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KILLING OUR MINISTERS

THAT is what is being done, certainly, to many of the ministers who have churches with a large membership. While valiantly struggling to untangle the problems of a thousand members or more they are at the same time expected to deliver one and perhaps three well thought out, fresh, and inspiring messages each week; to be prepared to give about three hundred additional addresses in the course of the year; to supervise the whole administrative machinery of the church; to instruct the young people in the Christian religion and to guide their activities; to have a part in all the worthwhile community projects; to spend much time in prayer and meditation; to read extensively; to raise a model family and always to be as unruffled and refreshing as a morning-glory. Many ministers have broken under the strain. Dr. J. Melvin Smith, medical director for the Presbyterian Minister's Fund for the past eighteen years, tells us that "hypertensive diseases which were comparatively few at the turn of the century, now account for about 60 percent of the mortality in the Fund. The indications are that the strains which cause these diseases, usually showing after fifty, are becoming effective much earlier and are an increasing threat to the younger man." His advice? "Work hard, but stop far short of exhaustion."

A large number of ministers have uttered a cry for help. Many sessions have responded and have recommended that an assistant minister, or an associate minister, or a Director of Religious Education, or anything you want to call the person be secured. An enthusiastic letter is sent by the pastor to the Seminary asking for a list of possible candidates for the position. How great is the disappointment to learn that none is available! In a period of a few months the Seminary received more than one hundred and sixty-six requests for assistants, men or women, but was able to provide only nine. What are we to do? What are the sources of supply? We suggest at least four.

I.

The minister seeking an assistant first looks to the Seniors who are about to graduate from the Seminary. He discovers that most of them have already made up their minds to take a church of their own, to enter the Foreign or National Mission field, or to do further study. While all of the Seniors recognize the distinct advantages that there are in serving for a period of time under the supervision and direction of a capable minister—advantages similar to those which come to a young medical man serving as an intern in a hospital—still only a few are inclined toward

THE PATH OUT OF THIS WILDERNESS

A CHARTER FOR THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR

EMILE CAILLIET

CHRISTIAN scholarship has to face the fact that our Western culture has adapted itself to Greek ways of thinking. Only too much so, for the verb 'to adapt' is often too close for comfort to the verb 'to adopt.' All human beings dispute the same ground with the same make-up. Together they confront the same reality—nay, the same Bible, the same Christ. Yet they view this same reality from different angles. Those who hold an essentially Greek outlook have challenged those who hold a Hebrew-Christian outlook, to such a degree that Christian scholars themselves would seem to have in some instances become apologetic with regard to their faith, even to have had recourse to appeasement. Many a man of good-will has abandoned the clear-cut Bible categories to seek refuge in vague forms of mysticism. The less we affirm, the less we offend, of course. But then, to blur an issue is never a good way of disposing of that same issue. While always anxious to safeguard the genuine Christian experience of direct communion with the living God of the Bible, we should constantly beware of contemporary forms of panpsychism, which are basically heathen in character.

The Christian scholar must find a path out of this wilderness. A charter must be formulated which will allow him to remain in perfect good faith both a Christian and a scholar.

'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth.'

We do not mean to suggest that the Greeks were not religious. Such a state-

ment would amount to illiteracy. Why, the whole Greek countryside, its groves and streams, its hills and the blue Mediterranean sky over them, were teeming with spirits suggested by local myths and wonderful stories. The rustic life thrived on nature spirits, as the metropolitan life did with its gods and goddesses. Even the great gods of mythology, such as Apollo, changed in nature and priesthood according to whether they were worshipped in Delos or in Delphi. The Homeric epics were born in such a world. So were the dramas of Sophocles and even the dialogues of Plato. In due time, Orphism came to be expressed in terms of Pythagorean philosophy.

To the Greeks, the world was 'full of gods'; but these were parts of nature. Nature itself was divine. According to Plato's *Timaeus* the celestial bodies were 'visible' gods, and even for the matter-of-fact biologist, Aristotle, the gods were to be found in the most insignificant living being. That is why it seemed a pity to the scholastics to refrain from making use of such views, and conveying the notion of God's omnipresence in His creation.

