

who was occupied throughout his life by the problem of church and culture—Ernst Troeltsch. The present book in one sense undertakes to do no more than to supplement and in part to correct his work on *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*. Troeltsch has taught me to respect the multiformity and individuality of men and movements in Christian history, to be loath to force this rich variety into prefashioned, conceptual molds, and yet to seek *logos in mythos*, reason in history, essence in existence. He has helped me to accept and to profit by the acceptance of the relativity not only of historical objects but, more, of the historical subject, the observer and interpreter. If I think of my essay as an effort to correct Troeltsch's analyses of the encounters of church and world it is mostly because I try to understand this historical relativism in the light of theological and theo-centric relativism. I believe that it is an aberration of faith as well as of reason to absolutize the finite but that all this relative history of finite men and movements is under the governance of the absolute God. Isaiah 10, I Corinthians 12 and Augustine's *City of God* indicate the context in which the relativities of history make sense. In the analysis of the five main types which I have substituted for Troeltsch's three, I have received the greatest help from Professor Etienne Gilson's *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*, as well as fruitful suggestions from C. J. Jung's *Psychological Types*.

Many colleagues, relatives, and friends have helped me with counsel, criticism, and encouragement in the course of the effort to give my reflections the unity and precision which written communication demands in the measure that the complexity of the data and the ability of the worker permit. I record my special thanks to my colleagues, Professors Paul Schubert and Raymond Morris, to my sister and brother, Professors Hulda and Reinhold Niebuhr, to Mr. Dudley Zuver of Harper & Brothers, at whose suggestion the last chapter was added, to my daughter and to Mrs. Dorothy Ansley who assisted with the typescript, to Professor Edwin Penick, who gave most careful attention to proof sheets and supplied the index, and to my wife. I recollect with gratitude the kindly reception given me at Austin by President Stitt and his colleagues and the part they played in helping me to bring this work to its present, tentative conclusion.

New Haven, Connecticut

H. RICHARD NIEBUHR

CHAPTER I



The Enduring Problem

I. THE PROBLEM

A many-sided debate about the relations of Christianity and civilization is being carried on in our time. Historians and theologians, statesmen and churchmen, Catholics and Protestants, Christians and anti-Christians participate in it. It is carried on publicly by opposing parties and privately in the conflicts of conscience. Sometimes it is concentrated on special issues, such as those of the place of Christian faith in general education or of Christian ethics in economic life. Sometimes it deals with broad questions of the church's responsibility for social order or of the need for a new separation of Christ's followers from the world.

The debate is as confused as it is many-sided. When it seems that the issue has been clearly defined as lying between the exponents of a Christian civilization and the non-Christian defenders of a wholly secularized society, new perplexities arise as devoted believers seem to make common cause with secularists, calling, for instance, for the elimination of religion from public education, or for the Christian support of apparently anti-Christian political movements. So many voices are heard, so many confident but diverse assertions about the Christian answer to the social problem are being made, so many issues

are raised, that bewilderment and uncertainty beset many Christians.

In this situation it is helpful to remember that the question of Christianity and civilization is by no means a new one; that Christian perplexity in this area has been perennial, and that the problem has been an enduring one through all the Christian centuries. It is helpful also to recall that the repeated struggles of Christians with this problem have yielded no single Christian answer, but only a series of typical answers which together, for faith, represent phases of the strategy of the militant church in the world. That strategy, however, being in the mind of the Captain rather than of any lieutenants, is not under the control of the latter. Christ's answer to the problem of human culture is one thing, Christian answers are another; yet his followers are assured that he uses their various works in accomplishing his own. It is the purpose of the following chapters to set forth typical Christian answers to the problem of Christ and culture and so to contribute to the mutual understanding of variant and often conflicting Christian groups. The belief which lies back of this effort, however, is the conviction that Christ as living Lord is answering the question in the totality of history and life in a fashion which transcends the wisdom of all his interpreters yet employs their partial insights and their necessary conflicts.

The enduring problem evidently arose in the days of Jesus Christ's humanity when he who "was a Jew and . . . remained a Jew till his last breath"¹ confronted Jewish culture with a hard challenge. Rabbi Klausner has described in modern terms how the problem of Jesus and culture must have appeared to the Pharisees and Sadducees, and has defended their repudiation of the Nazarene on the ground that he imperiled Jewish civiliza-

¹ Klausner, Joseph, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 368.

tion. Though Jesus was a product of that culture, so that there is not a word of ethical or religious counsel in the gospels which cannot be paralleled in Jewish writings, says Klausner, yet he endangered it by abstracting religion and ethics from the rest of social life, and by looking for the establishment by divine power only of a "kingdom not of this world." "Judaism, however, is not only religion and it is not only ethics: it is the sum-total of all the needs of the nation, placed on a religious basis. . . . Judaism is a national life, a life which the national religion and human ethical principles embrace without engulfing. Jesus came and thrust aside all the requirements of the national life. . . . In their stead he set up nothing but an ethico-religious system bound up with his conception of the Godhead."² Had he undertaken to reform the religious and national culture, eliminating what was archaic in ceremonial and civil law, he might have been a great boon to his society; but instead of reforming culture he ignored it. "He did not come to enlarge his nation's knowledge, art and culture, but to abolish even such culture as it possessed, bound up with religion." For civil justice he substituted the command to nonresistance, which must result in the loss of all social order; the social regulation and protection of family life he replaced with the prohibition of all divorce, and with praise of those who "made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake"; instead of manifesting interest in labor, in economic and political achievement, he recommended the unanxious, toilless life exemplified by birds and lilies; he ignored even the requirements of ordinary distributive justice when he said, "Man, who has made me a judge or divider over you?" Hence, Klausner concludes, "Jesus ignored everything concerned with material civilization: in this sense he does not belong to civilization."³ Therefore his people rejected him; and

² *Ibid.*, p. 390.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 373-375.

"two thousand years of non-Jewish Christianity have proved that the Jewish people did not err."⁴

Not all the Jews of his day rejected Jesus in the name of their culture, and two thousand years of non-Jewish Christianity and non-Christian Judaism may be appealed to in validation of many other propositions than that Jesus imperils culture; but it is evident that those two millennia have been full of wrastlings with just this problem. Not only Jews but also Greeks and Romans, medievalists and moderns, Westerners and Orientals have rejected Christ because they saw in him a threat to their culture.

The story of Graeco-Roman civilization's attack on the gospel forms one of the dramatic chapters in every history of Western culture and of the church, though it is told too often in terms of political persecution only. Popular animosity based on social piety, literary polemics, philosophical objection, priestly resistance, and doubtless economic defensiveness all played a part in the rejection of Christ, for the problem he raised was broadly cultural and not merely political. Indeed, the state was slower to take up arms against him and his disciples than were other institutions and groups.⁵ In modern times open conflict has again arisen, not only as spokesmen of nationalistic and communistic societies but also as ardent champions of humanistic and democratic civilizations have discerned in Christ a foe of cultural interests.

The historical and social situations in which such rejections

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

⁵ "Christianity's battle with the inner faith of the pagan masses, with the convictions of the leading spirits, was incomparably more difficult than was its wrestle with the power of the Roman state; the victory of the new faith was in consequence a far greater achievement than earlier times with their depreciation of paganism have assumed." Geffcken, Johannes, *Der Ausgang des Griechisch-Roemischen Heidentums*, 1920, p. 1. For other accounts of the conflict see *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. XII, 1939, and Cochrane, C. N., *Christianity and Classical Culture*, 1940.

of Jesus Christ have taken place have been extremely various; the personal and group motivations of opponents have been of many sorts; the philosophical and scientific beliefs which have been arrayed against Christian convictions have often been more sharply opposed to each other than to the convictions themselves. Yet in so far as the relation of Jesus Christ to culture is concerned considerable unanimity may be found among these disparate critics. Ancient spiritualists and modern materialists, pious Romans who charge Christianity with atheism, and nineteenth century atheists who condemn its theistic faith, nationalists and humanists, all seem to be offended by the same elements in the gospel and employ similar arguments in defending their culture against it.

