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The Present Crisis in Christian Ethics

I DO not think that this title misrepresents the true position. There is a crisis in Christian ethics at the present time. Perhaps there always has been one. In the 1920s, when the expression " the present crisis in religion " was being much used, L. P. Jacks[1] objected that the crisis in religion was not simply present but perpetual. If people hold religious beliefs sincerely, he declared, then they will always be involved in intellectual perplexity and moral tension, for it is only in spiritually dead ages that God ceases to puzzle men. No doubt there is truth in that. But it does not follow (as I am sure Jacks would have been the first to agree) that muddle-headedness is in itself a good thing, provided only that it has to do with God. When people are so perplexed that they do not know where they are, then, as rational beings, and still more if they profess to be followers of a Spirit of truth who is leading them into all truth, they have a duty to try to find out where they are as quickly and clearly as they can.

So far as Christian ethics is concerned, I think many people feel lost in a veritable labyrinth. For one thing, the times are so out of joint that, if it were simply a matter of setting them right in accordance with traditional Christian ideas of what is right, that would be hard enough in all conscience. But we are told by *avant garde* theologians that much in traditional Christian ethics is mistaken. Does anyone suppose that there are a number of moral principles, such as " Thou shalt not steal ", " Thou shalt not commit adultery ", in accordance with which, as a Christian, he must invariably act? He is wrong : there is nothing prescribed except love! Does anyone think that what Christians have always understood by virtue is, without qualification, admirable? Not so : much of it is simply a form of cowardice! Does anyone believe that there are absolute and objective moral values, grounded in the will of God? Then he is a supranaturalist and his views are not only offensive to the now prevailing empiricism, but are contrary to what Jesus taught![2] Well, this kind of thing goes over well with the brighter sparks at S.C.M. meetings; but it leaves many Christians, who are more concerned that their beliefs should make sense than be sensational, wondering where on earth they are.

Let me say at once that I am not entering the lists in order to champion tradition against the new thinking! I do not think that I am, by nature, a reactionary; I am all for new thinking, provided it is clear. All I want to do in this article is to try and make the issues which confront us in Christian ethics today a little clearer. For, when one is in a muddle, the first and all-important step

towards getting out of it is to frame as precisely as possible the questions which need to be answered.

Ethics and Meta-ethics

The problem, or so it seems to me, has two main aspects. They can be differentiated as the *practical* and the *logical,* or alternatively as the first-order and second-order, or again as the ethical and meta-ethical, aspects of the problem. On the one hand, that is to say, there are questions about what Christians, as such, ought to do. These are practical, or first-order, in the sense that they bear directly on conduct; the answers to them form the substance of Christian ethics. On the other hand, there are questions about the processes of Christian ethical thinking, or Christian moral discourse. These are not questions to which Christian moral judgments supply the answers; they are questions about the process of moral judgment itself—e.g. what is the relationship between moral judgments and the statements of natural or supernatural fact with which we frequently support them? Such questions are logical, or second-order, in the sense that they are about a use to which language is put; answers to them constitute what is sometimes called meta-ethics.

If the reader picks up any recent book or article on Christian ethics, he will probably find both aspects of our problem discussed, and perhaps confused. He will find, on the one hand, discussions as to whether Christians ought to engage in pre-marital sex, divorce, abortion, homosexuality, racial discrimination, war, etc. The traditional teaching of the Church on these matters will be assessed and, most likely, some revision of it proposed. But the reader will also find discussions about the conditions under which it does, or does not, make sense to say that one knows what is right; about whether morality should be grounded in the nature of man or the commands of God; about whether its main concern is with principles or persons, acts or rules.

In what follows I shall try to bring into focus these two kinds of issue. But, before doing so, I ought perhaps to try and clear my own head, and help the reader to clear his, as to what precisely the so-called " new morality " of *avant garde* theologians is.

The " New Morality "

I suppose one would be near the true origin of it if one said that the " new morality " has been bred out of philosophical Existentialism by religionless Christianity.[3] It represents the consequences for ethics of religionless Christianity's rejection of the God " out there "; and the application to Christian ethics of Existentialism's insistence that morality is fundamentally a matter of the individual's free choice in concrete situations. If Christian morality is what it has often been taken to be, namely a matter of commands or rules imposed by God upon men, then its significance can only be grasped

by the "religious", i.e. by those who believe in this Divine Law-giver. And, if Christian morality consists of general rules or principles, e.g. "Thou shalt not steal", "All extra-marital sex is wrong", etc., then it does violence to the complexity of real-life situations and sets principles above persons. These are the grounds on which so-called radical Christians have recently contended that ethics should not be supranaturalistic but "situational". Two changes, they maintain, are necessary. (i) Christians must ground their ethic in the nature of man himself, in the transcendent claim of love which all human beings, as such, experience in personal relationships. (ii) They must recognize that this claim is embodied, not in general rules of conduct, but in concrete situations each different from the rest, so that the question is never (or never simply) "What moral principle applies here?", but "What are the facts of this situation and, given these facts, what action will most completely express love for persons?"

