

A CRITIQUE OF BERTRAND RUSSELL'S RELIGIOUS POSITION

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Russell is without question "one of the most productive and most brilliant thinkers of our age, mathematical logician, philosopher, journalist and libertarian."¹ There is probably "no figure [who] has . . . dominated the intellectual world so long, so contentiously, and so courageously as Bertrand Russell."² In scholarly circles he has won great acclaim through his monumental publication (completed jointly with Alfred North Whitehead), *Principia Mathematica*, first published in 1910. This work conclusively demonstrated that mathematics was a special case of deductive logic, and, in the hands of Russell's pupil Ludwig Wittgenstein, it profoundly influenced the development of contemporary analytic philosophy.³

The "brilliant, crotchety, opinionated"⁴ Russell has also acquired great notoriety as a "Ban the Bomb" man, especially through such statements as: "I deplore the Russian tests just as I deplored American tests."⁵ This venture for peace has given Russell an international popularity, which has been enlarged further by his prolific writing. In 1950 he received the Nobel prize for Literature.⁶

In America, however, Russell is perhaps most remembered for an incident which occurred in 1940 on the campus of the College of the City of New York. Russell, who had been hired to teach philosophy, was declared morally unfit by the College authorities because of certain of his educational views, of which the following is representative: "I am sure that university life would be better, both intellectually and morally . . . if most university students had temporary, childless marriages."⁷ This incident proved to have damaging effects on the one hand, and limited positive results on the other, for Russell's acquired popularity. While practically every newspaper, periodical, and journal joined in the "chorus of defamation"⁸ against Russell, there were some members of the

1. Morton White, *The Age of Analysis: Twentieth Century Philosophers* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1955), p. 22.
2. Edwin Diamond, "Russell — War, Peace, The Bomb." *Newsweek*, LX (August 20, 1962), 56.
3. Charles Percy Sanger, "Bertrand Russell — Philosophy," *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (24 vols., 14th ed.; London: Encyclopedia Britannica Co., 1929), XIX, 678.
4. David Susskind, "Fourscore and Ten," *Newsweek*, LIX (June 18, 1962), 36.
5. Edwin Diamond, *loc. cit.*, p. 55.
6. F. W. Dillistone, "Russell, Bertrand Arthur William," *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. L. A. Loetscher (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1955), II, 987.
7. Edwin Diamond, *loc. cit.*, p. 56.
8. Bertrand Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*, ed. Paul Edwards (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1957), p. 183. For a complete account of the "Bertrand Russell Case" at City College in 1940, see the chapter, "How Bertrand Russell was Prevented from Teaching at the College of the City of New York," pp. 181-220.

university faculty who sympathized with Russell and who felt that he had been "viciously maligned . . . in large sections of the press."⁹ As a kind of honorable recompense for this alleged disgraceful treatment of Russell, one of the sympathizers, Paul Edwards by name, edited most of Russell's religious writings in a book entitled, *Bertrand Russell, Why I am Not a Christian*. It is these religious writings, which display without a doubt a marked "sophisticated naivete,"¹⁰ that will serve as the focal point of this paper.

Because of Russell's unequalled fame acquired through his prolific writings and his outspoken words, there is the danger that his religious writings, in which he sweepingly rejects all religions, including Christianity, will be read uncritically and accepted as the gospel truth. A detailed critique is badly needed in order to prevent students of Russell's religious — or better anti-religious — works from naively accepting him as an authority in the religious field. In spite of his competence in other areas, it is the present writer's opinion, after examining Russell's religious writings, that in the religious sphere he reveals an abysmal lack of competency and proficiency. The present critique,¹¹ though recognizing Russell's great talents and accomplishments, thus aims to subject his religious writings to rigorous analysis, in the conviction that in religion as in detection, "the truth will out."

RUSSELL'S OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIANITY

Russell's thesis against religion in general is two-pronged, as may be gathered from the Preface which he writes to Edwards' book: *Bertrand Russell, Why I am Not a Christian*.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. viii - ix.

10. Reinhold Niebuhr, "Reason vs. Belief," *The New York Times Book Review*, Sept. 22, 1957, p. 6.

11. No thorough scholarly critique of Russell's anti-Christian writings has yet been done. Two such attempts were made in 1928. One was written by H. G. Woods, *Why Mr. Bertrand Russell is not Christian* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1928), and the other by Kenneth Ingram, *The Unreasonableness of Anti-Christianity* (London: Published on behalf of the Catholic Literature Association by the Society of S. S. Peter and Paul, 1928). I have examined both of these books and have found them inadequate. Mr. Woods' book cannot be regarded as definitive for three reasons: (1) It was published in 1928 and Russell has written much on the topic of "anti-Christianity" since then. (2) It does little more than quote Russell's arguments against Christianity; and when the author does occasionally try to refute Russell's position, he operates not from a Christian standpoint but rather from that of humanistic-liberal theology. Significantly, he dedicates his book to the influential but avowedly liberal New Testament scholar of the last generation, F. J. Foakes Jackson, and refers to him as "Magistro meo at amico." (3) A man who in 1928 writes, "Mr. Russell is not a Christian and so is not bound by it, but Christians ought to do something about it" (p. 54), and then in 1958 (in spite of Mr. Russell's consistently non-Christian position during the intervening years) writes an article entitled: "Bertrand Russell, Rationalist and Christian" (*Expository Times*, LXIX [February, 1958], pp. 132-34), certainly displays aberrational judgment. In this article, Mr. Woods himself admits: "I treated the tract [*Why I am Not a Christian*] rather cavalierly and lightheartedly." This is, as a matter of fact, an accurate depiction of his critique. The book by Mr. Ingram likewise does not render the present essay superfluous, for (1) it was also published in 1928 and is now out of print; and (2) Mr. Ingram presents more a philosophical than a theological critique of Russell's writings.

There has been a rumour in recent years to the effect that I have become less opposed to religious orthodoxy than I formerly was. This rumour is totally without foundation. I think all the great religions of the world — Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Communism — *both untrue and harmful*. . . . I am as firmly convinced that religions do harm as I am that they are untrue.¹²

This argument Russell actually reduces to a single "cause-effect" argument, viz., "All the great religions are untrue; therefore, all the great religions are harmful."