But then, the Greek universe was not a *created* universe, while the idea of creation is one of the main features of the Biblical outlook. In the Bible little scope is given to mere mysticism, but instead there is a magnificent Hebrew imagery suggesting the *reality* of God, differing considerably from sheer philosophical monotheism. And just as there is in the entire Bible no instance of a process of logic to prove the being of God, so is there no effort at a scientific demonstration of the newness of

the world. As Thomas Aquinas has shown in his *Summa Theologica*, the fact that "the world did not always exist we hold by faith alone: it cannot be proved demonstratively . . . neither can the newness of the world be demonstrated from the efficient cause, which acts by will. For the will of God cannot be investigated by reason. . . ." ¹ There can be no useful debate on this question, therefore, from the point of view of modern philosophy which proceeds from doubt. The latter would not lead anyone anywhere.

Let us rather learn from *The Letter to the Hebrews*: "By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear." (II:3) Neither can modern science disagree, since it has nothing to say on the subject. What the Hebrew-Christian revelation does in fact, is to project a new light upon a realm of thought in which the contemporary physicist finds himself entirely in the dark. Again, this revealed description of existence will be for the Christian student something which adequately expresses his adoring sense of a sovereign God and his own dependence upon Him.

As the well-read and tolerant man he should be, the Christian student will appreciate the faith of the ancient Greeks, its sincerity, its grandeur, and the poetic charm of its naturism. He will appreciate the fact that while our modern drama deserted the cathedral for the market place, and eventually for a pagan structure, Aeschylus took tragedy from the market place and brought it to the shrine of Dionysus on the slope of the Acropolis below the Parthenon. He will not be sparing in his praise of the Fundamentalist Sophocles, one of the most religious men of Athens, who, although upset by the unbelief of his contemporaries in oracles, yet was willing to learn from these same contemporaries. The Christian student will also appreciate

the fact that while formalism has too often parched the sensitiveness of Christian disciples rather indifferent to the ways in which God clothes the grass of the fields, scholars such as Thaddaeus Zielinski in his *Religion of Ancient Greece* still exult with contagious enthusiasm in a life infused with spirit and divinity, in the fragrant grove, in the ripening grace of the garden. At this point, our student will even excuse the Greek scholar if he forgets himself to the point of calling 'poison' a religion which tears away from nature our feelings of gratitude.

The Christian student will acknowledge with genuine admiration the truly religious inspiration of Hellenistic metaphysics. In saying this we are not merely referring to the one who has deserved to be called the 'divine' Plato, especially for such works as the half mythological *Timaeus* where his 'Absolute God' took the form of a demiurge endowed with providential concern and will. We also mean Aristotle himself, thinking especially of the Twelfth Book of his *Metaphysics*, the most restrained, yet the most moving hymn ever dedicated by the Greek mind to the One who moves all things through love. The Seventh Book of Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* is less known perhaps in this connection; yet, what a tribute it pays (vii, xiv) to the divine in us!

When the Christian student attains with Aristotle unto the concept of *theoria*, as unto the pure contemplation of a contemplative God, he knows that sharing in this contemplation would make him happy as "none of the other animals is happy, since they in no way share in this contemplation."² Yet he knows also that such an

¹ *Summa Theologica*, I.Q. 46. Art. 2, *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. by Anton C. Pegis, New York: Random House, 2 v., 1945, v. I, 453.

² *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. by W. D. Ross, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1925, X, 8, 1178b.

attitude is necessarily esthetic, and does not bring him so far as to be on speaking terms with any divine Reality. The charm does not make communication possible. Indeed any thought of relationship would be as disturbing at this juncture, as would a clumsy movement on the part of a photographer aiming at a fixed star many thousands of light-years away.

When finally the Christian student sees a materialist like Epicurus paying tribute to the gods, he comes to realize that such speculations as those of Greek philosophy on the 'nature of the gods' cannot be reconciled with the Hebrew-Christian revealed truth, unless a high price be paid for such a feat. While the Bible speaks of God's creation, the Greek divinities had simply nothing to do with the mechanical processes of nature. Indeed Greek philosophy, once freed from mythology and from obsolete cosmological connotations, spoke of transformism.

In his *Physics* Aristotle set out to prove that the world is eternal. This in a way was an improvement over the other philosophers, some of whom were satisfied with statements as to the eternity of matter. The plain fact is, any compromise with matter appeared to all of them as incompatible with the metaphysical perfection of God. On the other hand the Jews could not compromise on the notion of creation *ex nihilo*, which excluded the Greek idea of the eternity of matter.