Its application to sex will serve as an illustration of this point of view. The "new moralists" tell us that, despite the seventh commandment or the teaching of Jesus about divorce, Christians should not say that adultery is *always* wrong. It is quite conceivable that an act of adultery should express a very high degree of love for persons, and in some circumstances, of all the acts which are practicable it may be the best. Moreover, if adultery or extra-marital sex is condemned, it should not be on the grounds that it contravenes the law of God but that it is a failure in love for persons. Suppose, for example, that a young man asks why he should not sleep with his girl friend. The answer is : " If you don't really love her, then you will just be using her and that is wrong. But if you do love her, you will want to wait until you can give her the security of marriage."[4]

Ethical Intuitionism

If my account of it is at all correct, then the "new morality" rests on two assumptions. I admit that the above account is doubtless over-simplified. There is a considerable literature, and many variations, on the theme of "situational ethics". I have presented the extreme form of it which is sometimes called "Act-agapism".[5] But, in what purports to be a critical introduction, rather than a comprehensive survey, I think that is permissible. The reader who feels some sympathy with the "new morality" may be induced by what he finds here to investigate less extreme forms of it to see how far, if at all, they meet my criticisms.

The first of the two assumptions referred to a moment ago is that *all* men do, as a matter of psychological fact, experience the transcendent claim of love in some personal relationships. The second is that, provided men understand the facts of the situation, they need only ask themselves : " What would love do here?" and

the *correct* answer will occur to them. These assumptions are quali-
fied in perfectly legitimate ways. It is said, for instance, that men
only experience the claims of love, if they have friends or family,
and some men have neither; or that it is sometimes necessary to
persist for a long time with the question " What would love do?'
before the answer becomes clear; or that some men are morally so
corrupt that they can no longer discern the correct answer at all.
And so on. But, allowing for such qualification, the " new morality ",
in its two assumptions, seems to be uncommonly like old-fashioned
ethical intuitionism.

Ethical intuitionism is notoriously difficult to defend.[6] It claims
that all normal human beings intuit certain obligations, but is the
evidence for this conclusive? Of course, the claim can be rendered
analytically true by defining " normal " as " intuiting certain
obligations ", but that is trivial and uninteresting. More is meant.
The claim of the " new moralists " is that human beings, as such,
cannot but feel love's constraint and that the latter cannot be ex-
plained as the consequence of any environmental conditioning. It
is the Unconditional in the conditioned. In a word, the constraint
of love is " theonomous ". It is the Divine " Thou " reaching us
" in, with and under " our human relationships.[7] This sounds fine,
but does it fit the facts? Do all men experience the claim of love—
in the sense of Christian *agape*—even in marriage, parenthood or
friendship? And if any but this sense of love is used, then do not
men sometimes act in ways which may be said to be motivated by
love but which are quite ungodly?

The other claim, or assumption, of the ethical intuitionist and
the " new morality ", that men discern by intuition the correct
answer to " What would love do?", fares even worse. If intuition
is the only source of moral judgments, then its deliverances cannot
be tested for moral rightness by anything beyond itself. They can,
therefore, never be shown to be *incorrect*. But, in that case, it is
vacuous to call them *correct*. All this would tell us is that they are
what they are.

Now, it certainly seems to be the case that, in the logical analysis
of moral discourse, there does ultimately come a point at which we
are left with judgments which simply have to be accepted or
rejected, there being no way of showing that they are correct or
incorrect. For instance, the judgment " Whatever produces the
greatest happiness of the greatest number is right " is, for Utili-
tarians, ultimate. Other judgments are shown to be correct or
incorrect by reference to it; whether a thing is correctly judged
right or not is determined by whether it maximizes happiness or not.
But there is nothing beyond the judgment " Whatever produces the
greatest happiness of the greatest number is right ", for Utilitarians,
by reference to which the correctness of that judgment can be deter-
mined. Not just Utilitarianism, but every moral viewpoint goes

down in the last analysis to some ultimate commitment. For Evo-
lutionists it is "Whatever conduces to evolution is right"; for
religious moralists it may be "Whatever fulfils the will of God is
right"; and so on. It is an important question in meta-ethics
whether such ultimate moral principles should be conceived as
discernments or decisions, but we will not go into that. The point
for the moment is that thorough-going "situational ethics" makes
it impossible to show, not only that such ultimate principles can
significantly be called correct or incorrect, but that *any* moral
judgment can be so described.

