erroneous conclusions affecting their own conduct, which some modern controversialists are so eager to draw from them." ⁵

It is surprising that orthodox theology is still so blind to the witness of primitive Christianity, and remains tied hand and foot by the traditional dogma of Church and State which was laboriously evolved from the beginning of the fourth century onwards. For the crucial change in the attitude of the Church to the claims of Caesar began, of course, after the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Christianity in 312. The Faith was now exalted, or debased, into a State religion, and Christians naturally began to look to the State for patronage, and in return more and more became reconciled to Caesar's claims, even where these might seem to compromise the New Testament ethic. And, as usual, war provides the touch-stone. The result of this changed attitude is thus summarized by Harnack: "After the winning over of Constantine the barrier between the *milites Christi* and the army was removed. The *milites Christi* put themselves at the disposal of the

¹ *De Corona*, xi.

² *De Idololatria*, xix.

³ *Epistles*, 1, 6.

⁴ *Divinae Institutiones*, vi. 20, 15-17.

⁵ Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World*, p. 118; quoted by Heering, op. cit. p. 47, to whom I also owe several of these quotations.

Emperor. The soldier of Christ became *ipso facto* a soldier of Caesar." ¹ The Church even went the length of pronouncing the primitive Christian attitude liable to punishment, and as early as 314 the Council of Arles decreed that "they who throw away their weapons in time of peace shall be excommunicated". Harnack rightly terms this decision "astonishing and shocking", and adds that by it "the Church completely revised her attitude to the army and war; . . . She even created saints on behalf of the Christian soldiers, and relegated to the monastic orders her old views about war". ²

It was Athanasius, "the Father of orthodoxy", who was one of the first to set the seal of official approval upon a subservience to State claims which involves in fact a double-morality; and once again it is the question of war which provides the test: "Murder is not permitted", he writes, "but to kill one's adversary in war is both lawful and praiseworthy." ³ Augustine, too, vigorously defends the right of the State to require the service of Christians in war, which for him always appears as a police measure against evil-doers. One can almost hear the modern dictator's apology for a "civilizing" war of aggression: "He who is bereft of his freedom, because he misused it by doing evil, is conquered in his own best interests." ⁴ Yet Augustine is quite obviously troubled in conscience by the dual ethic which his hypothesis involves; and in his great work *De Civitate Dei* he is the first systematically to define the relations between the Church and the State. He insists that the *Civitas Terrena*, as represented by the Roman Empire, is both ordained of God and under God's sovereignty, and that God righteously uses it as an instrument of war for the accomplishment of His will: "So likewise does He with the times and ends of war, be it His pleasure justly to correct or mercifully to pity mankind, ending them sooner or later, as He wills." ⁵ Yet he cannot wholly break with the older antithesis between Church and State, for according to him it is only in the *Civitas Dei*, which he practically identifies with the Church, that God's reign is perfectly manifested and the Christian ethic can come to its full expression.

Obviously such a hesitant attempt to harmonize conflicting loyalties could not permanently satisfy the demands of a Catholic theology which was becoming more and more subservient to the State. The dualism between Church and State, so apparent in Augustine's *Civitas Terrena* and *Civitas Dei*, is resolved into a systematic unity by Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century), who insists far more strongly than Augustine, not only that

¹ *Militia Christi*, p. 87.

² *Op. cit.* p. 92.

³ Athanasius: *Epistle to Ammonius*,

⁴ *Epistle to Marcellinus*, xiv.

⁵ *De Civ. Dei* v. 22.

the political State exists in the providence of God, but also that it is the natural and indispensable foundation of the Kingdom of Grace as represented by the Church. State and Church together thus become a single *corpus Christianum*. The Church might have "conquered" the world, but in at least an equal measure the world had penetrated the Church, and the purity of the Christian ethic suffered correspondingly. Aquinas is still the Catholic apologist *par excellence* for the "just war", when it is "waged by the command of the ruler for a righteous cause and with a good intention." But Catholicism after Aquinas was driven to recognize that the keenest Christian consciences were certain still to feel the tension between the earthly citizenship and the citizenship of the Kingdom of God. It therefore more and more encouraged such to withdraw from the world into the cloister, where alone pure Christian truth might be lived out. Of course this is, in fact, a recognition of a dual Christian standard; and it is still the Roman Catholic solution of the insoluble question, how to preserve both a Christianity which is subservient to a non-Christian or semi-Christian State and also the full Gospel ethic.