If this is so, then we might justifiably ask Russell why it is that people believe in that which is both "untrue and harmful." To this Russell replies: "Most people believe in God because they have been taught from early infancy to do it, and that is the main reason."¹³ There is also a second less powerful reason, which is "the wish for safety, a sort of feeling that there is a big brother who will look after you."¹⁴

These two bases for religious belief, in Russell's opinion, stem from a common denominator — fear.

Religion is based primarily and mainly upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown, and partly . . . the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes. Fear is the basis of the whole thing — fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death. Fear is the parent of cruelty, and therefore it is no wonder if cruelty and religion have gone hand in hand.¹⁵

Consequently, Russell's basic contention with all religions is that they are based on a belief that is generated through fear, which in essence is bad; therefore, all religions are "both untrue and harmful."

Russell has, moreover, certain specific objections to the Christian religion. These objections are of two kinds: "intellectual and moral."¹⁶ In stating his case against Christianity, Russell says:

Therefore, I take it that when I tell you why I am not a Christian I have to tell you two different things; first, why I do not believe in God and in immortality; and, secondly, why I do not think that Christ was the best and wisest of men.¹⁷

Comprehended in Russell's moral argument is his frequently stated claim that the organized Christian Church has been the powerful agent of moral retardation in the world.

Russell rejects a belief in God on the basis of an analytic evaluation of the Thomistic rational proofs for the existence of God. "You know, of course,

12. Russell, *op. cit.*, p. xi (italics mine).

13. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, p. 16. Russell maintained the same position in 1954 in "Can Religion Cure Our Troubles," when he remarked: "Mankind is in mortal peril, and fear now, as in the past, is inclining men to seek refuge in God" (*ibid.*, p. 169).

16. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

that the Catholic Church has laid it down as a dogma that the existence of God can be proved by the unaided reason."¹⁸ Briefly, these arguments may be summarized as follows: (1) *The causal argument*. Every effect has a cause. The world also must have been produced as an effect from a cause, which necessarily must have been the first cause. This "prima causa" must be God. (2) *The nomological argument*. The universe operates according to fixed natural laws. Every law presupposes a lawgiver. Therefore, there is a superior lawgiver, namely God. (3) *The cosmological argument*. We observe design and order in the activity of the universe. This design and order must have some origin. Therefore, God exists as the source and guarantor of this design. (4) *The moral argument*. Within the universe we observe a gradation of goodness. Consequently, we must presuppose an "ens perfectissimum" to account for the gradation of goodness in the universe. This "ens perfectissimum" is none other than God. (5) *The teleological argument*. The universe has a purpose, which is imposed upon it by some higher being. Things are observed to move towards an end, but they do not have this end within themselves — entelechy — as an inner force. Rather this purposive end is ordered by the supreme mind, which must be God.

These traditional Aristotelian arguments do not convince Russell that God exists. Neither does he claim to be able to prove the non-existence of God. When asked of F. C. Copleston in a radio interview what his position was, he replied:

My position is agnostic. . . . I'm not contending in a dogmatic way that there is not a God. What I'm contending is that we don't know that there is.¹⁹

Consequently, Russell claims that he cannot believe in God because His existence cannot be proven with absolute certainty.

The Christian God may exist; so may the Gods of Olympus, or of ancient Egypt, or of Babylon. But no one of these hypotheses is more probable than any other: they lie outside the region of even probable knowledge, and therefore there is no reason to consider any of them.²⁰

The question of immortality of the soul is another stumblingblock for Russell. He claims that it is a basic Christian tenet to believe in the immortality of the soul. Yet such a belief he cannot accept because "it is rational to suppose that mental life ceases when bodily life ceases."²¹ Of course, here Russell is equating "soul" with "mental life." He goes on to argue against a belief in the immortality of the soul on the grounds that such a belief leads to hyper-individualistic Christian ethics, to a breakdown of the natural biological family tie,

18. *Ibid.*, p. 3. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings*, ed. Anton C. Pegis (2 vols.; New York: Random House, 1945), I, 18-24; and also Richard McKeon, *Introduction to Aristotle* (New York: The Modern Library, 1947), pp. 243-296.

19. Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 144, 157. "The Existence of God," a debate between Bertrand Russell and Father F. C. Copleston, S. J., was originally broadcast in 1948 on the Third Programme of the B.B.C.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 40. in "What I Believe," published in 1925.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 40. Cf. Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 110-143, especially the chapter on "Body and Soul."

and to unwarranted superstition.²² As for himself, Russell states: "I believe that when I die I shall rot, and nothing of my ego will survive."²³ The truth of a belief in the immortality of the soul cannot be proven rationally; therefore, Russell cannot subscribe to it.

From the standpoint of morality, Russell presents two specific arguments against the Founder of Christianity. He denies that Jesus was the wisest and best of persons because he miscalculated the time of his return and he spoke of the "damnation in hell."

I now want to say a few words upon a topic which I often think is not quite sufficiently dealt with by Rationalists, and that is the question whether Christ was the best and the wisest of men. It is generally taken for granted that we should all agree that that was so. I do not myself.²⁴

For example, Jesus says,

"There are some standing here which shall not taste death till the Son of Man comes into His kingdom," and there are a lot of places where it is quite clear that he believed his second coming would happen during the lifetime of many then living.²⁵

Therefore, Russell argues that Jesus (whom Russell, as a matter of fact, doubts ever existed), in advocating that his second coming would be imminent, belied his alleged supernatural wisdom. Moreover, Jesus spoke of "damnation in hell" and of everlasting punishment.

There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ's moral character, and that is that he believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment. . . . I must say that I think all this doctrine, that hell-fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty.²⁶

After having rejected both God and Christ, Russell now feels compelled to swing his axe upon the organized Christian Church.

You find as you look around the world that *every* single bit of progress in humane feeling, *every* improvement in the criminal law, *every* step towards the diminution of war, *every* step towards better treatment of the coloured races, or *every* mitigation of slavery, *every* moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organized Churches of the world. I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its Churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world.²⁷

22. See Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*, p. 26. Here Russell makes his position patent when he says: "I think it is clear that the net result of all the centuries of Christianity has been to make men more egotistic, more shut up in themselves, than nature made them." Within this context, he further remarks: "This individualism culminated in the doctrine of the immortality of the individual soul, which was to enjoy hereafter endless bliss or endless woe according to circumstances."

23. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 15 (italics mine).