Suppose you and I are "situational" moralists. We both look at
one situation in all its uniqueness and ask ourselves "What would
love do?", but your answer is "X" and mine is "Y". Now, how
can we resolve this disagreement? There are, remember, on the
view which we are considering, no general principles to which
appeal can be made, nor features of this situation which make it
comparable morally with others. But it is *only* by such appeal or
comparison than moral disagreements can be resolved. Suppose you
and I were not "situational" moralists and we disagreed. Then I
could take either of two lines in the attempt to change your opinion.
(i) I could appeal to some principle which I believed us both to
hold. For instance, I might say "Do you think it right to do what
will make others happy?", and if you answered "Yes", then I
could try to show that what you thought right in the present case
would not make others happy. (ii) Alternatively, I could draw a
comparison between the present situation and some other about
which you had expressed a moral judgment. For instance, if you
were now saying that you thought it wrong to make abortion legal,
I might point out that, on some previous occasion, you had said that
you thought it wrong to bring children into the world unless a good
home was ensured for them. And I could argue that making
abortion legal would ensure that many children, who would other-
wise be born without the prospect of a good home, would not be
born. I am not, of course, concerned here with the rights and
wrongs of making others happy or of legalizing abortion; the point
which I am illustrating from such cases is simply that, if all appeal
to general moral principles, or common features of different situa-
tions is excluded, then moral judgment becomes simply a matter
of "seeing", or intuiting, what to do in particular, unique, concrete
situations, and it is impossible to test this "seeing" for correctness
or incorrectness.

According to "Act-agapism", morally right acts are "what love
would do". This is meaningless, if "love" is indefinable. If it is
to be defined, that must be either verbally or ostensively. If we say
what "love" means—e.g. it means doing to others as you would
that they should do to you—then such a definition, in effect, consti-
tutes a general principle which all right acts, as such, will instanti-

ate. But "Act-agapism" excludes all general principles. If we define "love" simply by pointing to an act, or acts, as its referent, then this act, or acts, must have some characteristic(s)—e.g. seeking the happiness of others—in virtue of which others also would call it "love", otherwise the definition is arbitrary. But, here again, these characteristics would implicitly constitute a general principle of rightness. It appears, therefore, that, if all reference to general principle is excluded, "what love would do" is a meaningless expression—or, at least, one which has meaning only for the user but not for anyone else.

So the account of morality which we have been considered seems to come to this. You ask a question the meaning of which cannot be stated (What would love do?) and you get an answer the correctness of which cannot be shown! If this is not a *reductio ad absurdum*, it is impossible to imagine what would be.

Reasons for Moral Judgments

I gave, as two definable features of the "new morality" : (i) its abhorrence of general rules or principles of conduct and (ii) its insistence that morality must be grounded in the nature of man rather than the external command of a Divine Lawgiver. We must look more closely at each of these.

The important point to notice about the former is this. When a moral judgment has been given, it is not unusual to ask for a reason why it has been given; and in this respect moral judgment differs from the mere expression of liking or taste. If I say to you "China tea tastes good", it will be a little eccentric on your part, if you answer "Why?" I shall dismiss such a question with some such reply as "It just does". But suppose I said to you, "Capital punishment is wrong", it would not be at all eccentric for you to ask "Why?" And it would show that I was not a very serious or responsible moralist, if I shrugged off your question with "It just is". Reason-giving is *normal* in moral discourse. This is one feature which differentiates it from other "expressive" utterances. But this is the point. Every reason which is given for a moral judgment appeals implicitly to some general moral principle. Suppose we say to the wife of a man who has been having an affair with someone else : "The right thing—the loving thing—to do is to forgive him and take him back." And in reply to her question "Why?", we say : "Because unless you do he will be ruined" or "Because unless you do the children will suffer" or "Because unless you do you will never manage financially" . . . etc. The implication of every such reason is a general moral principle : "All acts which avoid the ruin of others are right", "All acts which protect the interests of children are right", "All acts which safeguard your own financial interests are right" . . . etc. Reasons, as such, are necessarily universal. If any of them is invoked, it is because this

particular case is taken to be an instance of that universal. So we must either cut out all reason-giving in moral discourse—and then how would it differ from the mere expression of taste?—or acknowledge that there are universal principles or rules of rightness.