The development of Reformed thought is even more significant. Luther, in his revolt against the cloister, was obliged to insist that the pure ethic of the Sermon on the Mount was the true life for every Christian. When compelled to come to some understanding with the State, he still retained the idea of a single *corpus Christianum*; but he took refuge in the explanation that this "body" consisted of two "domains", a spiritual and a worldly; the one, in which the Christian is under the sanctifying grace of God, the other "put under the sword", in which by the ordinance of God evil men are kept in restraint and outward peace and order preserved by the State. These two domains demand a different morality; for the "order of grace" there is a personal morality based on the Sermon on the Mount; for the "order of creation" there is a State morality; and only the former is wholly Christian. When we ask, as we are bound to ask, how the Christian who has to live in both these domains can contrive thus to practise a dual morality, Luther replies that in his personal life and relations he must abide by the first order and the full ethic of the Gospel: as a Christian citizen he must abide in loyalty to the second order which is "put under the sword". "In spirit Christians are subject to none but Christ alone, but with life and goods they are nevertheless subject to the secular authority, and obliged to be obedient to it." ¹ The antithesis accordingly is now not between two distinct classes of people, as in

¹ *Ob Kriegleute auch in seligem Stande sein können*, Luthers Werke; Weimar Ed., XIX, p. 629.

the Catholic solution; the two conflicting types of ethic are, as Troeltsch puts it, "brought together into a dual way of life for every individual; the compromise is shifted to more deeply inward ground".¹ Luther frankly draws the conclusion that, whatever be true of the inward personal life, the entire outward life of the Christian is to be in submission to the sovereign and to the sovereign's conceptions of the will of God. And once again the implications of such a doctrine come out most clearly with respect to war: "The hand which bears such a sword (the sword of government) is as such no longer man's hand but God's; and not man it is, but God, who hangs, breaks on the wheel, beheads, strangles and wages war. . . . It is not I that smites, thrusts and kills, but God and my Prince, whose servants are my hand and life."² When Luther's teaching is thus set forth, it is difficult perhaps to realize that this doctrine is still the orthodox basis in the Protestant world for the dominant view concerning the ethics of Church and State. Yet it can hardly be called a solution of the problem at all; for man is one personality, and possesses one inward and spiritual life, which, so far from being exclusive of his outward life, is deeply affected by it, and in turn very largely determines it. As Troeltsch Justly remarks: "The Protestant way out of the strain of a dual morality, personal and official, is not a solution, but a reformulation of the problem."³

It must be confessed that Calvin comes no nearer than does Luther to an adequate solution. While taking over many of Luther's arguments he thinks to avoid the dualistic character of Lutheran ethics, and the discrepancy between personal and State morality, by insisting that God's Word comes to a man in Scripture as a whole, that this Word when related to human conduct comes primarily as a commandment, and that therefore even in the Old Testament commandments, one and all, we are to recognize, not a relatively Christian ethic, but one that is wholly Christian. The obvious contradiction between the thorough-going love-ethic of the Sermon on the Mount and the savage demands of Old Testament nationalism is resolved as follows: God's love is primarily the love of the Sovereign, who by His omnipotence elects some and reprobates others ; similarly man's love is above all else the will to give God the glory that is His due by keeping His commandments, as they are laid down in Old Testament and New Testament alike. Calvin can thus see the *corpus Christianum* as a single, undivided domain". "God's glory is involved in this alliance of Church and State. And everything that can minister to that glory is not only permitted but

¹ *Die Soziallehren der Christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, p. 505; quoted by Heering, op. cit. p. 75.

² *Ob Kriegersleute*, p. 626.

³ Op. cit. p. 509.

required, and does not need the expedient of a so-called 'official morality' to Justify it." ¹ In particular Calvin has no difficulty in Justifying war; for he can always appeal to the Old Testament, with which the Sermon on the Mount, in view of the unity of Scripture, cannot be in conflict. As Heering remarks at the close of an interesting study, "Calvinism has thus solved the problem of Christianity and State morality by bringing the State and its instruments of power under a 'Christian' law, basing this law mainly on the Old Testament, and putting the New Testament motive of love in the background". ² When it is objected that the New Testament nowhere gives its sanction to war, but rather condemns it outright, Calvin replies that war is a concern of the State, that the causes which the Old Testament heroes found for waging war still remain, and that "in this respect Christ altered nothing whatever by His coming".

It is as well that we should frankly recognize that it is upon this foundation of bad theology and worse Scriptural interpretation that the teaching of the Westminster Confession is based, when it declares in Chapter XXIII, "God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under Him over the people for His own glory and the public good ; and, to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil-doers. . . . *Christians. . . may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasions.*" ³ If war be, as we believe we have demonstrated, contrary to the ethic of the Gospel, than so long as the Christian citizen assents to the State's claim to wage a "just and necessary" war, just so long is he also assenting to the doctrine of a dual-ethic and a radical distinction between personal and collective morality. The Church has largely lost the moral leadership of the world because it has taken this road of compromise, and to-day even in Christian circles this countenancing, often no doubt almost unconsciously, of such a double standard of morality is playing havoc with the sincerity of our entire Christianity. What is to be the final outcome? "If Christianity does not set itself against this exalting of the State above morality, the spirit of the world will soon enough break loose from its fastness of non-moral political power, and will gradually re-conquer every region which the Christian conscience has subdued to itself in the course of twenty centuries." ⁴

¹ Heering, op. cit. p. 82.