To the Greeks, then, everything came about by transformation, the transformation of something into something else. In this manner the Aristotelian soul became the realization of potentialities in which the universe manifested its existence. Hence, the mood of panpsychism, which, in our day, has reappeared in Bergson's *élan vital* and in Whitehead's notion of Process and Reality. And thus we find Whitehead's first article of faith formulated as follows: "We know nothing be-

yond this temporal world and the formative elements which jointly constitute its character. The temporal world and its formative elements constitute for us the all-inclusive universe."³

This quotation is taken from the Lowell Lectures, 1926, entitled, interestingly enough, *Religion in the Making*. Now, religion is seen by Whitehead to be "in the making" because, attempting to evolve "notions which strike more deeply into the root of reality," progress in truth is at the same time progress in "truth of science and truth of religion."⁴ Again, such progress reaches its final principle in the conviction that "*there is a wisdom in the nature of things, from which flow our direction of practice, and our possibility of the theoretical analysis of fact.*"⁵ A naturalistic creed of this sort sounds rather weird in our atomic age! It may be that natural science is called upon to provide us with a new organized system of thought destined in many respects to play the part of theology, yet Christian theology from the Apostle Paul to Reinhold Niebuhr tallies far better than the naturism of Whitehead with available data on our human situation.

We admit that a religion may be said to be "in the making" when the best god it can evolve is one "who is the ground antecedent to transition," who "must include all possibilities of physical value conceptually, thereby holding the ideal forms apart in equal, conceptual realization of knowledge."⁶ Another great scientist was closer to the truth when, during a night of humble meditation and prayer over his

³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, Lowell Lectures, 1926, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1926, p. 90.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143. Italics ours. Compare with editorial "Is God Process or Person?", *The Christian Century*, LXIV, 5, January 29, 1947, 134-137.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

open Bible he received the final assurance that the true God, the Living God is the "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and scholars."⁷ The vital affirmation undergirding the entire Bible is that of the *reality* of this Living God. Consequently, we know the basic truth that matters, and our thinking should proceed from that known principle. This being the case, the old Aramaic verse of Jeremiah must also be vindicated, which reads: "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, *even* they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens." (10:11). Let the Christian, therefore, steer clear of the tragedy that befell Hamlet, the tragedy of unreality.

What may be said to be "in the making" is the individual and historical interpretation of revealed truth; it is the language spoken by the faith of a particular person and of a particular time. We further agree that the process according to which revealed truth is received and finally assimilated by the individual is an extremely complex one. Emil Brunner speaks in this connection of 'truth as an encounter' (Wahrheit als Begegnung).⁸ Yet the whole point at issue is that God has not left us in the dark. *He has spoken.*

Should our religious life be left without the body of truth revealed or proclaimed in our Hebrew-Christian tradition, we should understand what Bunyan meant when he saw the discouraging clouds of confusion hang over the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Anyone who has attended a student forum on religion knows how soon the point may be reached when nothing is taken for granted any longer. Should we try to live without the Word that God has spoken, we may even be left with little more than a confusing psychic experience reflected in our soul, of the dynamism of nature. Nay, we may even

become susceptible to the most extravagant interpretations of such an experience.

I for one cannot echo Dr. McGiffert's exultation as he hails the fact that divine immanence proved to be the characteristic doctrine of the nineteenth century, although it did make faith "infinitely easier than it was under the old regime,"⁹ as Dr. Fosdick put it. Panpsychism of that variety leads inevitably to certain 'unformulated experiences,' such as the one undergone by a College Junior and suggested by Professor Gordon W. Allport of the Harvard Psychology Department. It follows, quoted in the student's own words: "I remember once a few years ago I had gone for a walk alone and came to the top of a hill. It was a beautiful day, and I stretched out my arms, and had a most indescribable feeling of fullness and completeness. I remember I said out loud something that sounds foolish now. I said, 'I know all, I see all, I am all.'" To which the professor answered approvingly, "That was a typical mystical experience."¹⁰ And so it truly was. And so were the ravings of the Sibyl above her pit at Cumae, whose trance was so powerfully suggested by Virgil. So also were the 'intuitions' of Hitler in the midst of Wagnerian paraphernalia and pagan myth. Buchenwald was the direct outcome of such 'primitive' mysticism. Any such mysticism is to be feared

⁷ *Oeuvres de Blaise Pascal*, Brunshvig ed., Paris: Hachette, 14v., v. 12, 4.