It is true, of course, that general principles of right conduct may conflict in particular situations. The " new moralists " are far from being the first to point this out. Early in the eighteenth century, Richard Price—whose *Review* is probably the best defence of rational intuitionism ever written—pointed out that moral principles often " interfere " and must be " weighed " against one another. Any point of view in ethics, e.g. Utilitarianism, Evolutionism, etc., may be seen as a view about which moral principle " outweighs " all others when there is a conflict. In Christian ethics this principle is undoubtedly love. If all the " new moralists " are saying is that love outweighs all other considerations in assessing the morality of actions, then there is nothing in the least original about this. But if they are saying more, what more? It is surely not that no reasons can be given why one action is more loving than another! But the moment such a reason has been given, the general principle of love has been broken down into subsidiary general principles or rules for its exercise. In the above illustration, for instance, love is broken down, first, into " Forgive those who wrong you " and then into " Avoid ruining others " or " Protect the interests of children " or " Protect your own interests " (this latter implying a cynical view of " love "). It is true to say that, for Christians, nothing is prescribed except love, if this means that nothing outweighs love; but not if it means that this principle cannot be broken down into others which are also general. The important question for Christian ethics is " What constitutes love?" and unless the answer consists of as many particular intuitions as there are moral situations—and we have seen the difficulties in that view—then it must (logically must) consist of general rules or principles of conduct.

Morals and the Nature of Man

The other defining characteristic of the " new morality " which I gave was its insistence that morality must be grounded in the nature of man. This raises interesting questions which are receiving a good deal of attention in moral philosophy at the moment.[8] Everyone who has read a recent book on the subject will be familiar with the doctrine—one could almost say dogma—that " ought " cannot be deduced from " is ", moral evaluation from statement of fact. The claim that this deduction can be made—that, for instance, from " X will maximize happiness " we can deduce " X ought to be done ", or from " Y fulfils God's will " it follows that Y ought to be done—is what G. E. Moore called " the naturalistic fallacy ". Recently, however, there have been second thoughts about this.

Two points have been made, one with reference particularly to religious morality, the other more general.

Is not religious language, even where it purports to be purely factual, also morally commissive? If I say that Y is the will of God, do I not imply that I think it ought to be done? Would anyone—except in the imagination of philosophers—ever say "I think Y is the will of God but I do not think that it would be right to do it?" It is true that the morals of gods have sometimes been condemned. The sages of Greece condemned the immorality of the gods. But whilst they were doing that they were also ceasing to believe in them. Though it would not be formally contradictory, it would be very puzzling if anyone said : "I believe Y is the will of God but I do not think it is right." We should want some explanation of such a remark. We should feel that the speaker could not mean by "God" what we mean.

Now to think more generally, where are moral judgments grounded? Is it not in human wants and needs? Moral language is evaluative. By means of it we praise or blame, approve or condemn. If we had not wants or needs—if it never made any difference to us what happened—we should have no use for such language. Given human needs and wants, as they in fact are, certain evaluations are *intelligible,* others not. For example, since we take it that all (normal) people want to be happy, the fact that an act increases happiness *ceteris paribus* seems to us a good reason for judging it to be right. If someone said that he thought it right to make people miserable, we should be puzzled; his remark would need some explanation before it made sense, e.g. he meant the misery which results in long-term happiness such as sorrow for sin. It would seem, therefore, that there is some logical connexion between what we take to be the wants or needs of men and what is thought good or right or obligatory. It is not the case that, for any naturalistic description (Y), the statement "Act X is Y but X ought not to be done" is a formal contradiction. But it is the case that, for some values of Y, this remark would be unintelligible—more would have to be said before it ceased to puzzle us.

There are problems here. It is hard to say what men want; harder, what they need. Opinions differ. How are we to show that we *know* which are correct and which mistaken? One does not have to be an Existentialist to appreciate the difficulty of defining human nature. Nevertheless, there is a logical connexion between what we take the nature of man to be and what we take human wants or needs to be; and so there is also a logical connexion between the former and what we judge good or evil, right or wrong. What we take man to be determines what we find intelligible, and what unintelligible in terms of right and wrong, good and evil, ought and ought-not.