Prominent among these recurrent arguments is the contention that, as Gibbon states the Roman case, Christians are "animated by a contempt for present existence and by confidence in immortality."⁶ This two-edged faith has baffled and angered glorifiers of modern civilization as well as defenders of Rome, radical revolutionaries as well as conservers of the old order, believers in continuing progress and desponding anticipators of the decline of culture. It is not an attitude which can be ascribed to defective discipleship while the Master is exculpated, since his statements about anxiety for food and drink, about the unimportance of treasures on earth, and about fear of those who can take away life as well as his rejection in life and death of temporal power, make him the evident source of his followers' convictions. Neither is it an attitude that can be dismissed as characteristic of some Christians only, such as those who believe in an early end of the world, or ultraspiritualists. It is connected with various views of history and with various

⁶ *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Modern Library ed., Vol. I, p. 402.

ideas about the relations of spirit and matter. It is a baffling attitude, because it mates what seems like contempt for present existence with great concern for existing men, because it is not frightened by the prospect of doom on all man's works, because it is not despairing but confident. Christianity seems to threaten culture at this point not because it prophesies that of all human achievements not one stone will be left on another but because Christ enables men to regard this disaster with a certain equanimity, directs their hopes toward another world, and so seems to deprive them of motivation to engage in the ceaseless labor of conserving a massive but insecure social heritage. Therefore a Celsus moves from attack on Christianity to an appeal to believers to stop endangering a threatened empire by their withdrawal from the public tasks of defense and reconstruction. The same Christian attitude, however, arouses Marx and Lenin to hostility because believers do not care enough about temporal existence to engage in all-out struggle for the destruction of an old order and the building of a new one. They can account for it only by supposing that Christian faith is a religious opiate used by the fortunate to stupefy the people, who should be well aware that there is no life beyond culture.

Another common argument raised against Christ by his cultural antagonists of various times and persuasions is that he induces men to rely on the grace of God instead of summoning them to human achievement. What would have happened to the Romans, asks Celsus in effect, if they had followed the command to trust in God alone? Would they not have been left like the Jews, without a patch of ground to call their own, and would they not have been hunted down as criminals, like the Christians?⁷ Modern philosophers of culture, such as Nikolai

⁷ Origen, *Contra Celsus*, VIII, lxix (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. IV, p. 666).

Hartmann, find in this God-reliance of faith an ultimate antinomy to the ethics of culture with its necessary concentration on human effort.⁸ Marxists, believing that men make history, regard trust in the grace of God a sleeping pill as potent as the hope of heaven. Democratic and humanistic reformers of society accuse Christians of "quietism," while popular wisdom expresses its tolerant unbelief in grace by saying that God helps those who help themselves and that one must trust in Him but keep one's powder dry.

A third count in the recurring cultural indictments of Christ and his church is that they are intolerant, though this charge is not as general as are the former accusations. It does not occur in the Communists' complaint, for it is not the objection which one intolerant belief raises against another but rather the disapproval with which unbelief meets conviction. Ancient Roman civilization, says Gibbon, was bound to reject Christianity just because Rome was tolerant. This culture, with its great diversity of customs and religions, could exist only if reverence and assent were granted to the many confused traditions and ceremonies of its constituent nations. Hence it was to be "expected that they would unite with indignation against any sect of people which should separate itself from the communion of mankind and claiming the exclusive possession of divine knowledge, should disdain every form of worship except its own as impious and idolatrous."⁹ Toward Jews, who held the same convictions as Christians about the gods and idols, Romans could be somewhat tolerant, because they were a separate nation with ancient traditions, and because they were content for the most part to live withdrawn from the social life. Christians, however, were members of Roman society, and in the midst of that society

⁸ Hartmann, Nikolai, *Ethics*, 1932, Vol. III, pp. 266 ff.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 446.

explicitly and implicitly expressed their scorn for the religions of the people. Hence they appeared to be traitors who dissolved the sacred ties of custom and education, violated the religious institutions of their country, and presumptuously despised what their fathers had believed true and revered as sacred.¹⁰ We need to add that Roman tolerance, like modern democratic tolerance, had its limits just because it was carried out as a social policy for the sake of maintaining unity. Whatever religion man followed, homage to Caesar was eventually required.¹¹ But Christ and Christians threatened the unity of the culture at both points with their radical monotheism, a faith in the one God that was very different from the pagan universalism which sought to unify many deities and many cults under one earthly or heavenly monarch. The political problem such monotheism presents to the exponents of a national or imperial culture has been largely obscured in modern times, but became quite evident in the anti-Christian and especially anti-Jewish attacks of German national socialism.¹² Divinity, it seems, must not only hedge kings but also other symbols of political power, and monotheism deprives them of their sacred aura. The Christ who will not worship Satan to gain the world's kingdoms is followed by Christians who will worship only Christ in unity with the Lord whom he serves. And this is intolerable to all defenders of society who are content that many gods should be worshipped if only Democracy or America or Germany or the Empire receives its due, religious homage. The antagonism of modern, tolerant culture to Christ is of course often disguised because it does not call its religious practices

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 448.

¹¹ *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. XII, pp. 409 ff.; 356 ff.; Cochrane, C. N., *op. cit.*, pp. 115 ff.

¹² Cf. Barth, Karl, *The Church and the Political Problem of Our Day*, 1939; Hayes, Carlton J. H., *Essays in Nationalism*, 1933.

religious, reserving that term for certain specified rites connected with officially recognized sacred institutions; and also because it regards what it calls religion as one of many interests which can be placed alongside economics, art, science, politics, and techniques. Hence the objection it voices to Christian monotheism appears in such injunctions only as that religion should be kept out of politics and business, or that Christian faith must learn to get along with other religions. What is often meant is that not only the claims of religious groups but all consideration of the claims of Christ and God should be banished from the spheres where other gods, called values, reign. The implied charge against Christian faith is like the ancient one: it imperils society by its attack on its religious life; it deprives social institutions of their cultic, sacred character; by its refusal to condone the pious superstitions of tolerant polytheism it threatens social unity. The charge lies not only against Christian organizations which use coercive means against what they define as false religions, but against the faith itself.

Other points are frequently made in the attacks on Christ and Christianity by those who see in them the foes of culture. The forgiveness that Christ practices and teaches is said to be irreconcilable with the demands of justice or the free man's sense of moral responsibility. The injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount concerning anger and resistance to evil, oaths and marriage, anxiety and property, are found incompatible with the duties of life in society. Christian exaltation of the lowly offends aristocrats and Nietzscheans in one way, champions of the proletariat in another. The unavailability of Christ's wisdom to the wise and prudent, its attainability by the simple and by babes, bewilder the philosophical leaders of culture or excite their scorn.

Though these attacks on Christ and Christian faith under-

score and bring into the open—often in bizarre forms—the nature of the issue, it is not defense against them that constitutes the Christian problem. Not only pagans who have rejected Christ but believers who have accepted him find it difficult to combine his claims upon them with those of their societies. Struggle and appeasement, victory and reconciliation appear not only in the open where parties calling themselves Christian and anti-Christian meet; more frequently the debate about Christ and culture is carried on among Christians and in the hidden depths of the individual conscience, not as the struggle and accommodation of belief with unbelief, but as the wrestling and the reconciliation of faith with faith. The Christ and culture issue was present in Paul's struggle with the Judaizers and the Hellenizers of the gospel, but also in his effort to translate it into the forms of Greek language and thought. It appears in the early struggles of the church with the empire, with the religions and philosophies of the Mediterranean world, in its rejections and acceptances of prevailing mores, moral principles, metaphysical ideas, and forms of social organization. The Constantinian settlement, the formulation of the great creeds, the rise of the papacy, the monastic movement, Augustinian Platonism, and Thomistic Aristotelianism, the Reformation and the Renaissance, the Revival and the Enlightenment, liberalism and the Social Gospel—these represent a few of the many chapters in the history of the enduring problem. It appears in many forms as well as in all ages; as the problem of reason and revelation, of religion and science, of natural and divine law, of state and church, of nonresistance and coercion. It has come to view in such specific studies as those of the relations of Protestantism and capitalism, of Pietism and nationalism, of Puritanism and democracy, of Catholicism and Romanism or Anglicanism, of Christianity and progress.

It is not essentially the problem of Christianity and civilization; for Christianity, whether defined as church, creed, ethics, or movement of thought, itself moves between the poles of Christ and culture. The relation of these two authorities constitutes its problem. When Christianity deals with the question of reason and revelation, what is ultimately in question is the relation of the revelation in Christ to the reason which prevails in culture. When it makes the effort to distinguish, contrast, or combine rational ethics with its knowledge of the will of God, it deals with the understanding of right and wrong developed in the culture and with good and evil as illuminated by Christ.