Why, in summary, is Russell not a Christian? First, he believes that all religion is based on fear and thus is bad. Secondly, he cannot on rational grounds accept a belief in God or in the immortality of the soul. Thirdly, he is unable to regard Jesus as the wisest and best of men. Lastly, he sees the organized Christian religion as a retardation to moral progress in the world.

AN ANALYSIS OF RUSSELL'S OBJECTIONS

Let us now take up in turn each of Russell's arguments against Christianity. Our task will be to evaluate each point objectively in an attempt to discover just how valid Russell's anti-Christian arguments are. We shall consider his above stated views against the background of the rationalistic humanism which he presents as an alternative to the Christian religion.

Russell's conviction that all religious belief is a result of fear is a claim that displays what Randall and Buchler have well termed the "sociological fallacy."²⁸ This fallacy occurs when people try to establish the origin of something, in this case religious belief, by considering it as it actually functions in society, and then on the basis of this sociological investigation use the common elements to evaluate that which has allegedly arisen out of the societal situation. But such an approach is using a descriptive statement as though it were a normative definition. With regard to the distinction between descriptive and normative definition, E. S. Brightman in *An Introduction to Philosophy* rightly points out:

A descriptive definition would state what common elements actually have been present in those bodies of experience and belief that have called themselves religious. A normative definition would undertake to tell what religion ought to be. A descriptive definition would be based on a study of the facts of religious experience *without attempting to pass judgment on the value of the facts.*²⁹

Consequently, Russell's assertion that "all religious beliefs are based upon fear" does not actually *evaluate* belief; it merely *describes a condition* present in some people at the time they come to belief in God. Moreover, fear is not even a necessary condition for belief, as other factors such as desire for happiness, freedom, security — only to mention a few — may be equally as determinative as fear. William James, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, points out that "if there were such a thing as inspiration from a higher realm, it might well be that the neurotic temperament would furnish the chief condition of the requisite receptivity."³⁰ Thus origin does not determine value, even if we were to admit (and there would be no way of proving it) that fear is the source of religious conviction. Analogously we may state that most people fear fire, but this says nothing about nor does it determine the value of fire. H. G. Woods succinctly notes that psychological reasons "do not explain the origin of . . .

28. J. H. Randall, Jr. and Justus Buchler, *Philosophy: An Introduction* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1942), p. 271.
29. Edgar S. Brightman, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1925), pp. 317-18 (italics mine).
30. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1904), p. 25.

beliefs. They help to show *why* men believe. They do not account for *what* they believe."³¹

In opposing the traditional rational proofs of God's existence, Russell is destroying a straw man, not the Christian position. The truth of the matter is that "the modern philosopher can never cogently prove the existence of a God beyond this world. . . . If human reason tries to transcend the limits of the perceptible world or of mathematics . . . its thinking is bound to get entangled in contradictions . . . Rational conclusions are dependent on certain premises which reason itself is unable to prove."³²

A rational proof of God's existence is, moreover, actually inconsistent with the Christian faith. Blaise Pascal, the French apologist of the seventeenth century, has well stated in his *Pensées* that "the heart has its reasons which reason does not know. . . . It is the heart which experiences God, and not the reason."³³ This is not to say that reason has no place within the Christian religion; it is, however, to assert that the Christian does not come to a knowledge of his personal God *via* rationalism. The God which reason can produce is not the personal God of the Holy Scriptures but rather an impersonal God which is Aristotelian and Thomistic.³⁴

However, Russell makes the great mistake of assuming that because Aristotelian Christians have been unsuccessful in proving God's existence, no objective case for Christianity is possible. In other words, he narrows the meaning of the word "proof" to rational proof. In point of fact, the word "proof" may be employed in at least two other senses: (1) the historical, and (2) the subjective. These Russell dismisses summarily, though the key to the Christian apologetic lies there. Of the historical, he says:

I may say that one is not concerned with the historical question. Historically, it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if he did we do not know anything about him, so that I am not concerned with the historical question, which is a very difficult one. I am concerned with Christ as he appears in the Gospels.³⁵

Of the subjective, he smilingly states:

I can speak only from observation, not from personal experience.³⁶

Therefore, Russell accepts the Christ-event neither as *Historie* ("a happening in the past as an . . . occurrence, which is reported and which is contained in

31. Woods, *Why Mr. Bertrand Russell is Not a Christian*, p. 23.
32. Erich Frank, *Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 38-40.
33. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées and the Provincial Letters* (New York: Modern Library, 1941), p. 95.
34. Aquinas, *op. cit.*, [in n. 18] pp. 18-24.
35. Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*, [in n. 8] p. 11. It is precisely because of Russell's lack of concern for the historical question that he can equate Christianity with "Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Communism" (p. xi). For Christianity "is the only religion which purports to offer external, objective evidence of its validity. All other religions appeal to inner experience without any means of objective validation" (John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past* ["History in Christian Perspective," Vol. I; Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1962], p. 140).
36. Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*, p. 179, in "Religion and Morals," published in 1952.

objective, detached terms"),³⁷ nor as *Heilsgeschichte* ("a happening in the past as an event, which is proclaimed and which, instead of being the object of detached observation, comes to one as a personal encounter").³⁸ Yet if Russell wishes to say anything significant about the Jesus presented in the Gospels, he cannot afford to overlook both of these aspects of the New Testament proclamation.

The case for Christianity rests, as the Apostles well knew, on the "objective, historical truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."³⁹ "If Christ was not raised, then our gospel is null and void, and so is your faith" (I Cor. 15:14). The "Christ of the Gospels" can be no different from the Christ of history, for "on the basis of accepted principles of textual and historical analysis, the Gospel records are found to be trustworthy historical documents — primary source evidence for the life of Christ."⁴⁰ F. F. Bruce, Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis in the University of Manchester, points out that none of the Gospels could have been written later than A. D. 100; therefore, when the Gospels were written, "many were alive who could remember the things that Jesus said and did."⁴¹

In these sound historical records, "Jesus exercises divine prerogatives and claims to be God in human flesh; and he rests his claims on his forthcoming resurrection."⁴² In Mark 2:1-12 Jesus forgives sins and in John 10:30 he plainly states: "I and the Father are one."⁴³ When Jesus in John 2:19 says: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," he is speaking of his body. "After his resurrection his disciples recalled what he had said, and they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken."⁴⁴

Russell discounts the supernatural aspects of Jesus' life as recorded in the New Testament on the ground that miracles are impossible. He says:

In former days, miracles happened in answer to prayer; they still do in the Catholic Church, but Protestants have lost this power. However, it is possible to dispense with miracles, since Providence has decreed that the operation of natural laws shall produce the best possible results.⁴⁵

But the fact of the resurrection cannot be eliminated on a *priori* philosophico-

37. Robert Scharlemann, "Shadow on The Tomb," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, I (Spring, 1962), 23.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

39. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-39. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (5th rev. ed.; London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1960). Also E. J. Barnes, "The Dependability and Value of the Extant Gospel Manuscripts," in Montgomery, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-57.

41. Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

42. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

43. "In Mark 2:1-12 Jesus forgives sins; in such passages as Matt. 11:27; 16:13-17; John 10:30; 12:45; 14:6-10, Jesus states his divine relation to God the Father. It is also of great significance that the Gospel writers apply to Jesus the ascription *Kyrios* ("Lord") which in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) had been used as an equivalent of *Adonai* and *Yahweh*, the Hebrew designations for God Himself" (*ibid.*, p. 168).

44. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

45. Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*, [in n. 8] p. 42.

rational grounds; exceedingly strong historical evidence points in favour of its having happened, and one must start with this historical evidence, not with preconceptions. "Miracles are impossible only if one so defines them — but such definition rules out proper historical investigation."⁴⁶ C. S. Lewis has put it well when he says:

Remove miracles from the Bible and you relieve it of all its supporting pillars. The Bible teaches that . . . [the Apostles] saw the resurrected Christ; they ate with Him; they put their hands upon Him and felt Him; they talked with Him and were instructed by Him. "Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God'" (John 20:27-28). This is but a typical sample of the unequivocal manner in which all of the disciples personally and empirically came into contact with the resurrected Christ.⁴⁷

This argument is no proof for the existence of God in the sense of a rationalistic demonstration; "it is an empirical argument based upon the application of historical method to an allegedly objective event."⁴⁸ Certainty can never be attained in historical research. Paul Tillich was quite right when he said with reference to the resurrection: "Historical research can never give more than a probable answer."⁴⁹ Yet probability must be utilized by anyone investigating a factual problem if his research is to have any meaning at all.

As we pointed out earlier, forced intellectualization of the Christian faith is completely inconsistent with the nature of Christianity. Therefore, the purpose of this argument is not to force anyone into the Christian religion. It is rather to afford a solid objective basis for testing the Christian faith experientially.

How is the test made? By confronting, with no more than "suspension of disbelief," the Christ of the Scriptures; for "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" and (said Christ) "whoever has the will to do the will of God shall know whether my teaching comes from God or is merely my own" [Rom. 10:17; John 7:17]. The Scriptural Gospel is ultimately self-attesting, but the honest inquirer needs objective ground for trying it, since there are a welter of conflicting religious options and one can become psychologically jaded through indiscriminate trials of religious belief. Only the Christian world-view offers objective ground for testing it experientially; therefore, Christ deserves to be given first opportunity to make his claims known to the human heart.⁵⁰

It follows then, that when Russell asserts that there is no basis for belief in the existence of the Christian God, he takes a position that cannot be squared with

46. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 139. Cf. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1947); and Edward John Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics; a Philosophic Defense of the Trinitarian-Theistic Faith* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1948), chaps. xiv - xv.

47. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 246 (italics mine).

48. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

49. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 155.

50. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

historical evidence. There is a basis: Jesus Christ, who claimed to be God and attested his claim by his resurrection.

In criticizing the concept of the "immortality of the soul," Russell commits three serious blunders. First, he holds that those who believe in the immortality of the soul, when they speak of the "soul," refer to a particular aspect of man, namely, the "mental life." Secondly, he presupposes that the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul is a basic Christian tenet. Thirdly, in rejecting belief in the immortality of the soul, he attacks a straw man and not the true Christian position. In general, he mistakenly thinks that immortality is supposed to rest in man himself; and when he finds this notion incredible, he discards immortality entirely.

T. A. Kantonen, in reflecting upon the problem of the immortality of the soul, correctly observes:

The state of man after death has been the object of endless speculation, philosophical and religious, scientific and popular. . . . Hence the question of life after death has been the question of demonstrating the immortality, the death-defying capacity, of the soul. The body is of little consequence. This way of thinking is entirely foreign to the Bible.⁵¹

In Scripture, man is a totality and when the words, "soul" (*nephesh* in Hebrew; *psyche* in Greek) and "body" (*soma* in Greek) are used by the Biblical writers, they refer to man *in toto*.⁵²

For these various anthropological categories (soul, body, heart, mind, etc.) do not refer to different *parts* of a man at all, but refer rather to a man as a totality, described from different points of view.⁵³

Indeed we should not say that man *has* a soul, but that he *is* a soul; nor consequently that he *has* a body, but that he *is* a body.⁵⁴

Now if the word "immortality" were used in this holistic sense, then the concept would be a satisfactory starting point for Christian doctrinal formulation. For "immortality" as signifying an afterlife is not offensive to the Christian faith, since all it implies is that there is an afterlife of some kind. The problem with "immortality," however, is that it denotes too little for it to be a basic Christian tenet *per se*. Belief in the afterlife must be given a specific content.

Calling belief "in an afterlife" a "basic Christian tenet" is like saying that belief in God is a basic Christian tenet. Christians do believe in God, but so do practically all other religious people in the world. Belief in God cannot be called a "basic Christian tenet" until some content is given to the word "God." . . . The same is true of belief in an afterlife.⁵⁵

51. T. A. Kantonen, *The Christian Hope* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1945), pp. 27-28. Cf. Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

52. John A. T. Robinson, *The Body* ("Studies in Biblical Theology"; London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 14.

53. James H. Burtness, "Immortality and/or Resurrection," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, I (Spring, 1962), 47.

54. Claude Tresmontant, *A Study of Hebrew Thought*, trans. Michael Francis Gibson (New York: Deselee Company, 1960), p. 94.

55. Burtness, *loc. cit.*, p. 46.

And this content is neither "immortality of the soul" nor "resurrection of the body," both of which imply a dangerously dualistic anthropological viewpoint, but rather "resurrection of the dead" in a holistic sense as a future hope.⁵⁶

How, then, does the Christian share in this glorious hope for the future? First of all, there is nothing in man himself that will prove that he is immortal.