We are now in a position to see more clearly whether Christian

ethics is grounded in the nature of man or in the command of God. On the one hand, Christian moral judgments, like any other kind, are intelligible only so far as they are grounded in what those addressed take to be the wants and needs, and so the nature, of man. But the Christian, as such, has his own definitive conception of man as a being who lives under the judgment and mercy of God and this of course determines the account which he gives of human wants or needs. If anyone does not share this conception of man, then Christian ethics will not make sense to him. To say that we must choose between grounding morals in the nature of man or the command of God is therefore quite wrong. The Christian conception of human nature cannot be stated without reference to the command of God; for the definitive characteristic of man, from the Christian point of view, is just the fact that he is addressed by God in claim and succour. To be man is to be under the command of God.

Christian Morality and Empirical Fact

I turn now from these logical considerations to more practical ones. The dissatisfaction out of which the " new morality " has arisen is with traditional Christian ethics as a guide to conduct. Criticism has centred particularly upon the Church's teaching about sexual behaviour, and so we will confine our attention to that, though what I have to say could *mutatis mutandis* be applied to other moral issues. Is adultery always immoral? Is divorce always wrong? Some quite disinterested Christian thinkers have come to doubt the affirmative answers which traditional Christian ethics has given to such questions. Such doubt is not new, of course. Fifty yeare ago Hastings Rashdall in his excellent and responsible book *Conscience and Christ,* offered some radical criticism of the Church's teaching about sex. What is perhaps new is that the current criticism comes, in some instances, from what one would have said were strongholds of traditional morality, especially concerning sex, namely the episcopate and the Anglo-catholic wing of the Church of England. According to the " new morality ", the Church's uncompromising " Thou shalt not's " fail to recognize the complexity of human life and the values which can sometimes be realized in sexual relationships traditionally deemed illicit.

Now if one believes quite simply : (i) that Scripture—i.e. the seventh commandment, the Gospel records of Jesus' teaching about divorce, Paul's condemnation of homosexuality, etc.—gives us the content of the Christian ethic; and (ii) that Christian morality is just a matter of conforming to this content : then there is no problem. The application of the Christian ethic may sometimes seem harsh and impersonal. But, in many such cases, it can be shown convincingly that the happiness of all concerned will, even in this world, be best served if the Christian ethic is obeyed (by, for

example, refraining from adultery, divorce, homosexual practices, etc.) whatever the immediate attractions of failing to do so may be. And if, in some cases, this cannot be shown, it can be argued, from the Christian standpoint, that the long-term well-being of any person is best served by obeying the Word of God, whatever the immediate cost of so doing may be. This " ethical fundamentalism " has the merit of self-consistency and rests on clearly stateable presuppositions about Scripture and man's relationship to God.

However, there are many in the Church today who cannot rest content with it. We need not go very deeply into the reasons why. In fine, they are that the authority of Scripture, the situations of human existence and the theology of man's relationship with God are all much more complicated matters than ethical fundamentalism makes them out to be. I do not propose to discuss them all, but only to touch on two issues which seem to me to be crucial for any attempt to move away from ethical fundamentalism, as defined above.

The first is this : how far may questions in Christian ethics be settled by purely empirical inquiries? Mr. John Wilson, who is a Christian and a philosopher, argues very persuasively in his recent Pelican, *Logic and Sexual Morality*, that we just do not know the relevant empirical facts, so far as many aspects of sexual behaviour are concerned; and we need to find these out before we can form moral judgments correctly. He gives " integration " and " development " of personality as the overriding criteria of what is right here; but he asks whether what we actually know about premarital sex, promiscuity, homosexuality, etc. justifies us in asserting that these practices inevitably result in disintegration or arrested development of personality. Furthermore, it is conceivable, indeed likely, that many of the relevant empirical facts are, or will soon be, alterable and what then? " Thus the argument that we cannot have homosexuality if the race is to survive falls down as soon as we can produce children artificially; the argument that sadism is bad, because the poor sadist cannot enjoy normal sexual expression, will not do if we can produce people who enjoy normal expression *and* sadism; and the argument that monogamy is desirable, because children need two (and only two) permanent parental figures, falls down if it turns out that children are actually happier with a larger number of parents."[9] I have no axe to grind about this. But what worries me is that Christian thinkers—presumably because it is a prestigious appellation nowadays—claim sometimes to be empiricists whilst refusing, when it comes to the crunch, to behave like empiricists. We can't have it both ways. Either we rest our moral judgments upon certain claims as to what the facts are, and then if it turns out that we are mistaken about the facts, we repudiate our moral judgments; or we admit honestly that we hold certain moral views and propose to go on holding them even if the factual claims

with which we have hitherto supported them turn out to be false.