⁸ Title of a short volume translated by Amandus W. Loos under the title *The Divine-Human Encounter*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943.

⁹ Harry E. Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible*, New York: Macmillan, 1924, p. 267.

¹⁰ Gordon W. Allport, *The Roots of Religion*, published by the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, New York, pp. 15, 16. In all justice to Professor Allport quoted above, it should be added that his acknowledgment of the said experience was but a way of drawing the student within the area of revealed Christianity.

in an age wherein totalitarianism lurks as an ever-present danger. Totalitarianism is a primitive feature, as you know. Already contemporary authors are suggesting models of myths, which, mind you, our military authorities may find any day painted in red on the walls of the caves they are mapping out all over the land. Just in case. . . .

And thus it comes about that our speculations on Christian scholarship, far from being held aloof as mere fancies of the mind, may turn out to be strangely relevant in the present world of men and affairs.

Is there a Meaning to History?

From the Stoic's viewpoint, a wise man was not concerned with time. How could he be, in view of the Greek conception of God? In the context of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (I, ii, 2, 339), the tumult of meaningless cycles of history glittered endlessly. Man knew that his fate was bound in everyday circumstances in accordance with astrological processes. At the lower level of popular mythology it may become possible, according to Jocasta's words in *Oedipus King*, to "cheat Apollo of his will."¹¹ The very gods 'that did not make the heavens or the earth' were competing with man. As Herodotus saw it, they were wont to dock everything that stood out. On every side therefore, was excess danger, coming as it did either from gods that were jealous of man's success, or from man himself if he were tempted to go astray. In the long run the good life must needs be formulated in terms of the humanistic doctrine of the mean, and sophistication alone save man from fabulous forms of doom. As we know, sophistication in many subtle, insidious ways would sap off all its unique character the old Athenian tradition, when men were paid to argue for victory rather than for truth. As a satire of this very disease, Aris-

tophanes wrote that revealing comedy, *The Clouds*.

Now, contrast for a moment, such concepts with the Hebrew Christian notion of history. Even the individual's life history is included in the framework of a created universe distinct from its Creator, yet utterly dependent on Him. For that Creator is still at work at the roaring loom of events; nay, using history as a means of Self-disclosure, He is ever at work. History, thus unfolded, is a tale either of obedience or of would-be rebellion on the part of men and nations. In *De Civitate Dei* Augustine would give full scope to the implications of this purposeful Hebrew-Christian concept of time. Indeed it is to this concept that we owe the best of our secular philosophy of history, secularized though it was by Voltaire in his *Essai sur les Moeurs* and by Condorcet in his *Esquisse d'un Tableau historique des Progrès de l'esprit humain*.

As the Creator breaks in upon eternity in a meaningful intervention, that is, as time begins, it becomes possible for the individual creature to refer his own life to his Creator. Thus in the Tenth Book of the *Confessions* we find this prayer: "O Thou my true life, my God, I will pass even beyond this power of mine which is called memory¹²—I will pass beyond it, that I may proceed to Thee." Incidentally, Augustine's magnificent analysis of the process of conscience and memory¹³ turns out to have blazed the trail for those of Freud and Bergson; indeed, we may truly consider Augustine to be the founder of modern psychology. So true is it that knowledge concerning human nature is

¹¹ Sophocles, *Oedipus King of Thebes*, v.v. 721, 722, trans. by Gilbert Murray, Oxford University Press, 1911, p. 42.

¹² *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. by J. G. Pilkington, New York: Liveright, 1943, Book 10, 17:26, n. 238.

¹³ Cf. especially Book 10, ch. 8-19.

seen through the Bible tallies with the facts as we, at our best, know them.

We have now left far behind those Greek divinities, be they the gods of popular religion or the atomistic material gods of learned philosophy, which in any event paid not attention to man. What could *they* have in common with my Creator, my Redeemer, the Master of my soul who knows all my comings in and my goings forth?

The fact remains that all attempts at a compromise between Judaism and Hellenism under the general heading of Scholasticism have had dire results in at least two connections. Not only has the historical figure of Jesus been lost in metaphysical and cosmological speculations but the conclusions reached have proven unacceptable to our modern nominalism. Thus experimental science has shown that the so-called 'essences' or 'substances' were in fact the definition not of given realities, but of their names.