When the problem of loyalty to church or state is raised, Christ and cultural society stand in the background as the true objects of devotion. Hence, before we undertake to outline and to illustrate the main ways in which Christians have dealt with their enduring problem, it is desirable that we seek to state what we mean by these two terms—Christ and culture. In doing this we shall need to exercise care lest we prejudge the issue by so defining one term or the other or both that only one of the Christian answers to be described will appear legitimate.

II. TOWARD A DEFINITION OF CHRIST

A Christian is ordinarily defined as "one who believes in Jesus Christ" or as "a follower of Jesus Christ." He might more adequately be described as one who counts himself as belonging to that community of men for whom Jesus Christ—his life, words, deeds, and destiny—is of supreme importance as the key to the understanding of themselves and their world, the main source of the knowledge of God and man, good and evil, the constant companion of the conscience, and the expected deliverer from evil. So great, however, is the variety of personal and communal "belief in Jesus Christ," so manifold the inter-

pretation of his essential nature, that the question must arise whether the Christ of Christianity is indeed one Lord. For some Christians and parts of the Christian community Jesus Christ is a great teacher and lawgiver who in what he said of God and the moral law so persuades the mind and will that there is henceforth no escape from him. Christianity is for them a new law and a new religion proclaimed by Jesus. In part it seems to be the cause which they have chosen; in part it is a cause which has chosen them, by wresting consent from their minds. For others Jesus Christ is not so much a teacher and revealer of truths and laws as in himself, in incarnation, death, resurrection, and living presence the revelation of God. Jesus Christ, by being what he was, by suffering what he did, by being defeated in crucifixion, and by returning victoriously from death, makes evident the being and nature of God, exercises the claim of God on human faith, and thus raises to a new life the men he encounters. For still others Christianity is primarily neither new teaching nor new life but a new community, the Holy Catholic Church; hence the work of Christ which occupies the center of their attention is his founding of this new society which mediates his grace through word and sacrament.

There are many other views of what it means to "believe in Jesus Christ." Yet this variety in Christianity cannot obscure the fundamental unity which is supplied by the fact that the Jesus Christ to whom men are related in such different ways is a definite character and person whose teachings, actions, and sufferings are of one piece. The fact remains that the Christ who exercises authority over Christians or whom Christians accept as authority is the Jesus Christ of the New Testament; and that this is a person with definite teachings, a definite character, and a definite fate. Important as are the once debated question whether Jesus ever "really" lived, and the still moot

problem of the trustworthiness of New Testament records as factual descriptions of actual events, these are not the questions of primary significance. For the Jesus Christ of the New Testament is in our actual history, in history as we remember and live it, as it shapes our present faith and action. And this Jesus Christ is a definite person, one and the same whether he appears as man of flesh and blood or as risen Lord. He can never be confused with a Socrates, a Plato or an Aristotle, a Gautama, a Confucius, or a Mohammed, or even with an Amos or Isaiah. Interpreted by a monk, he may take on monastic characteristics; delineated by a socialist, he may show the features of a radical reformer; portrayed by a Hoffman, he may appear as a mild gentleman. But there always remain the original portraits with which all later pictures may be compared and by which all caricatures may be corrected. And in these original portraits he is recognizably one and the same. Whatever roles he plays in the varieties of Christian experience, it is the same Christ who exercises these various offices. The founder of the church is the same Christ who gives the new law; the teacher of truths about God is the same Christ who is in himself the revelation of the truth. The sacramentalist cannot escape the fact that the one who gives his body and blood is also the giver of the new commandments; the sectarian cannot avoid meeting in the ethical authority the forgiver of sins. Those who no longer know a "Christ after the flesh" still know the risen Lord as the same one whose deeds were described by those who "from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." However great the variations among Christians in experiencing and describing the authority Jesus Christ has over them, they have this in common: that Jesus Christ is their authority, and that the one who exercises these various kinds of authority is the same Christ.

As soon, of course, as we undertake to define the essence of the Jesus Christ who is one and the same, or to say what it is that gives him his various kinds of authority, we enter into the continuous debate of the Christian community. We encounter two difficulties in particular. The first is the impossibility of stating adequately by means of concepts and propositions a principle which presents itself in the form of a person. The second is the impossibility of saying anything about this person which is not also relative to the particular standpoint in church, history, and culture of the one who undertakes to describe him. Hence one is tempted to speak redundantly, saying simply, "Jesus Christ is Jesus Christ," or to accept the method of Biblical positivism, pointing to the New Testament and foregoing all interpretation.

It is, however, as unnecessary as it is undesirable to confine ourselves to such assertions and gestures. If we cannot say anything adequately, we can say some things inadequately. If we cannot point to the heart and essence of this Christ, we can at least point to some of the phenomena in which his essence appears. Though every description is an interpretation, it can be an interpretation of the objective reality. Jesus Christ who is the Christian's authority can be described, though every description falls short of completeness and must fail to satisfy others who have encountered him.

For the purpose of such description a moralist may be permitted to choose the somewhat arbitrary device of pointing out and defining the virtues of Jesus Christ; though it will be evident that the resultant portrait needs to be complemented by other interpretations of the same subject, and that a moral description cannot claim to come closer to the essence than do metaphysical or historical descriptions. By the virtues of Christ we mean the excellences of character which on the one hand

he exemplifies in his own life, and which on the other he communicates to his followers. For some Christians they are the virtues his example and law demand; for others they are gifts he bestows through regeneration, the dying and rising of the self with him, the first-born of many brothers. But whether Christians emphasize law or grace, whether they look to the Jesus of history or to the pre-existent and risen Lord, the virtues of Jesus Christ are the same.

The virtue of Christ which religious liberalism has magnified beyond all others is love.¹³ The discernment of this excellence in him surely constitutes no aberration on the part of liberal thought, whatever may be said about the paucity of references to love in the Synoptic Gospels. The remainder of the New Testament and the witness of Christians in all ages confirm the affirmation that love is one of Jesus Christ's great virtues, and that what he demands of his disciples or makes possible to them is love. Yet when we examine the New Testament and study its portraits of Jesus we become dubious of the descriptive value of such phrases as "the absolutism and perfectionism of Jesus' love ethic"¹⁴ or of such statements as the following:

What [Jesus] freed from its connexion with self-seeking and ritual elements, and recognized as the moral principle, he reduces to *one* root and to *one* motive—love. He knows no other, and love itself, whether it takes the form of love of one's neighbor or of one's enemy, or the love of the Samaritan, is of one kind only. It must completely fill the soul; it is what remains when the soul dies to itself.¹⁵

Jesus nowhere commands love for its own sake, and nowhere exhibits that complete dominance of the kindly over the aggress-

¹³ Cf. esp. Harnack, A., *What is Christianity?* 1901, pp. 78 ff. Not only liberals magnify this virtue; Reinhold Niebuhr, for instance, agrees with Harnack in regarding love as the key to Jesus' ethics. Cf. *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, 1935, chap. II.

¹⁴ Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁵ Harnack, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

sive sentiments and emotions which seems indicated by the idea that in him and for him love "must completely fill the soul," or that his ethics is characterized by "the ideal of love." The virtue of love in Jesus' character and demand is the virtue of the *love of God and of the neighbor in God*, not the virtue of the love of love. The unity of this person lies in the simplicity and completeness of his direction toward God, whether the relation be one of love or of faith or of fear. Love, to be sure, is characterized by a certain extremism in Jesus, but its extremism is not that of a passion unmodified by any other passions; it is the extremism of devotion to the one God, uncompromised by love of any other absolute good. This virtue in him is disproportionate only in the polytheistic-monotheistic sense, not in the sense that it is unaccompanied by other virtues perhaps equally great; nor in an Aristotelian sense, as though it did not lie in the mean between excess and defect or between kindness and anger. For Jesus there is no other finally love-worthy being, no other ultimate object of devotion, than God; He is the Father; there is none good save God; He alone is to be thanked; His kingdom alone is to be sought. Hence the love of God in Jesus' character and teaching is not only compatible with anger but can be a motive to it, as when he sees the Father's house made into a den of thieves or the Father's children outraged. Hence also it is right and possible to underscore the significance of this virtue in Jesus, while at the same time one recognizes that according to the Synoptic Gospels he emphasized in conduct and in teaching the virtues of faith in God and humility before Him much more than love.