In *Honest to God,* as we noted above, the Bishop of Woolwich gives, as the correct Christian answer to a young man who wants to know why he should not sleep with his girl friend, the following : We must ask him " Do you love her?" or " *How much* do you love her?" . . . " and then help him to accept *for himself* the decision that, if he doesn't, or doesn't very deeply, then his action is immoral, or if he does, then he will respect her far too much to use her or take liberties with her."[10] The bishop's whole approach purports to be in line with contemporary empiricism. But there is something curiously Victorian about the conception of the man-woman relationship which is implicit here. The quality of the young man's love is apparently determined by whether he has, or has not, married the girl. If he has, it is true love; if he has not, it is " using " her, " taking liberties ". The implication is that all extra-marital sexual love between man and woman is a kind of rape !. But surely this is just not true ! It allows the bishop to return at the end of the day from his flirtations with " new morality " to a safe, traditional insistence upon the supreme virtuousness of chastity, but at the price of falsifying the facts. Suppose our young man and his girl friend are sophisticated University students or professional people. She is not a passive, Victorian maiden, whose whole existence is conditioned for good if she gets married, and for ill if she does not. She is, let us suppose, a warm-hearted, vigorous, responsive person, who loves as she is loved. She knows about contraception, so the possibility of children is virtually eliminated. There are, let us take it, no third parties, such as spouses, parents or friends, who will be hurt or shamed by what our young couple do. He does his work; she does hers. In their time away from work they find joy and fulfilment in each other's company. They know that their relationship may not last, but whilst it does they cherish it as a great good; they are responsible, considerate and unselfish in their dealings with one another. Well, is this rape? Is he using her, taking liberties? True they may suffer guilt-feelings or have to be furtive; but these are both consequences of society's regarding what they do as wrong. That is different from its being wrong. Are we to say to the young man, " Don't sleep with her because, social convention being what it is, you might find the relationship in some respects uncomfortable "?

I am not saying that it would be right for the young man and his girl friend to form such a relationship as we have supposed. I think it would be wrong. But if I am asked why I think it wrong, I have to be very careful because the sort of reason which Christian moralists are wont to give may well turn out, on close consideration, to be false. If I say that the reason is that God disapproves of an extra-marital relationship such as we have supposed, then that is that and whether the young man is " using " his girl or not does not

signify. But if I say that it is wrong for some other reason, e.g. because it means that he *is* " using " her, then I must not see only the facts which seem to support this contention and turn a blind eye to all those which do not. Christian moralists seem to me to be very adept at turning this kind of blind eye. I am not surprised that it infuriates non-Christians. There is something contemptible about proclaiming oneself a a contemporary empiricist and then " rigging " the facts to fit one's preconceived ideas of right and wrong.

Development in Ethics

The other issue in any attempt to move away from fundamentalist ethics is : may we admit in Christian ethics a principle of development? Suppose our Lord did condemn divorce uncompromisingly. May we regard this as a limitation of his moral judgment comparable to certain limitations of his scientific knowledge, which most modern theologians would acknowledge to be real limitations? It does not prove that Christ was not the Son of God, if he did not know that the earth is round or believed evil spirits to be real entities. Could we take the same line on a moral issue? Our Lord gave his word on divorce in the context of Jewish culture and the current debate between Hillel, who allowed divorce for many causes, and Shammai, who allowed it only for adultery. He sided with Shammai. But the moral dimensions of the man-woman relationship, like the physical dimensions of the natural world, are, it may be said, wider than our Lord's teaching, taken as it stands, recognized. Many who have no difficulty in rejecting fundamentalism, where that means for instance the Genesis account of creation, find it hard to reject ethical fundamentalism. But are the two cases so different? Christ revealed the love of God in a human life under first-century conditions. If the physics and the psychology of our world can be so different from those of his, without this discrediting his Divine Sonship, may not the ethics be also? Rashdall, in the book referred to above, comes out with a strong affirmative reply to this question. But we have no clear idea what the guide-lines for such a development of Christian ethics should be. It seems to me that there is great need for Christian theologians, philosophers, psychologists and sociologists to get together and work on this problem, for all their disciplines will have something to contribute.

NOTES

[1] *Religious Perplexities* (Hibbert Lectures, 1922), pp. 51ff.
[2] See J. A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God,* chap. 6 and H. A. Williams, " Theology and 'Self-Awareness " in *Soundings,* ed. A. R. Vidler.