The Outlook of the Scientist

When everything has been said and done, when 'the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth' have been dispelled by the nominalism of modern thought, the basic affirmation which we inherit from Greek wisdom is that the simplest of our statements, even in the world of axioms, must remain beyond verification. Mathematicians will be among the first to subscribe to this last assertion. Our very notion of causality, according to *The Philosophy of Physics* of Max Planck "cannot be demonstrated any more than it can be logically refuted: it is neither correct nor incorrect; it is a heuristic principle, it points the way, and . . . it is the most valuable pointer that we possess in order to find a path through the confusion of events, and in order to know in what direction the scientific investigation must proceed so that it shall reach useful re-

sults. The law of causality lays hold of the awakening soul of the child and compels it continually to ask why; it accompanies the scientist through the whole course of his life and continually places new problems before him."¹⁴

Thus is human truth made in the likeness of its axioms and methods. To the scientist, truth is that which everyone has been given a chance to discuss and no one can discuss any longer for the time being. It is a battle which ends temporarily like that of Corneille's hero fighting against the Moors, because there is no warrior left on the battlefield, and there are as yet no reinforcements within sight—until the next 'last war.'

The scientist is anti-doctrinal by nature. Even a biologist like Claude Bernard, who lived during the golden age of positivism, rejected positivism, as he would "avoid every species of system, because systems are not found in nature, but only in the mind of man. Positivism, like the philosophic systems which it rejects in the name of science, has the fault of being a system." And so, to Claude Bernard, experimental medicine, far from being a new system, was, on the contrary, the negation of all systems. Its advent would then "cause all individual views to disappear from the science, to be replaced by impersonal and general theories which, as in other sciences, would be only a regular and logical coordination of facts furnished by science."¹⁵

It is only natural, then, that neither the mathematician nor the natural scientist will have anything to do with human authority. When he carried on his research on the problem of the vacuum, Pascal thus

¹⁴ Max Planck, *The Philosophy of Physics*, trans. by W. H. Johnston, New York, W. W. Norton Co., 1936, pp. 82, 83.

¹⁵ Claude Bernard, *Introduction à la Médecine expérimentale*, trans. by Henry C. Greene, Ann Arbor: Edwards Bros., 1940, pp. 218, 221.

came to grips with a Jesuit who proceeded upon the authority of Aristotle. May I advise you to read some day the *Fragment of a Preface to the Treatise on the Vacuum*, which is soon to appear in translation in the *Great Shorter Works of Pascal*?¹⁸

Proper Jurisdiction Restored

In this all-important document, the great Christian scholar lays down as a primary principle, that it is absolutely necessary to restore to experimental science the naturalistic and rationalistic method which properly belongs to it. He therefore pities "the blindness of those who offer only authority as their proof in matters of physics, instead of setting forth proofs based on reasoning or experimentation." We must give heart, he says, "to those timid people who dare not invent anything in physics." Now we know who some of those timid fellows were.

Father Noël was one of them; in fact he stood out as Pascal's unhappy opponent. In a previous letter Pascal had already reminded him of a "universal rule which provides a basis for the manner in which science is treated in the schools and which is employed by people who seek what is genuinely sound and satisfies an exacting mind." We should never pass a decisive judgment either against or in favor of a proposition without affirming or denying one of the following two conditions. Either, of itself the proposition seems so clearly and so distinctly evident to the senses or to reason, as the case may be, that the mind has no grounds for doubting its certainty; this is what we call *principles* or *axioms*, such as, for example, *if equals are added to equals, the sums will be equal*. Or it is deduced by infallible and necessary conclusions from such principles or axioms on whose certainty depends the full certainty of the conclusions which were carefully drawn therefrom. An example of this kind is that *the three*

angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. . . . Everything based on one of these two conditions is certain and authentic, and all that is based on neither of them passes for doubtful and uncertain. "Apart from such scientific rigor," added Pascal, "we can only speak now of *vision*, now of *caprice*, at times of *fancy*, sometimes of *idea*, and at most of *fine thought*."

That is that. Now let us mark the reservation which follows immediately upon the preceding statements. "And we reserve for the mysteries of faith, which the Holy Spirit himself has revealed, this submission of spirit which directs our belief to mysteries that are hidden from the senses and from reason."