³ Cf. also the 37th Article of the Church of England,

² Op. cit. p. 82.

⁴ Max Huber, *Internationale politiek en Evangelie*, p. 26 ; quoted by Heering, op. cit. p. 166.

It is certain that the tension between the ethics of Church and State, between Christ and Caesar, can never wholly be resolved. For both occupy a common field of action on which neither can afford to give way. The Church, no less than the State, is committed to the belief that the life of man finds its meaning and fulfilment only in a community of persons, free persons, but still units in a community. And only in relation to such a community can the Church fulfil her mission. "It is no longer sufficient that the Church should bear its witness only or chiefly to individuals. Its witness can be effective only as a continual challenge and criticism of the prevailing ideas and ways of life, in so far as these are contradictory of the Christian understanding of man and his responsibilities. In a community consciously committed to a contrary view, and most of all where the State has adopted a totalitarian policy, this witness can be borne only at the cost of suffering and martyrdom:" ¹ Our problem inevitably resolves itself into the question as to where our final loyalty lies; and the conflict of loyalties can be resolved only in the old way: "We must obey God rather than men." ² The Christian Pacifist does not deny that the State is a Divine institution; he only affirms that there are certain State activities which the Christian conscience can never endorse. He gives due loyalty to Caesar, but he also recognizes that a point is sometimes reached when a choice must be made between defiance of Caesar and apostasy from Christ. He is willing to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but only when he is not thereby precluded from rendering to God the things that are God's.

1 J. H. Oldham, Church, Community and State, p. 19.

2 Acts v. 29.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH

The tension of which we have been speaking has been raised to breaking-point by the Second World War and more recent developments. Area bombing, extermination bombing, the atomic bomb, the napalm bomb in Korea, the threat of germ warfare—all these "improved" methods of warfare have in the sacred name of "military necessity" put the Christian conscience under a compulsion that can no longer be endured. Doubtless the argument that modern war is less defensible ethically than war in the past may be rejected as purely sentimental. The horrors of war can be abolished only when we abolish war itself. Yet one must admit the cogency of the truth, expressed by Hegel in his *Logik*, that all things have their measure and that, when the measure is passed through quantitative alteration, there is a qualitative change also: "things cease to be what they were." There is surely some moral obtuseness about the man who can see no ethical difference between, let us say, the defence of Thermopylae by Leonidas and his Spartans, and the dropping of atomic bombs upon the defenceless population of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The cruel dilemma in which the Church was caught, between the Christian necessity of "drawing the line" somewhere and the practical impossibility, under the plea of military necessity, of so doing, became more and more apparent during the course of the late war. "The whole Christian tradition," wrote Dr. J. H. Oldham in the *Christian News Letter* in September, 1940, "is opposed to the view that everything is permissible in war in order to win. . . . I agree that the line is hard to draw: I am sure there is a line to be drawn somewhere. Christianity has no meaning unless for every man there is a point where he says, 'Here I stand before an absolute; this is unconditionally forbidden'." A month later he was even more emphatic: "The deliberate killing of non-combatants is murder. If war degenerates into wilful slaughter of the innocent, Christians must either become Pacifists or give up their religion." But as the war dragged on the line to be drawn was pushed farther and farther back. In May, 1943, we find Dr. Oldham writing: "Where the line is to be drawn between attacks on military targets, on the one hand, and indiscriminate slaughter and wanton destruction, on the other, is a decision which, so far as I can see, must be left to the Government,

the military authorities, and the fighting men." And finally two months later: "It is the acceptance of war that increasingly seems to me to be the fundamental issue, while the precise point where the line is to be drawn is of secondary importance. . . . If you accept war, military necessity, in so far as it is a real necessity, must prevail." A tragic landslide surely from Christian standards, and this on the part of a publication which was unrivalled in its efforts to preserve Christian values in the midst of war! But at least we know where we stand. Once reject uncompromising Christian Pacifism, and the Church is committed (with the assent of its leaders!) to the acceptance of total war, with no moral reservations whatever save such as "military necessity" may allow.

That the pressure upon the Christian conscience had become intolerable was proved at the meeting of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam in 1948 when a group of non-Pacifists, led by the Bishop of Chichester, took up a new position mid-way between Pacifist and non-pacifist. The Report of the Council starts with the assertion (which has been reaffirmed at every such conference for the past twenty years): "We are one in proclaiming to all mankind that war is contrary to the will of God; war as a method of settling disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ." But there unanimity ends, and the Report goes on to state that "three broad positions are maintained: (1) In the absence of impartial supranational institutions, there are those who hold that military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law, and that citizens must be distinctly taught that it is their duty to defend the law by force if necessary. (2) Others, again, refuse military service of all kinds, convinced that an absolute witness against war and for peace is for them the will of God, and they desire that the Church should speak to the same effect (3) There are those who hold that, even though entering a war may be a Christian's duty in particular circumstances, modern warfare, with its mass destruction, *can never be an act of justice*" (italics mine). It is this third group which represents a new point of view on the part of non-pacifist Christians; for, though they still defend participation in an activity which they have confessed to be contrary to the will of God, they nevertheless acknowledge that the ostensible aim of any Justifiable war, namely the vindication of justice, is in fact unrealisable. "The immense use of air forces and the discovery of atomic and other new weapons render widespread and indiscriminate destruction inherent in the whole conduct of modern war in a sense never experienced in past conflicts. In these circumstances the tradition of a just war, requiring a just cause and the use of just means, is now challenged. Law may require

the sanction of force, but when war breaks out force is used on a scale which tends to destroy the basis on which law exists."