If the nature of this virtue in Jesus is to be understood, some attention must be given to his theology. The tendency to describe Jesus wholly in terms of love is intimately connected with the disposition to identify God with love. Fatherhood is

regarded as almost the sole attribute of God, so that when God is loved it is the principle of fatherhood that is loved.¹⁶ Or God is defined as "the final unity which transcends the world's chaos as certainly as it is basic to the world's order." This "unity of God is not static, but potent and creative. God is, therefore, love." He is all-inclusive good-will.¹⁷ Surely this does not represent the theology of Jesus. Though God is love, love is not God for him; though God is one, oneness is not his God. God whom Christ loves is the "Lord of heaven and earth"; He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; He is the power who causes rain and sun, without whose will and knowledge not a sparrow dies, nor a city is destroyed, nor he himself crucified. The greatness and the strangeness of Jesus' love of God does not appear in his love of cosmic love, but in his loyalty to the transcendent power that to all men of little faith seems anything but fatherlike. The word "Father" on the lips of Jesus is a greater, more faithful, and more heroic word than is evident when fatherhood and deity are identified.

To this interpretation of the unique nature of the virtue of love in Jesus as based on the single-mindedness of his devotion to God it will be objected that he practices and teaches a double love, of the neighbor as well as of God, and that his ethics has two foci, "God, the Father, and the infinite value of the human soul."¹⁸ Such statements forget that the double commandment, whether originally stated or merely confirmed by Jesus, by no means places God and neighbor on a level, as though complete devotion were due to each. It is only God who is to be loved with heart, soul, mind and strength; the neighbor is put on the same level of value that the self occupies. Moreover, the idea

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 68 ff., 154 f.

¹⁷ Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 49, 56.

¹⁸ So Harnack, *op. cit.*, pp. 55, 68-76. The phrase in many variations has become the commonplace of liberal Protestantism.

of ascribing "infinite" or "intrinsic" value to the human soul seems wholly foreign to Jesus. He does not speak of worth apart from God. The value of man, like the value of sparrow and flower, is his value to God; the measure of true joy in value is the joy in heaven. Because worth is worth in relation to God, therefore Jesus finds sacredness in all creation, and not in humanity alone—though his disciples are to take special comfort from the fact that they are of more value to God than are the also valued birds. The virtue of neighbor-love in Jesus' conduct and teaching can never be adequately described if it is in any way abstracted from the primary love of God. Christ loves his neighbor not as he loves himself but as God loves him. Hence the Fourth Gospel, discerning that the Jewish statement "Love thy neighbor as thyself" fitted adequately neither Jesus' actions nor his requirements, changed the commandment to read, "Love one another as I have loved you."¹⁹ Beyond that it became clear to the disciples that Jesus Christ's love of men was not merely an illustration of universal benevolence but a decisive act of divine *Agape*. For we must face the recognition that what the early Christians saw in Jesus Christ, and what we must accept if we look at him rather than at our imaginations about him, was not a person characterized by universal benignity, loving God and man. His love of God and his love of neighbor are two distinct virtues that have no common quality but only a common source. Love of God is adoration of the only true good; it is gratitude to the bestower of all gifts; it is joy in Holiness; it is "consent to Being." But the love of man is pitiful rather than adoring; it is giving and forgiving rather than grateful; it suffers for and in their viciousness and profaneness; it does not consent to accept them as they are, but calls them to repentance. The love of God is nonpossessive *Eros*; the love of

¹⁹ John 13:34, 15:12. Cf. Mark 12:28-34, Mt. 22:34-40, Luke 10:25-28.

man pure *Agape*; the love of God is passion; the love of man, compassion. There is duality here, but not of like-minded interest in two great values, God and man. It is rather the duality of the Son of Man and Son of God, who loves God as man should love Him, and loves man as only God can love, with powerful pity for those who are foundering.

There seems then to be no other adequate way to describe Jesus as having the virtue of love than to say that his love was that of the Son of God. It was not love but God that filled his soul.

Similar statements must be made about the other excellences we find in him. The liberalism that magnified his love has been followed by eschatological interpretations that see him as the man of hope, and by an existentialism that describes him as radically obedient. It was preceded by an orthodox Protestantism for which he was the exemplar and the bestower of the virtue of faith, and by a monasticism which was astonished and charmed by his great humility. The Christ of the New Testament possesses each of these virtues, and each of them is expressed in his conduct and teaching in a manner that seems extreme and disproportionate to secular, cultural wisdom. But he practices none of them and requires none of them of his followers otherwise than in relation to God. Because these virtues are qualities of conduct on the part of men who always confront the Almighty and Holy One, therefore they seem extreme.

It is so with the virtue of *hope*. The eschatologists, of whom Albert Schweitzer is the best known spokesman, have attempted to describe Jesus as uniquely characterized by expectancy rather than love. He hoped so intensely, they assert, for the realization of the Messianic promise, for the great reversal in history through which evil would be finally overcome and God's reign would be established, that nothing mattered to him except

preparation for this event. "Is it not even *a priori* the only conceivable view," writes Schweitzer, "that the conduct of one who looked forward to his Messianic 'parousia' in the near future should be determined by that expectation?"²⁰ Jesus' teaching, like his conduct, is explained by reference to this hope. "If the thought of the eschatological realization of the Kingdom is the fundamental factor in Jesus' preaching, his whole theory of ethics must come under the conception of repentance as preparation for the coming of the Kingdom. . . . [Repentance] is a moral renewal in prospect of the accomplishment of universal perfection in the future. . . . Jesus' ethics . . . is oriented entirely by the expected supernatural consummation."²¹ What Jesus communicated to his disciples, the eschatologist maintains, was a similar expectancy, heightened now by the conviction that in him the Messianic future had come very near. Hence the ethics of early Christianity is set forth as the ethics of the great hope.

As in the case of the liberal interpretation of Jesus as a hero of love, a deep truth is evidently presented here, and all modern Christianity is in debt to the eschatologists for drawing attention to this virtue in Jesus and to its setting. Their work has greatly helped toward the achievement of Schweitzer's aim "to depict the figure of Jesus in its overwhelming heroic greatness and to impress it upon the modern age and upon modern theology."²² There was an extremeness in the hopefulness of Jesus that sets him apart from all other men who expect lesser glories or more frequently, no glory at all. Average morality presupposes complacency tempered by a little cynicism, or resignation qualified by moderate expectations of good. Intense anticipation of supernal good must result in a transformation of ethics.

²⁰ Schweitzer, A., *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1926, p. 349.

²¹ Schweitzer, A., *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, 1914, pp. 94, 100.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 274.

Yet the urgency in Jesus' expectancy is inexplicable, and the degree to which he communicates it to disciples in cultures remote from first-century Palestine is unintelligible, when it is forgotten, as eschatologists sometimes seem to forget, that his hope was in God and for God. What Jesus hoped *in*, they seem inclined to say, was a dogma; what he hoped *for* was a metamorphosis of nature, human and nonhuman—a transformation of the whole earthly form of existence. So Schweitzer defines eschatological interpretation as "a critical examination of the dogmatic element in the life of Jesus. . . . Eschatology is simply 'dogmatic history'—history as moulded by theological beliefs. . . . Dogmatic considerations . . . guided the resolutions of Jesus."²³ Hence he is thought to have staked his hope upon what turned out to be an erroneous belief about the shortness of time, and to have tried to force a stubborn course of events to conform to his dogmatic pattern. Though the Jesus described in the New Testament was clearly animated by an intense hope, yet it seems evident that the reality present to him as the author of the future was not a course of history, dogmatically conceived. His eschatological view of history did not differ from the doctrine of progress only or primarily by regarding time as short. He was not dealing with history at all in the first place, but with God, the Lord of time and space. He hoped in the living God, by whose finger demons were being cast out, whose forgiveness of sins was being made manifest. The times were in His hand, and therefore predictions about times and seasons were out of place. And was not the object of Jesus' intense expectancy God Himself, the manifestation of divine glory and the revelation of divine righteousness? The Kingdom of God for Jesus is less a happy state of affairs in the first place than God in his evident rulership. He rules now, but His rule is to

²³ *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 248, 249, 357.

become manifest to all. The ethics of Jesus does not seem to depend on his view of history any more than his view of history depends on his ethics; both are reflections of his faith in God. Hence also one must do violence to the New Testament account if one attempts to make extreme hopefulness, with the repentance it entails, the key virtue in his conduct and teaching. Many of his most radical statements are not closely connected at all with expectancy of the coming kingdom, but rather with realization of the present rule of God in the course of daily and natural events. So in the teaching about nonanxiety there is no reference to future catastrophe and renewal, but only to God's daily care; and the teaching about forgiveness of the enemy is connected with the daily and ordinary demonstration of God's mercy in sending rain and sun on just and unjust.²⁴ The heroic character of Jesus' hopefulness does not stand alone, it is mated with heroic love and heroic faith; and all these have their source in his relation to the God who is Now as well as Then. Not eschatology but sonship to God is the key to Jesus' ethics.