But then, what were some of the novelty-seeking theologians of those days doing with such mysteries? Let us revert to the *Fragment of a Preface to the Treaty on the Vacuum* for our answer. It seems that the very same people—meaning here Jesuits like Father Noël—who would offer only authority as their proof in matters where only reasoning and experimentation are called for, resort solely to reasoning in theology, instead of the authority of the Scriptures and the Church Fathers. To Pascal, then, they seem foolhardy people whose insolence should be confounded.

Thus Pascal drew a sharp dividing line between scientific matter pertaining to rationalism and naturalism on the one hand, and on the other the mysteries of faith which are God's, and pertain to theology.

As we take that position three centuries after Pascal, it must be with the frank admission that a part of what Pascal classified under the heading of theology, has now been claimed by new disciplines. Nevertheless, the basic principle formulated by him is left intact.

¹⁸ To be published in 1947 by The Westminster Press, Philadelphia. The following translations are taken from the manuscript.

The Method Put to the Test

To all intent and purpose, the mathematical sciences are not affected by this most vital of all issues. Neither are the sciences of nature affected, apart from the fact that the data of revelation, according to which this is a created and God-controlled universe, enrich considerably the notion of cosmos which we owe to the Greeks. No conflict thus far, as every element of our problem slips nicely into position.

As we come to the social sciences, especially history, the advantage is decidedly on the side of the Christian scholar. He at least will be protected from the modern secularized views, wherein the notions of Progress and evolution have been so strangely merged. Documenting a work recently published in the series of the American Philosophical Society, I had to canvass the background of this question. Great was my amazement in realizing how artificial the process of merging had been. We will clarify this sufficiently by noting that the evolution element appears once more in this case to have been arbitrarily lifted from the biological realm where it belonged, and applied in turn, in the most hit-and-miss way, to data where it never did or ever will belong. As for the element of Progress, it seems that, as a distant cousin of long-since forgotten Christian ancestors, it became a step-child of Enlightenment and is now totally estranged in the present postwar world.

This is not a side issue. We know, do we not, that writers in our day force the contents of the Bible into such categories of 'evolution-progress' foreign to its central message. Some of the subject matter in the Book of books becomes material for anthropological speculation. As these authors proceed from the crudeness of lowly origins to the refinement of highly idealistic notions of religion,

are they not re-writing the Bible in a rather daring manner? For with them sin becomes an evolutionary survival from man's animal origins—which view, by the way, proves to be quite unfair to animals! Contemporary 'primitives' so-called, some of whom turned out to have been degenerate,¹⁷ are most gratuitously made to represent somehow the pattern for our distant ancestors. Yet considering the brain size of the Neanderthal type, for example, and what we know of his life for good measure, it seems that those of our distant ancestors who can be traced back with any certainty, were as intelligent as we are. Their main trouble doubtless was that they lacked labor-saving devices, and therefore could not devise accelerated programs!

To proceed, Bible material is more or less arranged according to the now familiar pattern of 'evolution progress.' The God of the Old Testament is said to have been first 'conceived of' as an awe-inspiring divinity, finally to become in modern man's enlightened understanding, an invisible Friend no longer to be feared. The fact is that fear as well as love enters, even in our day, into the notion of that which is called 'sacred.' While it is true that we have in the Bible a progressive revelation culminating in the incarnation of the Son of God, nevertheless God remains, even and especially in the teaching of Jesus, the awe-inspiring Sovereign to be feared. How would it be, may I ask, if someone properly selecting, classifying and organizing his material, wrote a paradoxical history of the evolution of the 'idea' of God from Abraham, the Friend of God, to the Jonathan Edwards of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"? Far from being facetious in these last remarks,

¹⁷ See for example, Raoul Allier, *Le Non-Civilisé et Nous*, Paris: Payot, 1927, especially Chap. III 'Magie et désintégration morale,' pp. 86-131.

I am only availing myself of a use of irony which is perfectly valid according to Scripture. Pascal has a great page on the subject.

The Method Further Clarified

As we proceed from the social sciences through ethico-religious realities, we feel the need for further clarification of the distinction between what pertains to rationalism and naturalism on the one hand, and, on the other, what proves to be an authoritative matter of revelation.