God alone is immortal in the absolute sense of the word (Gr. *ousiodos*), but through his grace shown at creation he gives immortality to man as well. We are created for immortality: still, our immortality is not our own achievement but a divine gift.⁵⁷

Consequently, immortality always originates in God and from God. It is not something that springs forth from man. Yet, man has a foretaste of the glorious life with God through Jesus Christ who overcame the barrier of sin between God and man. It is Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit who daily renews man unto newness of life. "For as the Father has life in himself, so has the Son by the Father's gift" (John 5:26). Therefore, "if Christ is life then the believers will never die (John 6:50; 11:26) . . . The new life is given to the believer already as a down payment here on earth."⁵⁸

Therefore, immortality, properly understood from a Christian standpoint, does not primarily refer to a here-and-now state within man but rather points to a future hope; nevertheless, man presently decides for an eternal relationship either with God or with demonic powers.⁵⁹ Oscar Cullmann speaks quite correctly of the Christ-event as a "decisive victory already accomplished . . . but the not-yet-consummated victory at the end."⁶⁰ Thus, in a sense we may speak of a conditional immortality — conditional in the sense that the believer while alive already shares in this relational experience with his God, and conditional also in the sense that this immortality of relationship rests upon man's decision while alive here on earth. This immortality, however, is not consummated until the final judgment which is "incontestable and cannot be appeal-

56. The expression that we find employed throughout the New Testament is neither "immortality of the soul" nor "resurrection of the body" but "resurrection of the dead," and the latter has been guaranteed to all believers through Jesus Christ. Cf. Tresmontant, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

57. Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici* (Frankfurt/Hamburg: Zacharia Hertel, 1957), VII, 85; II, 109, quoted by Edward Smits, "The Blessed Immortality," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, I (Spring 1962), p. 41. Contrast Burtness' statements: "The word immortality does occur occasionally in the New Testament, but it is used to designate a future hope rather than a present possession (Rom. 2:7; I Cor. 15:53 f.), or as an attribute which belongs to God alone (I Tim. 6:16), or as an attribute of the risen Christ (II Tim. 1:10). In no case does it refer to a present aspect of human existence, even when qualified as a gift of God to the believer" (*loc. cit.*, p. 48). In this latter sentence, Mr. Burtness is depriving the believer of that gift of immortality which God has given man at Creation and restored again at the Resurrection: the gift of eternal fellowship with his God in spite of sin.

58. Smits, *loc. cit.*, p. 44.

59. "There is no immortality of the soul but a resurrection of the whole person, body and soul, from death. The only immortality which the Bible recognizes is the immortality of a personal relationship with God in Christ" (T. A. Kantonen, *op. cit.*, p. 33). Cf. "The decisive consideration is not, are you a man and therefore an immortal being, but, are you 'in Christ' and therefore assured that not even death can separate you from him?" (Kantonen, *op. cit.*, p. 36).

60. Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of Dead* (London: The Epworth Press, 1958), p. 48.

ed."⁶¹ It is at the final Judgment when all the dead will be raised (I Corinthians 15) and all the living changed through the gift of glorious resurrected bodies (in a holistic sense) such as that with which Christ made his post-resurrection appearances.⁶² Since "this event is not an individualistic affair but a corporate one,"⁶³ it cannot lead to individualistic ethics.⁶⁴

Properly regarded, immortality and the resurrection of the dead must be blended together.⁶⁵ Russell clearly does not understand the nature of "the Christian hope" and therefore his supposed refutations of it have little value. In point of fact, the Christian faith, with its stress on total restoration of the person at the Last Judgment, works well into the psychosomatic monism of contemporary medicine and psychology. Granted, the coming resurrection (like all future events) cannot be empirically demonstrated now, but the Christian has the explicit assurance of resurrection hope from the only One who ever conquered death — Jesus Christ.

Was Jesus the best and wisest of men? Russell would respond with an emphatic "No." Yet, with what justification does he make such a claim, if indeed he wishes to follow the historical portrait of Jesus in the primary records? As we noted earlier, Russell argues (1) that Christ miscalculated his second coming; and (2) that he believed in hell and spoke of "damnation in hell" for all those who refused to believe in him as the true revelation of God to man.

To the first of these claims, three rebuttals may be advanced. First, we have the position adopted by C. S. Lewis, that Jesus was in fact in error but simultaneously admitted his ignorance in this matter of his Second Coming. Jesus said: "There are some standing here which shall not taste death till the Son of Man comes into His kingdom" (Matthew 16:28); but he shortly thereafter asserted, "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32).

The one exhibition of error and the one confession of ignorance grow side by side. That they stood thus in the mouth of Jesus himself, and were not merely placed thus by the reporter, we surely need not doubt.⁶⁶

Thus, Lewis argues, in this one matter of the time of the Last Judgment, the Son of Man knew little more about the end of the world than anyone else. His admission of ignorance preserves him from a charge of falsification.

61. Carnell, *op. cit.*, [in n. 46] p. 350.

62. Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:50-53; John 20:26-29; 21:1-23. In these passages Christ appears in an identifiable body.

63. Burtness, *loc. cit.*, p. 48. "The resurrection of all the dead is the end result of Christ's triumph over death, the manifestation of its cosmic proportions" (Kantonen, *op. cit.*, p. 93).

64. "In the same way in which the Biblical writers think synthetically rather than analytically in relation to anthropology, they think synthetically rather than analytically about the people of God" (Burtness, *loc. cit.*, p. 49). Cf. James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 12 ff. Also see T. A. Kantonen, *op. cit. Contra* individualistic ethics, note how many times Christ admonished his followers against leading others into sin and away from himself (see, e. g., Mark 9:42-48; Matthew 5:29-30; Luke 17:1-2).

65. A disregard or dismissal of the concept of immortality is generally based on what is regarded as a "rational" approach to the afterlife. Yet if I Corinthians 15 is relevant, then the resurrection of the dead and the immortality given to man by God must be blended.

66. C. S. Lewis, *The World's Last Night* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959), p. 98.

The facts, then, are these: that Jesus professed himself (in some sense) ignorant, and within a moment showed that he really was. . . . The answer of theologians is that the God-man was omniscient as God, and ignorant as man. This, no doubt, is true, though it cannot be imagined.⁶⁷

This argument that Jesus accommodated himself to human error is, I believe, highly questionable, for then "one would have to give specific reasons why the accommodation did not extend to all of Jesus' words. Such accommodation would remove meaning from everything Jesus said, and would leave us with no criterion for the interpretation of his teachings."⁶⁸ But Lewis' approach at a minimum suggests that Russell's negativistic argument is not (as he would imply) the only possible interpretation.