The emergence of this third group in the non-Pacifist camp is extraordinarily significant, for it is in fact a confession that the whole theological basis of the Christian non-pacifist position has collapsed. For Catholic and Protestant theologians alike, for Luther and Calvin no less than for Ambrose, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, the sole apology for waging war has been the traditional doctrine of the "just war." It is on this that rests the statement in the XXXIX Articles that "it is lawful for Christians, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars" (the wording in the XLII Articles of 1553 is "serve in *lawful* wars"), and in the Westminster Confession of Faith that Christians "may lawfully now under the New Testament wage war upon Just and necessary occasions:" But all through the centuries theologians have laid down the strictest conditions to which such a "just" war must conform. Indeed the very purpose of the "doctrine" as formulated by successive theologians was (a) to provide justification for Christian participation in war, which might otherwise be challenged as contrary to Christian teaching and principle, and (b) to lay down conditions defining not only the "just cause" but also, be it noted, the "just means" by which alone such a cause might be legitimately defended. To justify participation by Christians not only must the cause be wholly just, but the means must be "restrained within the limits of justice and love"; and here the greatest emphasis has always been laid upon the necessity of discrimination between combatants and non-combatants.

Now in theory at least we may still claim that it is possible to determine whether or no a cause is "just". But in practice, once national passions are aroused and mass propaganda is in full swing, can we be confident that it will ever be possible to reach a clear judgement as to even the relative Justice of any cause? It is however with regard to the means of warfare that non-Pacifist theologians now find themselves in an *impasse*. In a most significant Report presented by a Special Commission to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1951 the majority, while still adhering to the traditional non-pacifist position, yet make the following damaging admissions: "Certain features of the war, foreshadowed in the First World War-obliteration bombing, unconditional surrender, mass propaganda, the atomic bomb-raised acute doubts in the minds of many, by no means only of Pacifists, as to the relevance of speaking in terms of justice' with regard to either the ends or means of modern war:" "Our experience of the methods of modern warfare, and our Just apprehensions of their future

potential extension, have made obsolete most of the traditional distinctions as to 'just means' of warfare." "There is to-day a widespread and well-grounded fear that the results of a major conflict would be conditions of such devastation and anarchy as would destroy the foundations on which justice is possible. This is vividly represented in many minds to-day by the appalling devastation inflicted on the Koreans in the course of a war believed to be justly undertaken against aggression." "We have therefore to acknowledge that any doctrine of the Just War which is based upon the idea of an accepted code of behaviour to be enforced upon, or accepted by, warring powers is unreal in the present circumstances." "We must therefore declare that the methods of modern war are so different from those in the minds of the formulators of the traditional Doctrine as to render many of their arguments irrelevant." Nevertheless, against the logic of their whole argument, the Commission amazingly concludes that "the traditional doctrine of the Just War is still relevant in the conditions of our atomic age", and that there is "no reason to depart from the received teaching that Christians may lawfully wage war upon Just and necessary occasions." In the light of its own admissions the Commission surely acknowledges the bankruptcy of non-pacifist theology when it finally confesses that, short of the Pacifist position, "we can see no Christian alternative to the statement of the Westminster Confession."

To claim that war even for a Just cause can itself be a "just war" irrespective of the means employed is possible only on the assumption that the end justifies the means, however unjust the latter may in itself be. But to admit that necessity knows no law and that a worthy end Justifies the means however sinful, is surely the final betrayal of Christian principle. "Nothing is more terrible", writes Jacques Maritain, "more cause of scandal, than to see . . . evil barbarous means employed by men claiming to act in the name of Christian order. . . . The character of the end is already predetermined in the means. . . . It is a truth inscribed in the very nature of things, that Christendom will recreate itself by Christian means, or it will perish completely." In view of the virtual collapse of the doctrine of the "Just War" non-pacifists are left without any theological standing-ground. If the non-pacifist majority in the Church are to maintain their position, then it appears that they must restate their case on a basis quite different from that adopted by the majority at Amsterdam, namely that "military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law." Of such a restatement there is up to date

no sign whatever: failing it, Pacifists may well claim that their case wins by default.