It is not otherwise with the *obedience* of Christ. The Christian existentialists of our time find Jesus characterized by the virtue of radical obedience, undertaking as their predecessors did to describe him and his teaching by centering on one great excellence. So Bultmann writes that one can understand Jesus' proclamation of the will of God and his ethics, in distinction from the Greek ideal of humanity and from the modern ethics of autonomy and value theory, only if one notes its relation to and its distinction from Jewish piety. Then one can say concisely that "the ethic of Jesus, exactly like the Jewish, is an ethic of obedience, and the single though fundamental difference is that Jesus has conceived radically the idea of obedience."²⁵ Bult-

²⁴ Mt. 6:25-34, 5:43-48.

²⁵ Bultmann, Rudolf, *Jesus and the Word*, 1934, pp. 72-73.

mann accounts for the radicalness of Jesus' obedience by pointing out that for him there was no mediate authority between God and man, for "radical obedience exists only when a man inwardly assents to what is required of him, when the thing commanded is seen as intrinsically God's command. . . . So long as obedience is only subjection to an authority which man does not understand, it is not true obedience." Further, obedience is radical when the whole man is involved, so that "he is not only *doing* something obediently but *is* essentially obedient," and when he confronts an either-or so that he no longer seeks a neutral position but accepts the burden of decision between good and evil.²⁶

Again, as in the case of an interpretation in terms of love, we must recognize the evident truth in such statements. Jesus was obedient, and he was radically obedient—as the believers recognized from the beginning. They marvelled at his obedience unto death, at his submission in the agony and prayer at Gethsemane; they saw that he had come down from heaven not to do his own will but the will of Him that sent him; they rejoiced that through the obedience of the one, many will be made righteous; and they were consoled by the thought that they had a high priest in heaven who, though he was a Son, had learned obedience by what he had suffered.²⁷ They discerned that the radicalness of this obedience was connected with a certain transcending of the mediate authority of the law, that it was addressed to the whole man, including every thought and motive as well as every overt deed, and that there was no escape from the responsibility of obedience.

Yet something is lacking in the existentialist portrait of the obedient Christ. Not only has one virtue been made the key to

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 78.

²⁷ Phil. 2:8, Mark 14:36, John 6:38, 15:10, Rom. 5:19, Hebrews 5:8.

all the others, but this virtue has been essentially abstracted from that realization of God which makes all the virtues of Jesus Christ radical. This existentialist Jesus is more Kantian than Markan or Pauline or Johannine. Bultmann can find no real content in the gospel idea of obedience. Jesus, he says, has no doctrine "of duty or of the good. It is sufficient for a man to know that God has placed him under the necessity of decision in every concrete situation in life, in the here and now. And this means that he himself must know what is required of him. . . . Man does not meet the crisis of decision armed with a definite standard; he stands on no firm base, but rather alone in empty space. . . . He [Jesus] sees only the individual man standing before the will of God. . . . Jesus teaches no ethics at all in the sense of an intelligible theory valid for all men concerning what should be done and left undone."²⁸ Moreover, although God is mentioned as the one whose will is to be obeyed, the idea of God ascribed to Jesus is as empty and formal as the idea of obedience. Just as for liberalism God is the counterpart of human love, so in this existentialism He becomes the mere counterpart of moral decision. He is "the Power which constrains man to decision," the one whom man can find "only in the actual comprehension of his own existence"; "God Himself must vanish for the man who does not know that the essence of his own life consists in the full freedom of his decision."²⁹ The animus of such existentialism against speculative and naturalistic ideas of God can be understood, but the ascription to Jesus of this twentieth century view of freedom results in a caricature of the New Testament Christ. For the Jesus who is radically obedient knows that the will of God is the will of the Creator and Governor of all nature and of all history; that there

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 108, 85, 84. Cf. pp. 87-88.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 103, 154.

is structure and content in His will; that He is the author of the ten commandments; that He demands mercy and not sacrifice; that He requires not only obedience to Himself but love and faith in Him, and love of the neighbor whom He creates and loves. This Jesus is radically obedient; but he also knows that love and faith alone make obedience possible, and that God is the bestower of all these gifts. His obedience is a relation to a God who is much more than an "Unconditioned," met in the moment of decision; its radical character is therefore not something that lies in itself, or something that is separable from radical love and hope and faith. It is the obedience of a Son whose sonship is not definable as just obedience to a principle that constrains obedience.

Examination of Protestant concentration on the *faith* of Jesus Christ, and of monastic interest in his great *humility*, leads to the same result. He is indeed characterized by an extreme faith and by a radical humility. But faith and humility are not things in themselves; they are relations to persons—habits of behavior in the presence of others. Now when we look at Jesus from the point of view of his faith in men, he seems a great skeptic who believes that he is dealing with an evil and adulterous generation, with a people that stones its prophets and then erects monuments to them. He puts no trust in the enduring institutions and traditions of his society. He shows little confidence in his disciples; he is convinced that they will be offended in him, and that the sturdiest of them will be unable to stand by him in the time of testing. Only romantic fictionizing can interpret the Jesus of the New Testament as one who believed in the goodness of men, and sought by trusting it to bring out what was good in them. Yet despite his skepticism he is remarkably free from anxiety. He is heroic in his faith in God, calling the Lord of heaven and earth Father. He relies in

his poverty-stricken existence, without family, food, or lodging, on the one who gives the bread needful for the day; and in the end he commends his spirit to Him whom he knows to be responsible for his ignominious and shameful death. To Him also he entrusts his nation, believing that everything needful will be granted to folk who, turning away from self-defense, seek only the Kingdom of God. Such faith will always seem radical to human beings with their deep suspicion of the power which brought them forth, maintains them, and decrees their death. It is the faith of a Son of God, too extreme for those who conceive themselves as sons of nature, or of men, or of blind chance.

Jesus' humility is also inordinate. He lives with the sinners and pariahs; he washes the disciples' feet; he accepts indignities and scurrilities from priests and soldiers. When he is recognized as the living, risen Lord, the magnificence of his lowliness astounds and staggers his believers. Though he was rich, he had become poor that he might enrich many; though he was in the form of God, he had taken the form of a slave; the Word through whom all things were made had become flesh; the life which was the light of men had entered their darkness. There is indeed something disproportionate about the humility of Jesus Christ; it would not be surprising if a new school of interpreters arose in the wake of existentialists with an attempt to understand him as the man of radical humility. But the humility of Jesus is humility before God, and can only be understood as the humility of the Son. He neither exhibited nor commended and communicated the humility of inferiority-feeling before other men. Before Pharisees, high priests, Pilate, and "that fox" Herod he showed a confidence that had no trace of self-abnegation. Whatever may be true of his Messianic self-consciousness, he spoke with authority and acted with confidence of power.

When he repudiated the title of "Good Master" he did not defer to other rabbis better than himself, but said, "No one is good but God alone." There is no condescension in his life toward the sinners, such as might mark an insecure or apologetic man. His humility is of the sort that raises to a new sense of dignity and worth those who have been humiliated by the defensive pretensions of the "good" and the "righteous." It is a kind of proud humility and humble pride, which can be called paradoxical only if the relation to God as the fundamental relation in his life is left out of account. If it is wholly different from all the modesties and diffidences that mark men's efforts to accommodate themselves to their own and each others' superiority-feelings, it is also wholly different from that wise Greek virtue of remaining within one's limits lest the jealous gods destroy their potential rivals. The humility of Christ is not the moderation of keeping one's exact place in the scale of being, but rather that of absolute dependence on God and absolute trust in Him, with the consequent ability to remove mountains. The secret of the meekness and the gentleness of Christ lies in his relation to God.

Thus any one of the virtues of Jesus may be taken as the key to the understanding of his character and teaching; but each is intelligible in its apparent radicalism only as a relation to God. It is better, of course, not to attempt to delineate him by describing one of his excellences but rather to take them all together, those to which we have referred and others. In either case, however, it seems evident that the strangeness, the heroic stature, the extremism and sublimity of this person, considered morally, is due to that unique devotion to God and to that single-hearted trust in Him which can be symbolized by no other figure of speech so well as by the one which calls him Son of God.