How then is this apparent contradiction in the words of One who claimed to be God and rose from the dead best explained? If we consult primary documentary material, which indeed we must, then we find that the whole issue hinges upon two matters: (1) the "coming of the Son of Man" and (2) the word "generation" (for in Matthew 24:34 Jesus said: "This generation shall not pass till all these things be done").

Ingram is quite correct when he points out that in the passages of Scripture which Russell quotes there is in fact no explicit reference made to the "Parousia" at the end of time.⁶⁹ In John 14:16 Jesus gives evidence of this fact when he says in connection with his forthcoming departure from the world: "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you *another* Counsellor to be with you forever." The word used here in Greek is not *heteron* (another of a different kind) but *allos* (another of the same kind).⁷⁰ Christ was not thinking of his final Coming, but rather he was looking forward to the time of Pentecost when the Spirit of God would come down "from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind" (Acts 2:2). Then there can be no contradiction in Jesus speaking of "some standing here which shall not taste death till the Son of Man comes into His kingdom," for the Spirit of Christ (the Holy Spirit) came at Pentecost — only a few days after Christ's ascension. Since the phrase "Second Coming" is nowhere found in Holy Scripture, we may justifiably regard Christ's final Coming as really a "Third Coming"! And of *that* Coming Christ said: "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Arndt and Gingrich, the New Testament lexicographers, point out that the

67. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

68. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, [in n. 35] p. 175.

69. Ingram, *op. cit.*, [in n. 11] p. 14.

70. *Allos* means "different from the subject who is speaking and yet of the same kind," whereas *heteros* refers to "someone else" (William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957], pp. 395, 896). In John 14:18 Christ further assures his disciples that he will not leave them: "I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you." Also cf. John 5:32: "there is another (*allos*) who bears witness to me."

word *genea* (generation) may also be translated as "race" or "contemporaries."⁷¹ Therefore, if we take Christ as speaking of his Coming at Pentecost, his contemporaries were still alive to witness the event. Or, on the other hand, if we take *genea* as signifying "race," then Christ's saying in Matthew 24:34 is not false even if it refers to the Last Judgment, for the Jewish race will remain to the end. On that day there will be "tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek" (Romans 2:9-10).

Therefore, it is evident that Russell "uses selected material from the Bible to illustrate an independently formulated philosophy."⁷² He does not inductively attempt to find what the Bible says before criticizing it; rather, his negative evaluation of the Bible is based upon his predetermined categories. But in the matter of supposed contradictions, even Aristotle recognized (and all proper literary criticism has followed him here) that "one should first test as one does an opponent's confutation in a dialectical argument, so as to see whether he means the same thing, in the same relation, and in the same sense, before admitting he has contradicted."⁷³ In other words, where there is evidence pointing in both directions, let us give the benefit of the doubt to the subject under analysis. And certainly, in this case of Christ's "miscalculation" of his return, the evidence is strongly in support of a non-contradictory interpretation.

Russell, in keeping with his humanistic ideal, cannot conceive of eternal punishment befalling man because in his way of thinking man is essentially good. Consequently, he rejects Christ for believing in hell and for speaking of "damnation in hell." Russell, however, does not consider Ingram's important distinction between the ultimate reality of hell and the description of such a place in human terms. "The only issue . . . is whether the state of hell is inevitable or incredible."⁷⁴ From a Christian standpoint, hell is inevitable for the unbeliever but it is not incredible for the believer. For at the close of the age, "the Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire" (Matthew 13:41-42). Moreover, Christ says: "Fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell" (Luke 12:5).

Also Peter, one of the Twelve, gives evidence that Jesus himself descended into hell:⁷⁵ "He went and preached to the spirits in prison" (I Peter 3:19).

71. Arndt & Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

72. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

73. Aristotle, *De Arte Poetica*, 1460^b-1461^b.

74. Ingram, *op. cit.*, [in n. 11] p. 47.

75. Some doubt that I Peter was written by Peter the Apostle. Yet there is much substantiating evidence in favour of his authorship. (1) I Peter 1:12 makes specific reference to the "Holy Spirit sent from heaven," and we know from Acts 2 that the Apostle Peter was present at Pentecost (indeed, he delivered his great sermon there). (2) The reference in 1:8 to "love" is often regarded as Peter's remembrance of Jesus' challenge to him, "Lovest thou me more than these?" (Merrill C. Tenney, *The New Testament: An Historical and Analytic Survey* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1953], p. 365). (3) Eusebius reports that the epistle was universally accepted as canonical. It is attested to by many of the Church Fathers, who quote from it; e. g., Clement, Bishop of Rome (A. D. 96), Ignatius (A. D. 115), and Polycarp (A. D. 120). Cf. Bruce, *op. cit.*, [in n. 40] p. 18.

There are, to be sure, several difficulties in this passage. In what sense are the words "descend" and "ascend" used in Scripture? These terms are used in reference to the relational aspect in which or without which man lives. If he lives in the fellowship and spirit of God, then relationally, he has ascended unto God. But the reverse is true without this relation, and this is equal to a state of hell.⁷⁶ The words which Peter uses are "in which spirit"; this would signify that Christ already possessed his glorious spiritual body when he preached even (Gk. *kai*) to "the spirits in prison," i. e., to the spirits which had hitherto rebelled against God and refused to listen to His saving Word. J. H. A. Hart, in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, says that the significance of this passage lies in the word "even": Christ preached "even to the typical rebels who had sinned past forgiveness according to pre-Christian notions."⁷⁷ In other words, it is only Christ who can speak of "damnation in hell," for he alone knows what it is like to be there and he alone has returned to tell us, to forewarn us to seek repentance and forgiveness.