Why is it then that the vast majority of thoughtful Christians, most of them Just as sincere in their convictions as are Christian Pacifists, still fail to find in the New Testament a clear condemnation, in all conceivable circumstances, of participation in war? We have already considered in Chapters Three and Four some of the arguments which have been used to "water down" what to a pacifist appears to be self-evident truth. But to-day it is the orthodox Protestant theologians, particularly the dialectical school, who are the chief champions of the non-Pacifist position; and foremost among them is Reinhold Niebuhr, whose writings have perhaps done more than anything else to salve the uncomfortable conscience of the non-Pacifist, and even to wean many Pacifists from the pure milk of their faith. ¹

The argument runs somewhat as follows: (1) We must start from the basic fact of human sin. Pacifists are deluded because they reject the Christian doctrine of original sin, and imagine that man is essentially good at some level of his being, and therefore able to respond to the demands of an ethic of absolute love. The truth is that the inherent sinfulness of human nature expresses itself in a "will-to-live" and a "will-to-power" that are diametrically opposed to Jesus' ethic, which finds a man's fullest attainment in a willingness to "lose his life," and insists that the way of greatness is the way of humble service. Even the sincerest Christian is therefore quite incapable of obedience to the way of Christ. Though we know that we ought to love our neighbours as ourselves, there is "a law in our members which wars against the law that is in our mind," so that in fact we love first and foremost our own selves. And if this be true of the Christian individual, much more is it true of social, political and national groups. For it is one of Niebuhr's postulates that "human collectives are less moral than the individuals which compose them." Who looking at the world to-day can deny that the collective sin of man against man has reached diabolical proportions? And what possible relevance can an ethic of absolute love have in such a world?

(2) Secondly, given a sinful world and the impracticability of the way of absolute love, the nearest approximation to the ideal is to be found in "equal justice." This, rather than love, is the only practical guide to conduct in the dealings of individual with individual, and still more of community with community; and because all men are sinners justice can be achieved only by the strict maintenance of law. This in turn demands a certain degree of

¹ For a fuller treatment of Niebuhr's views see the present writer's *Relevance of the Impossible*

(Fellowship of Reconciliation).

Just coercion on the one hand, and resistance to unjust coercion and tyranny on the other hand; and in the last resort military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law.

(3) Thirdly, it follows that the full Christian ethic is not immediately applicable to social and international problems. At most it has a merely relative relevance. It provides us with an ideal standard against which we can measure the magnitude of our past failures, and an ultimate criterion by which every attempt to build a better world must be judged. But also, and for Niebuhr most significantly, the ethic of absolute love gives us "a principle of discriminate criticism between forms of Justice." That is to say, when there are two or more alternatives, both admittedly falling short of the ideal, the law of love provides the measuring-stick by which we may determine which of these several "second-bests" approximates most closely to the ideal. It may even lay upon us the duty of accepting what, in the light of the ideal, is not "the best of several second-bests" but rather "the less of two evils" - for example, according to Niebuhr, war rather than submission to tyranny. The Christian Pacifist is blameworthy because he too often refuses to make such relative judgements, to discriminate between alternative second-bests, to choose the lesser of two evils, and with a good conscience to act upon such a choice.

This is a powerful argument. Has the New Testament any answer? Take first the primacy given to "equal Justice" as the goal of Christian action. The plain truth is that the New Testament has surprisingly little to say on the subject; indeed "Justice" can hardly be said to be a New Testament category at all! And the reason is plain enough. In Chapter Six we tried to show how Jesus taught that the Law, which is the foundation of any "equal Justice", finds its only true "fulfilment" in His own new ethic, and in particular in the specifically "Pacifist" features in it. That is to say, Jesus did not regard "justice" as an end in itself. He taught that Justice truly "fulfilled" is nothing less than love, rather than love a by-product of justice; that if we aim at love we shall establish justice by the way; that we can in fact secure Niebuhr's "equal Justice" only when we aim primarily not at it, but at the love-relationship of which justice is but an uncompleted part. But in the light of what we have written above concerning the collapse of the traditional doctrine of the Just War, this charge that Pacifism betrays justice through the exaltation of love is little more than academic. It comes ill from those who have at last been compelled themselves to admit that even war in a just cause can no longer now itself be called an "act of Justice. '