Let us find our example in the case of one of the most respected scholars in our day, Professor A. T. Olmstead, Professor of Oriental History at the University of Chicago. In his recent book, *Jesus in the Light of History*, he seeks reasons for the failure of Jesus to marry, soon admitting his strange quest to be "quite futile." Why then raise such a shocking question, some of you will ask? But this is not the only point at issue. What is interesting is the mental attitude of Professor Olmstead as he faces his problem. Jesus' failure to marry, he writes, "cannot be explained as due to consciousness of a future mission, for this consciousness did not come to Jesus until decades after he had reached the normal age of marriage."¹⁸ Now, how can any historian know when you or I became aware of such or such a notion? How may we know ourselves, even?

This I give as a typical instance of the unreality and irrelevance of what is called objective historiography. We have come far beyond the "peril of modernizing Jesus," as you will well realize without my having to call the thing by name. Let us rather see here a decidedly misplaced use of objectivity. Such objectivity would indeed seem to belong to the realm of geometry, for, as Pascal wrote, the characteristic trait of the geometrician who is only a geometrician, is that he does not see what is in front of him! Need we add that

such apparent lack of discretion would seem to disqualify the purely secular historical method in the realm of Christian scholarship? Jesus is neither a curve nor a diagram. There comes a moment when would-be accuracy becomes so inadequate as to miss the point.

Now, secular scholarship may try to amend its methods by using more imagination, and this has been attempted. Only too much. Concluding an agnostic study of 'the problem of Jesus,' Professor Guignebert of the Sorbonne had to denounce the abuse of constantly gratuitous hypotheses—"abus de l'hypothèse en l'air"¹⁹ is his untranslatable French way of putting it. Yet the learned book of Professor Guignebert misses the point also. Like Matthew Arnold, he does not seem to have been on speaking terms with the Divinity.

Kierkegaard would help us throw light on such misunderstandings, as he draws a dividing line which practically coincides with that of Pascal, followed thus far. The great Danish philosopher distinguishes between scientific matter, which naturally becomes an object of acquisition to which the personal life of the teacher is accidental, and ethico-religious matter, Christian realities wherein commitment is the essential thing. Certainly such a distinction should not be made to affirm that Christian scholarship did not count in the consideration of Kierkegaard. His whole life work would rise up as a protest against this. The context reveals that Kierkegaard simply attests to the fact of Christianity as it finally emerges from the consideration of the reverent historian. Surely the time has come when we should set forth and act upon it.

Kierkegaard reveals to us in effect the great divide which all along we have been

¹⁸ A. T. Olmstead, *Jesus in the Light of History*, New York: Scribner's, 1942, p. 56.

¹⁹ Charles Guignebert, *Le Problème de Jésus*, Paris: Flammarion, 1914, p. 157.

trying to detect—one which further separates in the midst of ethico-religious realities modern values from Christian virtues, the coldly analytic mind from the reverent mind, and Greek intellectualism from the Hebrew-Christian way of thinking—the latter proving to be, in the last analysis, *existential*. Kierkegaard's words must be read in the context of his experience. He finally parted ways with Hegel in order to find the truth, which was truth for himself, and to appropriate that discovery. This meant turning away from pure speculation, from the System, and directing his efforts to reality, so as to exist, to stand out—*ex-stare*. Heidegger suggests the same experience as the fact of *Da-sein*, *In-der-Welt-sein*—which Walter Lowrie translated 'thereness,' 'the fact to be in the world.'

There must be first of all a deliberate renunciation of the purely esthetic enjoyment of life; then, a lone venturing forth far upon the deep, with seventy thousand

fathoms of water under us, in the firm assurance that one shall be supported, then, met in the fullness of time, to be given at last sealed orders. As in the case of Isaac, this venture of faith may imply a temporary, awe-inspiring suspension of the 'ethical' until one 'be found by the Truth.

Now, tell me, once this has happened, how could the Lord's freeman, without great betrayal to himself and to his Master, make Truth the object of a detached, pleasure-seeking occupation?

At his death-bed Kierkegaard said to his old friend, Pastor Boesen, "You must note that I have seen from the very inside of Christianity."²⁰ So also will the Christian student consider from the inside phenomena which are observed from the outside by purely professional men. This may be one of the reasons why these two classes of men will not get the same viewpoint.

²⁰ Walter Lowrie, *A Short Life of Kierkegaard*, Princeton University Press, 1942, p. 239.

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