Russell says he wishes to take Jesus as he appears in the primary records; what alternative does he have then but to accept Jesus as he truly appears in the Gospels? For "sheer and ultimate rejection of truth, when there is free and unfettered opportunity to accept truth, is hell."⁷⁸ Not without reason, as Philip Schaff has pointed out in *The Creeds of Christendom*, has the doctrine of hell been accepted for centuries by the Christian Church.⁷⁹

Moreover, to judge God by an external ethical standard is self-contradictory. What is Russell's standard of perfection and of wisdom by which he evaluates Christ? Whatever standard Russell sets up, he cannot justify it nor can he measure Christ in accord with it because Christ is infinitely beyond all that the human mind may imagine.

It is ironic that Russell, in making his erratic frontal attack upon the organized Christian Church, should label it the "Emotional Factor."⁸⁰ For it is rather obvious that Russell tries to account for the evil in the world by using the organized Christian Church as a scapegoat, and in so doing he forgets about his original intention and substitutes sheer emotion for reasoned argument.

First, he attacks Christianity by what he sees in practice within the organized Christian Church. And quite often these are two entirely different things.

Even if Mr. Russell's denunciation were wholly accurate, it would be no proof of the falsity of Christianity. It would prove only that Christians had continuously and without exception prostituted the principles of the

76. J. J. Von Allmen (ed.), *A Companion to the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 86.

77. J. H. A. Hart, "The First Epistle of Peter," *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (5 vols.; New York: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1897), V, 68.

78. Ingram, *op. cit.*, [in n. 11] p. 17.

79. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (3 vols.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1877), II, 478, discussing the descent into hell. The history of this doctrine in the Church creeds will be found *passim*.

80. Bertrand Russell, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell, 1903-1959* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1961), pp. 592-95. It is here that the rationalist Russell "becomes . . . erratic and disposes of all professional 'rationalism'" (Ingram, *op. cit.*, p. 19.).

religion they professed. It would be as illogical not to believe in Christianity because of the crimes committed by Christians, as not to believe in Socialism because there have been Socialists who propagate their faith by persecution and murder.⁸¹

But the truth is that Russell does not present an accurate picture when he claims that Christianity is the greatest enemy of moral progress in the world. Kenneth Scott Latourette, generally regarded as the greatest living Church historian, says:

If mankind is viewed as a whole, never has Christ been as great a force in the human scene and never has Protestantism played as large a part in the human drama.⁸²

Furthermore, says Latourette:

Never has the Christian faith been as widely accepted as it is today. Indeed no other religion has ever had as extensive a geographic spread as has Christianity in the twentieth century. . . . A century and a half ago Protestantism was confined almost entirely to Northwestern Europe. Today it is the prevailing form of the faith in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, and it is increasing by leaps and bounds in Latin America, the Philippines, Africa south of the Sahara, India and Indonesia.⁸³

If Russell's moral condemnation of the Church were true, then we should rightly conclude that all these nations are morally degenerate. Though this is of course *possible*, common sense makes us doubt that such is the case. It is probably much truer to say that moral uplift, rather than moral degradation, goes hand in hand with the spread of Christianity.

"The Christian understanding of history does not necessarily deny progress."⁸⁴ As a matter of fact, historical evidence points in the opposite direction, as Latourette vividly expresses.

Moved by their faith, Christians devised new methods and programmes for the education of the masses. They brought into being hundreds of colleges and universities. . . . Christians also were the initiators and supporters of measures and movements to reduce the sufferings attendant on wars and to eliminate war by devising and operating institutions and measures for the peaceful adjustment of friction between nations and for international co-operation for the welfare of mankind. By its symbol

81. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

82. Kenneth Scott Latourette, "Protestantism's Amazing Vitality," *Christianity Today*, VI (March 2, 1962), 3. Mr. Latourette is Sterling Professor Emeritus of Missions and Oriental History at Yale University. He is also author of the great classic, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (7 vols.; New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1937-1945). This series, especially Vol. VII (titled, *Advance Through Storm*), should be consulted for compelling evidence of Christianity's remarkable growth and positive cultural contributions.

83. Latourette, *Christianity Today*, VI (March 2, 1962), 4.

84. *American Historical Review*, LIV (January, 1949), 272 ff.

and name the Red Cross bore witness of its Christian origin. It came into being through the efforts of a Protestant layman of Geneva, Henri Duvant.⁸⁵

Moreover, when Russell engages in his negativistic arguments against the organized Christian Church, what is his standard of moral decay? He cannot justify it here any more than he can when he judges Christ.

Therefore, Russell's arguments against the institutionalized Christian Church cannot be proven empirically nor established historically — the former because empirically there is no way of proving that any progress or hindrance thereof is due solely to one factor such as the Christian Church, and the latter because there is much positive evidence in behalf of Christianity's claims to be in fact "the light of the world."

RUSSELL'S RATIONALISM VIS-A-VIS THE CHRISTIAN WORLD-VIEW

If Russell rejects Christianity, what is his alternative? It is a rationalistic humanism based on the good life inherent within man, inspired by love and guided by scientific knowledge. The pursuit of this good life will, he claims, free the world of all its evils.⁸⁶ His motto is basically this: "Conquer the world by intelligence, and not merely by being slavishly subdued by the terror that comes from it."⁸⁷

The knowledge in which Russell trusts is solely "scientific"; it is knowledge acquired by means of the scientific method. Nevertheless, he "does not always appear to grasp the essential fact that we have assumed the existence of a world and man, and then occupied ourselves with solving the problem of the relation between them, which is called knowledge."⁸⁸ In other words, implicit in his philosophy there is a faith — yet a faith which he nonetheless refuses to admit. He seems to believe that belief can only properly be generated by the scientific method!

To be sure, the scientific method is a most valuable way of obtaining information, but it is not the only way. It is not at this point, however, that Russell makes his greatest mistake. His great blunder occurs when he places his faith in science as a religion, for a "scientific faith" cannot be justified by the scientific method. Science starts with *a priori* presuppositions, such as "the world is of real space, of real time, and of real matter" — and such presuppositions cannot be verified by means of the scientific method.⁸⁹ Furthermore, "science is analytic; its laws are statements about the relations of the parts which analysis has revealed."⁹⁰ Science is a description of the laws of phenomena and of situa-

85. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), pp. 1336-1337.

86. Russell, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, 1903-1959, pp. 367-390.

87. Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*, [in n. 8] p. 16. According to Russell, in order for us to overcome the evil in the world, we must resort to intelligence; it is only intelligence that can give us an honest and frank picture of the universe.

88. T. C. Hammond, *Reasoning Faith: An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (London: The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1943), p. 94.

89. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, [in n. 35] p. 266-67.