Hence belief in Jesus Christ by men in their various cultures

always means belief in God. No one can know the Son without acknowledging the Father. To be related in devotion and obedience to Jesus Christ is to be related to the One to whom he undeviatingly points. As Son of God he points away from the many values of man's social life to the One who alone is good; from the many powers which men use and on which they depend to the One who alone is powerful; from the many times and seasons of history with their hopes and fears to the One who is Lord of all times and is alone to be feared and hoped for; he points away from all that is conditioned to the Unconditioned. He does not direct attention away from this world to another; but from all worlds, present and future, material and spiritual, to the One who creates all worlds, who is the Other of all worlds.

Yet this is only half the meaning of Christ, considered morally. The other half has been indicated above by what was said about his love of men in relation to his love of God. Because he is the moral Son of God in his love, hope, faith, obedience, and humility in the presence of God, therefore he is the moral mediator of the Father's will toward men. Because he loves the Father with the perfection of human *eros*, therefore he loves men with the perfection of divine *agape*, since God is *agape*. Because he is obedient to the Father's will, therefore he exercises authority over men, commanding obedience not to his own will but to God's. Because he hopes in God, therefore he gives promises to men. Because he trusts perfectly in God who is faithful, therefore he is trustworthy in his own faithfulness towards men. Because he exalts God with perfect human humility, therefore he humbles men by giving them good gifts beyond all their deserts. Since the Father of Jesus Christ is what He is, sonship to Him involves the Son not in an ambiguous but in an ambivalent process. It involves the double movement—with men toward God, with God toward men; from the world to the

Other, from the Other to the world; from work to Grace, from Grace to work; from time to the Eternal and from the Eternal to the temporal. In his moral sonship to God Jesus Christ is not a median figure, half God, half man; he is a single person wholly directed as man toward God and wholly directed in his unity with the Father toward men. He is mediatorial, not median. He is not a center from which radiate love of God and of men, obedience to God and to Caesar, trust in God and in nature, hope in divine and in human action. He exists rather as the focusing point in the continuous alternation of movements from God to man and man to God; and these movements are qualitatively as different as are *agape* and *eros*, authority and obedience, promise and hope, humiliation and glorification, faithfulness and trust.

Other approaches besides the moral one must be taken if Jesus Christ is to be described adequately. Yet as the history of the church and its theologies indicate, each such approach tends toward the same issue. The power and attraction Jesus Christ exercises over men never comes from him alone, but from him as Son of the Father. It comes from him in his Sonship in a double way, as man living to God and God living with men. Belief in him and loyalty to his cause involves men in the double movement from world to God and from God to world. Even when theologies fail to do justice to this fact, Christians living with Christ in their cultures are aware of it. For they are forever being challenged to abandon all things for the sake of God; and forever being sent back into the world to teach and practice all the things that have been commanded them.

III. TOWARD THE DEFINITION OF CULTURE

From this inadequate definition of the meaning of Christ we turn now to the task of defining, in similarly tenuous fashion,

the meaning of culture. What do we mean in our use of this word when we say that the Christian church enduringly struggles with the problem of Christ and culture?

A theologian's definition of the term must, in the nature of the case, be a layman's definition, since he cannot presume to enter into the issues raised by professional anthropologists; yet it must also, at least initially, be a definition of the phenomenon without theological interpretation, for it is just this theological interpretation which is the point at issue among Christians. For some of them culture is essentially Godless in the purely secular sense, as having neither positive nor negative relation to the God of Jesus Christ; for others it is Godless in the negative sense, as being anti-God or idolatrous; for others it seems solidly based on a natural, rational knowledge of God or His law. Christian disinterestedness forbids the adoption at least at the outset—of any one of these evaluations.

The culture with which we are concerned cannot be simply that of a particular society, such as the Graeco-Roman, the medieval, or the modern Western. Some theologians, like some anthropologists, do, indeed, think of Christian faith as integrally related to Western culture, whether this term be used to designate one continuous historical society beginning not later than the first century A.D., or a series of distinct and affiliated civilizations as in Toynbee's scheme. So Ernst Troeltsch believes that Christianity and Western culture are so inextricably intertwined that a Christian can say little about his faith to members of other civilizations, and the latter in turn cannot encounter Christ save as a member of the Western world.³⁰ Troeltsch himself, however, is highly aware of the tension between Christ and Western culture, so that even for the Westerner Jesus Christ is

³⁰ Troeltsch, Ernst, *Christian Thought*, 1923, esp. pp. 21-35; cf. also his *Die Absolutheit des Christentums*, 1929 (3d ed.) and *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. II, 1913, pp. 779 ff.

never merely a member of his cultural society. Furthermore, Christians in the East, and those who are looking forward to the emergence of a new civilization, are concerned not only with the Western Christ but with one who is to be distinguished from Western faith in him and who is relevant to life in other cultures. Hence culture as we are concerned with it is not a particular phenomenon but the general one, though the general thing appears only in particular forms, and though a Christian of the West cannot think about the problem save in Western terms.

Neither may we define culture narrowly by taking into view some special phase of human social organization and achievement. This is done when the problem is stated in terms of Christ's relation to science and philosophy, as in the question of revelation and reason, or of his relation to political organization, as in the question of church and state. It is also done when, with Jakob Burkhardt, "culture" is distinguished from both religion and state. He regards these three powers, religion, state, and culture, as "supremely heterogeneous to each other." Culture, in his usage, is distinguished from the other two powers by its nonauthoritarian character. It is "the sum of all that has spontaneously arisen for the advancement of material life and as an expression of spiritual and moral life—all social intercourse, technologies, arts, literature and sciences. It is the realm of the variable, free, not necessarily universal, of all that cannot lay claim to compulsive authority."³¹ The spearhead of such culture is speech, he says; the foremost expressions of its spirit are found in the arts. Doubtless the relation of Christ to these elements in civilization raises special problems, yet we can find no clear demarcation between them and those that arise in political and religious society; nor are authoritarianism and

³¹ *Force and Freedom*, 1943, p. 107; cf. 140 ff.

freedom distributed as Burkhardt seems to think. It is especially arbitrary and confusing to define culture as though it excluded religion, and the latter as though it included Christ, since the problems with which we are concerned are often most difficult in the realm of religion, where we must ask about the connection of Christ with our social faiths. Again, culture is too narrowly defined for our purposes if it is distinguished from civilization, the latter term being used to designate the more advanced, perhaps more urban, technical and even senescent forms of social life.³²

What we have in view when we deal with Christ and culture is that total process of human activity and that total result of such activity to which now the name *culture*, now the name *civilization*, is applied in common speech.³³ Culture is the "artificial, secondary environment" which man superimposes on the natural. It comprises language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes, and values.³⁴ This "social heritage," this "reality sui generis," which the New Testament writers frequently had in mind when they spoke of "the world," which is represented in many forms but to which Christians like other men are inevitably subject, is what we mean when we speak of culture.

Though we cannot venture to define the "essence" of this culture, we can describe some of its chief characteristics. For one thing, it is inextricably bound up with man's life in society; it is always *social*. "The essential fact of culture, as we live and experience it, as we can observe it scientifically," writes Malin-

³² Malinowski, Bronislaw, art. "Culture," *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. IV, pp. 621 ff.; Dawson, Christopher, *Religion and Culture*, 1947, p. 47. Spengler, Oswald, *The Decline of the West*, 1926, Vol. I, pp. 31 f., 351 ff.

³³ Cf. Robinson, James Harvey, art. "Civilization," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th ed., Vol. V, p. 735; Brinkmann, Carl, art. "Civilization," *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. III, pp. 525 ff.

³⁴ Malinowski, *loc. cit.*

owski, "is the organization of human beings into permanent groups."³⁵ Whether or not this is the essential fact, it is an essential part of the fact. Individuals may use culture in their own ways; they may change elements in their culture, yet what they use and change is social.³⁶ Culture is the social heritage they receive and transmit. Whatever is purely private, so that it neither derives from nor enters into social life, is not a part of culture. Conversely, social life is always cultural. Anthropology, it seems, has completely scotched the romantic idea of a purely natural society, not characterized by highly distinct and acquired habits, customs, forms of social organization, etc. Culture and social existence go together.