But what of the argument that man is so corrupted by sin as to be incapable, even if he would, of obedience to the ethic of love? Over against the facile and shallow humanism of yesterday this is no doubt a much-needed corrective. The New Testament has no false optimism about man, and no illusions about the radical nature of sin and evil. Yet from beginning to end it is throbbing with Joy and hope, simply because its writers are conscious that a new Power has come into the world to transform it. Jesus Himself can hardly have shared Niebuhr's view of human nature! When He wished to teach us what God is like He pointed to the God-like in men. Even in the worst sinner He could discover the hidden good and appeal to it, knowing that the good and not the evil is the essential man. He tells us that it is when a sinner "comes to himself" that he "arises and goes to his Father": the man's true self is that within him which responds to God. We may appeal furthermore to the New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit and of "enabling grace" which the dialectical theologians so strangely ignore. As Charles Raven has said, "Our discipleship is not our own; we are not living in our own strength; we are vitalised and controlled by the good gift of the Holy Ghost. Humanly speaking our task is impossible; Christianly speaking our resources are infinite." ¹ St. Paul at least clearly believed in such "enabling grace:" Otherwise how can he speak of "his power that worketh in me mightily," or pray to be "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man," or boast that "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"? Indeed for Paul every step towards the attainment of the Christian ideal is a "fruit of the Spirit," that is a product of the new life of which the Spirit is the author: and this new life is the first result of the Christian's status "in Christ." "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation": consequently "the servant of Christ is capable of a perfect obedience because he has been transformed in the very constitution of his being". ² Henceforward the moral demands of the Christian ethic become "the law of the Spirit" and are spontaneously and joyfully obeyed. Furthermore, if it be argued that the essential immorality of collective man Justifies the application of a lower ethical standard to the community than to individuals (an idea which Dean Inge has called "that ruinous dualism of public and private ethics . . . which by openly proclaiming that the teaching of Christ has no reference to the conduct of States has made modern Europe a hell upon earth") we reply that according to the New Testament it is not in the individual but in the Church as the redeemed community that the work of the Holy Spirit is

¹ *The Theological Bases of Christian Pacifism*, 31.

² E. F. Scott, *The Spirit in the New Testament*, 140.

³ *The Fall of the Idols*, 179.

most powerfully manifested. The existence of such a "fellowship of the Spirit" surely disproves the stark pessimism of *Moral Man and Immoral Society* with its thesis that collective man can never rise above the moral level of a mob, and must always and only act in his own self-interest. Remember that we are speaking of "the Church which is His Body", and that our concern at the moment is not Pacifism as a practical political policy, but the Church's duty and her capacity for obedience.

Finally what of the argument that in the practical affairs of everyday life, and particularly in social and international relationships, the full Christian ethic is impossible of achievement, and has therefore merely a relative relevance? Here too the New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit is very much to the point. As William Robinson has splendidly said: "A Christian attitude which neglects the power of the Holy Spirit will regard the Christian ethic as an 'impossible possible', that is, as an *ideal* which can never in any sense be achieved. But an attitude which takes fully into account the power of the Holy Spirit will regard the Christian ethic as a possible impossible', that is, as a *reality* beyond mere human achievement, but not beyond the achievement of God through a faithful Church. The Church is not set in the world to achieve a *mundane* 'possible', but to achieve a *heavenly* 'impossible'; in other words she is set in the world to work 'the works of God'."

¹ Indeed one of the most tragic features in the present lamentable world-situation has been the Church's failure to use the power which, in Jesus Christ and His Spirit, God has placed in her hands, and which through the Church's obedience might have been released for the world's redemption. Christian Pacifists have often been warned by self-styled "realists" that we shall never bring in the Kingdom of God by acting in an evil world as if it were already here. Yet this is, I suggest, exactly what Jesus did teach: if only men were prepared to take God at His word, and to order their lives here and now by the laws of a transcendent Kingdom, then the power of God would answer the cry of faith, and the Kingdom would break in upon them and take them unawares. After all, if Jesus' ethical teaching is really irrelevant in this present sinful world, so also is His whole work of redemption. For, as William Robinson again writes: "There is no possibility of separating the ethic of Jesus from who Jesus is . . . If we cannot have the ethic apart from the Man, neither can we have the Man apart from the ethic. The ethic expresses the Spirit of Christ and reveals the character of God. If it is not to be practised, and is indeed impracticable, then Christ Himself and

¹ Evil Confronted, 8 (Fellowship of Reconciliation).

His passion and death become equally irrelevant in the kind of world that He lived in and we live in. Both have relevance only for an ideal world other than one of flesh and blood. Christianity then falls under the judgement of being no more than a celestial soporific.”¹

There is no more subtle argument against Christian Pacifism than this plea that the ethic of Jesus has merely a relative relevance and that the Christian must therefore be prepared to accept "the lesser of two evils." Let us look at it a little more closely in the light of the New Testament, "The choice," writes John Lewis in his *Case against Pacifism*, "is never between rigid obedience to the moral law and wilful transgression but . . . between two courses *both of which have evil consequences*." Now the words in italics (mine) are dangerously ambiguous. Consequences may be "evil" in the sense that they involve evil-doing and therefore sin; or they may be "evil" in the sense that they involve material loss or suffering or even death. Now it is likely that any one of us may be confronted with a situation when every possible alternative line of action involves "evil" in the second sense. But "evil" in the first sense? The New Testament would be reduced to nonsense if we were compelled to believe that God ever places a Christian in an *impasse* to escape from which he is compelled of deliberate choice to commit sin, the "lesser" rather than the greater sin no doubt, but nevertheless sin. "God is faithful . . . who will with the temptation also make a *way of escape*." Between two ways of sinning there is always a "third alternative"; it may be a very costly way both for ourselves and for those dear to us; it may indeed, as it was in Jesus' case, be the way of the Cross. But it is there to be taken, if only the Church has the courage and the faith.