90. Brightman, *op. cit.*, [in n. 29] p. 10.

tions as they actually exist, not as they ought to be or become. This fact becomes vividly clear in the *Kinsey Reports* on the sexual habits of Americans,⁹¹ which (popular opinion notwithstanding!) are only descriptive in nature and *not* normative. Even though many worship science as a "sacred cow," science can never properly assume the status of a religion because it has no intrinsically justifiable axiology. Anthony Standen, himself a scientist, in his book *Science is a Sacred Cow* well expresses science's limitations in the field of value; e. g., "If a scientist became really objective about freedom, he would not even be able to say what it is."⁹² In light of such considerations, science must be rejected as a legitimate religion.

Furthermore, rationalists will usually argue that God could not be infinitely good or wise because, first of all, if He were good, He would not have created an evil world; and, secondly, if He were wise, He would not set man in control of the world because He would have seen that man would make a hell of it. Yet, strangely enough, rationalists will "claim that men are naturally good at heart and will do the right thing if only they are educated properly."⁹³

Here can be seen the inconsistency of rationalism. Rationalists, when arguing their own position, paint the world in far rosier colours than the facts warrant; but they paint it black when arguing against God's existence! They regard the Biblical doctrine of original sin as preposterous.

The rationalist who disbelieves in original sin is much more satisfied with man than the Christian. He violently opposes the idea that we are "miserable sinners." He bases his code of morality on man's essential goodness. Yet — when it suits him to do so — he turns completely round and urges that a good God could never have created such a revolting biped as man.⁹⁴

The fundamental idea at the root of the rationalistic ethic is that externals only are at fault. This Russell illustrates when he argues that the institutionalized Christian Church is the cause of much evil in the world. Christians, on the other hand, maintain that the problem lies basically within man himself — as sinner — and that the nature of man leads him to follow wrong motivations and pursue immoral ends. Neither education nor the creation of better living conditions is going to make the world a utopia. Rationalists such as Russell offer numerous remedies as panaceas to overcome chaotic world conditions. "Many of them are excellent indeed, but not one of them goes to the heart of the problem — *not one of them will make bad men good.*"⁹⁵ For it would seem that

91. Donald Porter Geddes (ed.), *An Analysis of the Kinsey Reports on Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male and Female* (New York: Mentor Books, 1954).

92. Anthony Standen, *Science is a Sacred Cow* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1958), p. 219.

93. R. E. D. Clark, *Scientific Rationalism and Christian Faith; with particular reference to the writings of Prof. J. B. S. Haldane and Dr. J. S. Huxley* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1945), p. 81.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 82. Cf. Arnold S. Nash, *Protestant Thought in the Twentieth Century: Whence & Whither?* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 113.

95. Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 87. Cf. Carl F. H. Henry, *Contemporary Evangelical Thought* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp. 140-143. Ethics cannot be decided upon until the problem of God is settled. Also cf. Edward John Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1952).

"every social development of natural good in history breeds a corresponding evil which neutralizes it."⁹⁶

Russell argues, as does Marx, that religion is the opium of the masses. If so, then it seems to be a far less intoxicating opiate than rationalism, which is virtually blind to the reality of things.

The Christian is at least sufficiently wide awake to diagnose what is wrong. He has no need to blind himself to the truth about man and about man's history. He believes that there is something fundamentally wrong about human beings.⁹⁷

Rationalists are often very anxious to do something about world conditions, but they are never ready to go to the root of the problem: man in his sinful condition. "The fact is that the man who will not or cannot mend himself likes to project his sins on other people."⁹⁸ Yet the truth of the matter is that

the best contribution that men can make to the welfare of the world in which they live is, surely, to return to the only known ethical system which undermines the sin of self-righteousness — to repent of sin and accept the good news that God showed His love to man in the Cross of Christ. But to do this is not primarily to moralize on how other people should behave: it must start with you and me.⁹⁹

This, then, is the solidarity of the Christian faith which Russell so superficially maligns: it alone is rooted in a realistic view of man, and it alone offers a historically grounded and experientially satisfying answer to the human predicament.¹⁰⁰

In order to understand the real Russell, we should not overlook his childhood religious experiences — which consisted mainly of Unitarian indoctrination by his Victorian grandmother.¹⁰¹ During this period Russell, in a quiet, reflective manner, came to rebel against his grandmother's moralistic asceticism. This does not, of course, justify Russell's present-day anti-Christian position nor does it account for his adherence to humanistic and scientific rationalism. But herein probably lies the formative source of Russell's religious orientation. For the Unitarians are non-conformists who, as Williston Walker points out, set themselves against all "creeds of human composition."¹⁰² Thus their rejection

96. Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

100. See n. 50 above.

101. I am not using Russell's childhood religious experiences to explain away his adult position; I am merely citing them to point up his reaction against moralistic legalism. Granting the legitimacy of Russell's rebellion against a perversion of Christianity is not, however, to approve his wholesale rejection of the theological baby along with the legalistic bath water! Russell's article, "My Religious Reminiscences," is found in *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell, 1903-1959*, [in n. 80] pp. 31-36.

102. Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (rev. ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 443.

of Jesus Christ as divine; and thus also their substitution of faith in man's rationality for faith in God's grace.¹⁰³

Yet it is indeed a pity that a man of Russell's stature, with such keen perceptivity and superior intelligence in mathematical logic, should permit his mind to be so warped in religious matters as to blind him to reality. Clearly, he wishes to encounter the world as it really is:

We want to stand upon our own feet and look fair and square at the world — its good facts, its bad facts, its beauties, and its ugliness; see the world as it is, and be not afraid of it.¹⁰⁴

The answer to this problem of seeing the world and humanity "fair and square" lies not in rationalism, as we have been at pains to point out, but in the Cross of Jesus Christ, in the Person of the One who recognized the true condition of man as a "miserable sinner," and who on the Cross at Calvary overcame the world, sin, and death, and concretized man's hope in eternal life — not through any abstract rational arguments but by sacrificing his very life on the Cross and by rising again for man's justification. This is humanity's only true faith and hope; to accept it is indeed, to use the Pauline phrase, "a reasonable service," but to reject it as a result of carelessly warping its content and message, is assuredly tragic blindness.

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103. Leo Rosten (ed.), *A Guide to the Religions of America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), p. 143.

104. Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*, [in n. 8] p. 16.