Culture, secondly, is *human achievement*. We distinguish it from nature by noting the evidences of human purposiveness and effort. A river is nature, a canal culture; a raw piece of quartz is nature, an arrowhead culture; a moan is natural, a word cultural. Culture is the work of men's minds and hands. It is that portion of man's heritage in any place or time which has been given us designedly and laboriously by other men, not what has come to us via the mediation of nonhuman beings or through human beings insofar as they have acted without intention of results or without control of the process. Hence it includes speech, education, tradition, myth, science, art, philosophy, government, law, rite, beliefs, inventions, technologies. Furthermore, if one of the marks of culture is that it is the result of past human achievements, another is that no one can possess it without effort and achievement on his own part. The gifts of nature are received as they are communicated without human intent or conscious effort; but the gifts of culture cannot be possessed without striving on the part of the recipient. Speech

³⁵ Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, 1944, p. 43.

³⁶ On individual and society in relation to culture see Benedict, Ruth, *Patterns of Culture*, 1934, chapters VII and VIII.

must be laboriously acquired; government cannot be maintained without constant effort; scientific method must be re-enacted and reintended with every generation. Even the material results of cultural activity are useless unless they are accompanied by a learning process that enables us to employ them as they were intended to be employed. Whether we try to interpret the signs of ancient culture or to solve problems of contemporary civilization, this characteristic feature will always be brought to our attention: we are dealing with what man has purposefully wrought and with what man can or ought to do. The world so far as it is man-made and man-intended is the world of culture.

These human achievements, in the third place, are all designed for an end or ends; the world of culture is a *world of values*. Whether or not we should ask value-questions about nature or pass value-judgments on natural occurrences is a moot question. But with respect to culture phenomena this problem never arises. What men have made and what they make, we must assume, is intended for a purpose; it is designed to serve a good.³⁷ It can never be described without reference to ends in minds of designers and users. Primitive art interests us because it indicates human interest in form, rhythm, and color, in meanings and symbols, and because we are interested in these things. Potsherds are studied that they may reveal what ancient men intended and what methods they had devised to achieve their ends. We judge science and philosophy, technology and education, whether in past or present, always with reference to the values that were intended by them and to the values that attract us. To be sure, the ends that human achievements serve may change; what was intended for utility may be preserved for

³⁷ So Malinowski uses as a central concept in his theory of culture the idea of "an organized system of purposive activities." *A Scientific Theory of Culture*, chaps. V and VI.

the sake of aesthetic satisfaction or of social harmony; yet the value-relation is inescapable wherever we encounter culture.

Further, the values with which these human achievements are concerned are dominantly those of the *good for man*. Philosophers in cultural societies may argue whether the ends that are to be served by culture are ideal or natural, whether they are ideas of value given to spiritual vision or natural goods, that is, ends interesting man as biological being. In either case, however, they seem to agree that man must serve his own good, that he is the measure of all things.³⁸ In defining the ends that his activities are to realize in culture, man begins with himself as the chief value and the source of all other values. What is good is what is good for him. It seems self-evident in culture that animals are to be domesticated or annihilated so far as these measures serve man's good, that God or the gods are to be worshiped so far as this is necessary or desirable for the sake of maintaining and advancing human life, that ideas and ideals are to be served for the sake of human self-realization. Though the search of the good-for-man is dominant in the work of culture, it is not evident that this anthropocentrism is of an exclusive sort. It is not only conceivable that men should undertake to labor and produce for the sake of some other being's good, but it seems true that they do indeed in their cultures often seek to serve causes transcending human existence. From totemic to modern societies they identify themselves with orders of being that include more than men. They regard themselves as representatives of life, so that social organization and laws as well as art and religion show some respect for life even in non-human beings. They define themselves as representatives of the

³⁸ Nikolai Hartmann's *Ethics*, 1932, which is from one point of view a great philosophy of culture, presents at one and the same time a strong argument for the transcendent, objective character of values and a defence of the primacy of human value.

order of rational beings, and seek to realize what is good-for-reason. They also serve the gods. And yet the pragmatic tendency to do all these things for the sake of men seems unconquerable. It must at once be added, however, that no culture is really humanistic in the broad sense, for there are only particular cultures, and in each of them a particular society or a particular class in that society tends to regard itself as the center and source of value, seeking to achieve what is good for it, though justifying that endeavor by claiming for itself a special status as the representative of something universal.

Again, culture in all its forms and varieties is concerned with the *temporal and material realization of values*. This does not mean that the goods that human effort seeks to realize are necessarily temporal or material, however much the concern for these is a part of all cultural achievement. It is fallacious to think of culture as materialistic in the sense that what men labor to achieve is always the satisfaction of their needs as physical and temporal beings. Even the economic interpretations of culture recognize that beyond material goods—that is, values relative to man's physical existence, beyond food, drink, clothing, progeny, and economic order—men in culture seek to gain less tangible values. But even the immaterial goods must be realized in temporal and material form; even the good-for-man as mind and person must be given "a local habitation and a name." Prestige and glory on the one hand, beauty, truth, and goodness on the other—to use the unsatisfactory symbols of spiritual-value theory—are presented to feeling, imagination, or intellectual vision; and human effort presses on to embody in concrete, tangible, visible, and audible forms what has been imaginatively discerned. The harmony and proportion, the form, order and rhythm, the meanings and ideas that men intuit and trace out as they confront nature, social events, and the

world of dreams, these by infinite labor they must paint on wall or canvas, print on paper as systems of philosophy and science, outline in carved stone or cast in bronze, sing in ballad, ode, or symphony. Visions of order and justice, hopes of glory, must at the cost of much suffering be embodied in written laws, dramatic rites, structures of government, empires, ascetic lives

Because all these actualizations of purpose are accomplished in transient and perishing stuff, cultural activity is almost as much concerned with the conservation of values as with their realization. Much of the energy which men in their societies expend at any time is given to this complicated task of preserving what they have inherited and made. Their houses, schools, and temples, their roads and machines, stand in constant need of repair. The desert and the jungle threaten every cultivated acre. Even greater are the dangers of decay that surround the less material achievements of the past. The systems of laws and liberties, the customs of social intercourse, the methods of thought, the institutions of learning and religion, the techniques of art, of language, and of morality itself—these cannot be conserved by keeping in repair the walls and documents that are their symbols. They need to be written afresh generation by generation "on the tables of the heart." Let education and training lapse for one generation, and the whole grand structure of past achievements falls into ruin. Culture is social tradition which must be conserved by painful struggle not so much against nonhuman natural forces as against revolutionary and critical powers in human life and reason.³⁹ But whether customs or artifacts are in question, culture cannot be maintained unless

³⁹ Henri Bergson in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 1935, offers an illuminating and persuasive interpretation of the role of conservatism in culture. Cf. chaps. I and II. Cf. also Lecomte du Nöuy, *Human Destiny*, 1947, chaps. IX and X.

men devote a large part of their efforts to the work of conservation.

Finally, attention must be directed to the *pluralism* that is characteristic of all culture. The values a culture seeks to realize in any time or place are many in number. No society can even try to realize all its manifold possibilities; each is highly complex, made up of many institutions with many goals and interweaving interests.⁴⁰ The values are many, partly because men are many. Culture is concerned with what is good for male and female, child and adult, rulers and ruled; with what is good for men in special vocations and groups, according to the customary notions of such good. Moreover, all the individuals have their special claims and interests; and everyone in his individuality is a complex being with desires of body and mind, with self-regarding and other-regarding motives, with relations to other men, nature and supernatural beings. Even if economic or biological interpretations of culture are maintained, still all that can be claimed is that economic or biologic values are fundamental, while the vast superstructure of other interests must be recognized.⁴¹ But in culture as we meet it and live it not even such unity as these interpretations claim is recognizable. The values we seek in our societies and find represented in their institutional behavior are many, disparate, and often incomparable, so that these societies are always involved in a more or less laborious effort to hold together in tolerable conflict the many efforts of many men in many groups to achieve and conserve many goods. The cultures are forever seeking to combine peace with prosperity, justice with order, freedom

⁴⁰ Cf. Benedict, Ruth, *Patterns of Culture*, 1934, chap. II; Malinowski, B., *A Scientific Theory* etc., chaps. X and XI.

⁴¹ Cf. for instance Friedrich Engels' statement about the relative independence of the superstructure in his letter of Sept. 21, 1890, to Joseph Bloch. Adoratsky, V., *Karl Marx, Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 381.

with welfare, truth with beauty, scientific truth with moral good, technical proficiency with practical wisdom, holiness with life, and all these with all the rest. Among the many values the kingdom of God may be included—though scarcely as the one pearl of great price. Jesus Christ and God the Father, the gospel, the church, and eternal life may find places in the cultural complex, but only as elements in the great pluralism.