Consider once again Jesus' dilemma as He faced the crisis of His own ministry. Was He caught in this kind of *impasse* from which there was no escape except by the choice of "the lesser evil"? He might have argued that the cause for which He stood was so precious that it would be a lesser evil to call up His "twelve legions of angels" and annihilate the evil men who were plotting His destruction, than to see His disciples scattered as the result of His death, and His friends suffering, and His kingdom going down, as must have seemed inevitable, in irretrievable ruin. He might have refused at that point to be bound by the law of absolute love which He Himself had preached. He might have said, "I have the choice of two evils, to see my Gospel destroyed, or to destroy my enemies. I must choose the lesser evil. I must destroy these evil men." But Jesus refused to be caught in this dilemma; He refused thus to try to calculate consequences; He

¹ op. cit. 4-5.

believed that sacrificial love was a creative power which could completely change a situation and create the most unexpected consequences. And so He chose the Cross; and the consequence was not the eclipse of His cause, but its victory; not only Calvary but also the Resurrection.

What then of this argument that in a national emergency the Christian must be prepared to participate in war as the "lesser evil"? Pacifists are not alone in questioning the quite unwarrantable assumption that war is in fact always, or ever, the lesser evil. As Dean Inge, not himself a Pacifist, puts it: "The burden of proof always lies with the nation that chooses war, and the reasons alleged are generally, in part at least, hypocritical. That war is the greatest evil in human life, and that no good can ever come of it, are in my opinion certain." ¹ But granted that to many the consequences of Pacifism may seem likely to be more evil than war itself, we Christians have no right thus to calculate consequences. We may, like Jesus, seem likely to fail the whole way to Calvary. But the first question is not, What will be the consequences? or Will the Pacifist way "work"? The first question is, Is it Christ's way? And if the answer is "yes", then we have no right to calculate the consequences of our choice, because it is just at that point of choice, just by choosing what we know to be the way of Christ, that we open the door for the inrush of God's own power, which, if only we had faith, might so incalculably transform the whole situation as to confound our fears about the consequences of refusing war. And if not? Why then there is still the way of the Cross, for individuals and for nations alike. And even for a nation the Cross might mean Resurrection and ultimate victory. As Dean Inge again insists, "The notion of a martyr-nation, giving itself up to injustice and spoliation for the most sacred of all causes, cannot be dismissed with contempt." ²

The Christian Church to-day is challenged to take the lead in a crusade for world peace. The very word "peace" has become so suspect that it seldom appears in print save in inverted commas! It is for the Church to rehabilitate it; and no institution in existence has such a comprehensive, world-wide organisation wherewith to take the initiative in so great a task. If our Church leaders suspect, as well they may, the motives of sundry other self-styled champions of "peace", then let the Church herself be in the vanguard of an equally devoted and enthusiastic campaign in the name of the Prince of Peace. Nothing would more surely recreate her own life; for as the World Council of Churches confessed at Amsterdam, "the Church appears impotent to deal with the realities of the human situation because it

¹ The Fall of the Idols, 185.

² op. cit. 201.

has failed to speak effectively on the subject of war:” If that effective word were spoken, and an effective lead given, it is certain that the people would rally to the Church as they have not done for three or four generations.

As a first step in this new lead the Church will declare her refusal to countenance war under any circumstances whatever, partly because even such a bare act of renunciation will signify a clean cut with the policy which has led to the present tragic "Fall of Christianity," but chiefly because such a refusal is a necessary clearing of the decks for a positive campaign of reconciliation which must other-wise inevitably be stultified from the outset. Moreover she will announce to the world that her refusal to countenance war is absolute. To the objection that the essence of Christian living is not to bind oneself in advance, but to seek to read the will of God in each new situation as it arises, the Church will reply that every new situation grows out of a previous one, and that to fail to break with the errors of the past is to share the guilt of creating a "new situation" in which the way of Christ will be no less 'impracticable' than it is declared to be to-day. There can be no question that if all Christians were to announce that henceforth they would refuse absolutely to participate in warfare; if the Church as such were to give notice that under no conditions would she give her official sanction and spiritual blessing to war measures; and if this pronouncement were made on the definite basis of unalterable Christian principle, so that governments might know that no amount of pressure or propaganda would move millions of their best citizens to break a vow made before God-then the whole world situation might well be radically changed. The ideal, of course, would be action by the Church Catholic and Universal, or at least by the World Council of Churches. Failing that one national Church must take the initiative. Until it does so, individual Christians must continue to bear unremitting witness. After all, is not that the story of almost all the great redemptive movements of mankind?