These are some of the obvious characteristics of that culture which lays its claim on every Christian, and under the authority of which he also lives when he lives under the authority of Jesus Christ. Though sometimes we state the fundamental human problem as that of grace and nature, in human existence we do not know a nature apart from culture. In any case we cannot escape culture any more readily than we can escape nature, for "the man of nature, the *Naturmensch*, does not exist,"⁴² and "no man ever looks at the world with pristine eyes."⁴³

IV. THE TYPICAL ANSWERS

Given these two complex realities—Christ and culture—an infinite dialogue must develop in the Christian conscience and the Christian community. In his single-minded direction toward God, Christ leads men away from the temporality and pluralism of culture. In its concern for the conservation of the many values of the past, culture rejects the Christ who bids men rely on grace. Yet the Son of God is himself child of a religious culture, and sends his disciples to tend his lambs and sheep, who cannot be guarded without cultural work. The dialogue proceeds with denials and affirmations, reconstructions, compromises, and new denials. Neither individual nor church can come to a stopping-

⁴² Malinowski in *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. IV, p. 621.

⁴³ Ruth Benedict, *op. cit.*, p. 2

place in the endless search for an answer which will not provoke a new rejoinder.

Yet it is possible to discern some order in this multiplicity, to stop the dialogue, as it were, at certain points; and to define typical partial answers that recur so often in different eras and societies that they seem to be less the product of historical conditioning than of the nature of the problem itself and the meanings of its terms. In this way the course of the great conversation about Christ and culture may be more intelligently followed, and some of the fruits of the discussion may be garnered. In the following chapters such typical answers are to be set forth and illustrated by reference to such Christians as John and Paul, Tertullian and Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Luther, Ritschl and Tolstoy. At this point brief and summary descriptions of these typical answers is offered as a guide to what follows. Five sorts of answers are distinguished, of which three are closely related to each other as belonging to that median type in which both Christ and culture are distinguished and affirmed; yet strange family resemblances may be found along the whole scale.

Answers of the first type emphasize the *opposition* between Christ and culture. Whatever may be the customs of the society in which the Christian lives, and whatever the human achievements it conserves, Christ is seen as opposed to them, so that he confronts men with the challenge of an "either-or" decision. In the early period of church history Jewish rejection of Jesus, defended by Klausner, found its counterpart in Christian antagonism to Jewish culture, while Roman outlawry of the new faith was accompanied by Christian flight from or attack upon Graeco-Roman civilization. In medieval times monastic orders and sectarian movements called on believers living in what purported to be a Christian culture to abandon the

"world" and to "come out from among them and be separate." In the modern period answers of this kind are being given by missionaries who require their converts to abandon wholly the customs and institutions of so-called "heathen" societies, by little groups of withdrawing Christians in Western or "Christianized" civilization, and in partial manner, by those who emphasize the antagonism of Christian faith to capitalism and communism, to industrialism and nationalism, to Catholicism and Protestantism.

Recognition of a fundamental *agreement* between Christ and culture is typical of the answers offered by a second group. In them Jesus often appears as a great hero of human culture history; his life and teachings are regarded as the greatest human achievement; in him, it is believed, the aspirations of men toward their values are brought to a point of culmination; he confirms what is best in the past, and guides the process of civilization to its proper goal. Moreover, he is a part of culture in the sense that he himself is part of the social heritage that must be transmitted and conserved. In our time answers of this kind are given by Christians who note the close relation between Christianity and Western civilization, between Jesus' teachings or the teachings about him and democratic institutions; yet there are occasional interpretations that emphasize the agreement between Christ and Eastern culture as well as some that tend to identify him with the spirit of Marxian society. In earlier times solutions of the problem along these lines were being offered simultaneously with the solutions of the first or "Christ-against-culture" type.

Three other typical answers agree with each other in seeking to maintain the great differences between the two principles and in undertaking to hold them together in some unity. They are distinguished from each other by the manner in which

each attempts to combine the two authorities. One of them, our third type, understands Christ's relation to culture somewhat as the men of the second group do: he is the fulfillment of cultural aspirations and the restorer of the institutions of true society. Yet there is in him something that neither arises out of culture nor contributes directly to it. He is discontinuous as well as continuous with social life and its culture. The latter, indeed, leads men to Christ, yet only in so preliminary a fashion that a great leap is necessary if men are to reach him or, better, true culture is not possible unless beyond all human achievement, all human search for values, all human society, Christ enters into life from above with gifts which human aspiration has not envisioned and which human effort cannot attain unless he relates men to a supernatural society and a new value-center. Christ is, indeed, a Christ of culture, but he is also a *Christ above culture*. This *synthetic* type is best represented by Thomas Aquinas and his followers, but it has many other representatives in both early and modern times.

Another group of median answers constitutes our fourth type. In these the duality and inescapable authority of both Christ and culture are recognized, but the opposition between them is also accepted. To those who answer the question in this way it appears that Christians throughout life are subject to the tension that accompanies obedience to two authorities who do not agree yet must both be obeyed. They refuse to accommodate the claims of Christ to those of secular society, as, in their estimation, men in the second and third groups do. So they are like the "Christ-against-culture" believers, yet differ from them in the conviction that obedience to God requires obedience to the institutions of society and loyalty to its members as well as obedience to a Christ who sits in judgment on that society.

Hence man is seen as subject to two moralities, and as a citizen of two worlds that are not only discontinuous with each other but largely opposed. In the *polarity* and *tension* of Christ and culture life must be lived precariously and sinfully in the hope of a justification which lies beyond history. Luther may be regarded as the greatest representative of this type, yet many a Christian who is not otherwise a Lutheran finds himself compelled to solve the problem in this way.

Finally, as the fifth type in the general series and as the third of the mediating answers, there is the *conversionist* solution. Those who offer it understand with the members of the first and the fourth groups that human nature is fallen or perverted, and that this perversion not only appears in culture but is transmitted by it. Hence the opposition between Christ and all human institutions and customs is to be recognized. Yet the antithesis does not lead either to Christian separation from the world as with the first group, or to mere endurance in the expectation of a transhistorical salvation, as with the fourth. Christ is seen as the converter of man in his culture and society, not apart from these, for there is no nature without culture and no turning of men from self and idols to God save in society. It is in Augustine that the great outlines of this answer seem to be offered; John Calvin makes it explicit; many others are associated with these two.

When the answers to the enduring problem are stated in this manner it is apparent that a construction has been set up that is partly artificial. A type is always something of a construct, even when it has not been constructed prior to long study of many historic individuals and movements. When one returns from the hypothetical scheme to the rich complexity of individual events, it is evident at once that no person or group ever

conforms completely to a type.⁴⁴ Each historical figure will show characteristics that are more reminiscent of some other family than the one by whose name he has been called, or traits will appear that seem wholly unique and individual. The method of typology, however, though historically inadequate, has the advantage of calling to attention the continuity and significance of the great *motifs* that appear and reappear in the long wrestling of Christians with their enduring problem. Hence also it may help us to gain orientation as we in our own time seek to answer the question of Christ and culture.

⁴⁴C. J. Jung's *Psychological Types*, 1924, is suggestive and illuminating as an example of typological method. On the applicability to individuals of type descriptions see especially pp. 10 f., 412 ff.

CHAPTER 2

*Christ Against Culture*

I. THE NEW PEOPLE AND "THE WORLD"

The first answer to the question of Christ and culture we shall consider is the one that uncompromisingly affirms the sole authority of Christ over the Christian and resolutely rejects culture's claims to loyalty. It seems to be both logically and chronologically entitled to the first position: logically, because it appears to follow directly from the common Christian principle of the Lordship of Jesus Christ; chronologically, because it is widely held to be the typical attitude of the first Christians. Both claims are subject to question, yet it must be conceded that the answer was given at a very early time in the history of the church, and that on the surface it seems to be logically more consistent than the other positions.

While various New Testament writings evince something of this attitude, none presents it without qualification. The first gospel contrasts the new law with the old, yet contains very explicit statements about the Christians' obligations to be obedient not only to the code of Moses but also to the requirements of the leaders of Jewish society.¹ The book of Revelation is radical in its rejection of "the world," but here the problem is complicated by the persecution situation in which Christians

¹ Mt. 5:21-48, 5:17-20; 23:1-3.