Meanwhile we Christian pacifists must learn to face the possible cost of peace. The man who in his own soul's life has experienced the miracle of reconciliation finds that a new obligation has been laid upon him. Himself reconciled to God through the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, he knows himself to be called to serve that same holy love, and to follow that same reconciling way in all his dealings with his fellow-men, and to do so even when the way of obedience seems likely to be the way of appalling risk, It lead Jesus to the Cross. But beyond the Cross was the Resurrection; and it was Jesus Crucified and Risen who, when "the disciples were assembled in fear, . . . stood in the midst and said unto them, Peace be unto you."

APPENDIX

THE NEW TESTAMENT SPEAKS

THE ROOTS OF WAR

"Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and covet, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war; ye have not because ye ask not:" (James iv. 1 f.)

"The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these . . . enmities, strife, Jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions . . . of the which I forewarn you, . . . that they which practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . peace. . . . Against such there is no law." (Gal. v. 19-23.)

"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon:" (Matt. vi. 24.)

THE WAY OF PEACE

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of goodwill." (Luke ii, 14.)

"Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." (John xiv. 27.)

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God." (Matt. v. 9.)

"The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." (Jas. iii. 18.)

"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace." (Rom. x. 15.)

"Stand therefore . . . having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace:" (Eph, vi. 14 f.)

"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace:" (Eph. iv. 1-3.)

"Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord:" (Heb. xii. 14.)

"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom. xvi. 20.)

"Finally, brethren . . . be perfected; be comforted; be of the same mind; live in peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you." (2 Cor. Xiii. 11.)

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 7.)

THE VICTORY OF SELFLESSNESS

"Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls:" (Matt. xi. 29.)

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the

form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.

. . . He humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow." (Phil. ii. 5-10.)

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt. v. 3, 5.)

"Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. xx. 25-8.)

"Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Matt. xxiii. 12.)

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." (1 Pet. v. 5 f.)

THE COMANDMENT OF LOVE

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth." (Matt. xxii. 37-40.)

"The whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Gal. v. 14 .)

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law. . . . Owe no man anything, save to love one another." (Rom. xiii. 10, 8.)

"Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be, sons of your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 44 f.)

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples." (John xiii. 34 f.)

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he hat loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he,hath not seen." (1 John iv. 20.)

"Love suffereth long, and is kind ; love . . . seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." (1 Cor. Xiii.4 ff.)

"The Lord make you to increase and abound in love toward one another, and toward all men." (1 Thess. iii. 12.)

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently." (1 Pet. i. 22.)

"Above all things be fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins." (1 Pet. iv. 8.)

THE DUTY OF FORGIVENESS

"Jesus said, Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.)

"Whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." (Mark xi. 25.)

"If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." (Luke xvii. 3 f.)

"Put on therefore . . . a heart of compassion . . . forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye." (Col. iii. 12 f.)

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." (Eph. iv. 31 f.)

CHRIST'S WAY OF MEETING EVIL

"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Pet. ii. 21 ff.)

"I came not to Judge the world, but to save the world." (John xii. 47.)

"When his disciples saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them? But he turned and rebuked them." (Luke ix. 54 f.)

"Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we intreat." (1 Cor. iv. 12.)

"One only is the lawgiver and judge, even he who is able to save and to destroy: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbour?" (Jas. iv. 12.)

"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." (Matt. vii. 12.)

"Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you:" (Luke vi. 27 f.)

"Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matt. v. 39.)

"Why not rather take wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?" (+ Cor. vi. 7.)

"The Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all forbearing in meekness, correcting them that oppose themselves." (2 Tim. ii. 24.)

"Bless them that persecute you; bless, and curse not. . . . Render to no man evil for evil. . . . If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men. Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense. saith the Lord. But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. xii. 14 ff.)

"See that none render unto any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all." (1 Thess. v. 15.)

"Finally, be ye all like minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender hearted, humble minded: not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but contrariwise blessing; for hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing." (1 Pet. iii. 8 f.)

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

"God commendeth his own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.)

"Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame:" (Heb. xii. 2.)

"For as much then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind." (1 Pet. iv. 1.)

"We are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." (2 Cor. iv. 8-10.)

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. xvi. 24.)

"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." (Heb. xiii. 12 f.)

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

"If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." (Rom, v. 10 f.)

"It was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross." (Col. i. 19 f.)

"He is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity . . . that he might create in himself of the twain one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh." (Eph. ii. 14-17.)

"All things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation: (2 Cor. v. 18 f.)

THE FAMILY OF NATIONS

"I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named:" (Eph. iii. 14 f.)

"Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." (Eph. iv. 25.)

"In one spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit." (Cor. xii. 13.)

"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him." (Rom. x. 12.)

"There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male or female: for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 28.)

"There cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all." (Col. iii. 11.)

THE MORAL EQUIVALENT OF WAR

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on the life eternal." (1 Tim. vi. 12.)

"This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." (1 John v. 4.)

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strong holds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the Knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ:" (2 Cor. x. 3-5.)

"For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand," (Eph. vi. 12 f.)

"Take thy part in suffering hardship, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus: (2 Tim. ii. 3.)

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day: and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 7 f.)