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The Revd. JOHN W. CARROLL in the Chair.

THEOLOGY AND SOME RECENT SOCIOLOGY.

By the REV. D. R. DAVIES.

PART I. A CHANGING CLIMATE.

IT is an indisputable fact that the intellectual activity of civilised man is subject to climatic changes, in which one system or general scheme of related ideas rather than another tends to be instinctively accepted. Let me put it in another way. In certain eras, we find that there is a general predisposition in favour of a particular group of co-related ideas and values, when the trend of the time makes them predominant. There is a tide in the intellectual affairs of men which carries one set of ideas rather than another into a position of predominance. As long as that particular tide is flowing, opposition to the ideas carried onward by its currents is powerless. Logical demonstration against the predominant ideas has no weight, and the consequent tears of the logicians are full of bitterness. The climatically favoured ideas have it all their own way. They are batting on an easy, cast-iron wicket, which robs the bowling of all its terrors. The reasonableness and indeed the inevitability of these ideas seem to be taken for granted. For the time being they are immune to the sharpest attacks. The best minds of the time, which, of course, are always to be found among the young, are all captured by them.

This, in fact, is how civilised society does most of its thinking, which has hardly begun to be realised and appreciated. What may be termed the sociological factor in the *process* of thinking (as distinct from its results) is as yet in the pioneer stage of investigation, as anyone can see who takes the trouble to examine

Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia. Whatever the explanation may prove to be, if it ever proves to be anything, the fact itself is beyond dispute. It is most flattering, but almost completely false, to assume that conscious rationality is the only, or even the important, factor in men's thinking. This assumption is partly the unconscious product of the modern dogma of the infallibility of reason. It is indeed most touching to imagine that men start off in a kind of no-man's land or ivory tower and proceed to a purely rational estimation of evidence, for and against, ideas and opinions. It invests the individual, as a thinker, with a touch of Roman nobility and dignity. This is the idea of the thinker which Rodin has symbolised in his celebrated sculpture, "The Thinker." There Rodin has chiselled the figure of a naked man, seated, chin resting heavily on his hand, with his elbow on his knee—lost in profundity. As a piece of sculpture, it is magnificent. But as a representation of the average process of thinking, it is bunkum. Are we to believe, for instance, that Professor Laski's cocksure dismissal of Christian dogmas is the result of cold, pure ratiocination, of a dispassionate, abstract estimation of evidence? Not even the marines would be gulled by such a fiction.

We find ourselves, not in an ivory tower, but in a dynamic social process, in which varying systems of ideas and values predominate at certain periods. It is with these that our thinking starts—with what has been called "the mental furniture of the time." They operate in overlapping and interlapping spheres—in concentric circles, so to speak. We find certain systems of ideas dominating the scene in theology, sociology, philosophy, etc. Whilst these areas (or rather functions) are distinct, they are not separate and isolated from one another. The dominant ideas in theology, for example, are not isolated from the dominant ideas in philosophy, and sociology, and vice versa. The task for which I have been conscripted in these lectures is to indicate some of the relations and similarities between these predominant systems of ideas, so as to suggest, if not even to demonstrate, that both Church and world move in the same universe of reference; that both Kingdom of God and civilisation (which are by no means the same thing) are concerned with common objects on different levels—please note, *on different levels*; that both theology and secular culture are seeking to solve the same problem in different formulations. It is the failure to realise these relations and similarities which so largely accounts, in my

judgment, for undue inferiority-feeling in theologians, and for undue complacency and fatuousness among the purely secular thinkers, particularly the sociologists.

I.

We can now note another indisputable fact, namely that during the last twenty-five years the theological climate has been undergoing a very great change indeed. From the sunny, cloudless skies, the warm, gentle breezes, the clear light of nineteenth-century optimism, the climate has changed with a vengeance. Our sky is overcast with heavy, thunder-laden clouds. Breeze has changed into a veritable east wind, and visibility has sadly declined. Those wonderful distant vistas which so delighted and excited our theological fathers have terribly shrunken. Visibility, as they say in the weather forecasts for shipping, is poor. The prospect has narrowed. We are navigating in half-light, and the promise is not good. The prophet of smooth things is having a hard time of it. My heart goes out to him, though not my head. The thing cannot be questioned. We are enjoying—or rather enduring—a climate vastly different from that enjoyed—literally enjoyed—by preceding generations. Certain theologians, whose sight was determined by insight (e.g., Peter Forsyth), sense a coming depression in the climate. Events have fully justified their intuition. The depression has broken upon us. The vials have emptied themselves upon our generation. What are the concrete facts behind all these metaphors? If we study the development of theology in post-Reformation Europe, we cannot fail to notice a most unfortunate process, which can best be described as the growing irrelevance of Christian orthodoxy. It was a process in which, on the one hand, civilisation was developing on assumptions and values very different from those of Christian orthodoxy. On the other hand, theological dogma was hardening into a barren isolation, with the result that theology was tending to get more and more out of touch with actual, living social development. For this process, the Church had to pay a costly price, as she always does, whenever theology, orthodox theology, becomes irrelevant to the actual living processes of civilisation. The penalty of allowing orthodoxy to degenerate into irrelevance is to stimulate the predominance of theological heresy, which comes about in the endeavour to make theology relevant once again. This is what happened, at least in the Protestant countries of Europe.

Theology was forced into a false relevance to social development, and so became heretical. Orthodox dogma underwent an adaptation to an essentially secular, un-Christian, not to say anti-Christian, historic evolution. This process can be summed up, not unjustly, by saying that orthodox Christianity was naturalised. Or better still, the Gospel suffered desupernaturalisation. Orthodox dogma, which for ever challenges and denies the natural man, was devitalised, so as to force it into an uneasy, deadly marriage with secular civilisation. Civilisation is the natural man in a state of unwilling allegiance to supernatural sanction, which is made manifest and audible in conscience. By adapting orthodox dogma to the natural man, by cutting its claws and drawing its fangs, which deprived the Gospel of its offence to self-centred European humanity, theology did acquire a new, but false and deadly and temporary relevance. It interrupted the education of Europe's conscience in Christian sanctions and demands. In the long run, that is what heresy always does. The insistence on the overwhelming importance of orthodoxy is nothing less than the evangelical instinct of survival, which is but another way of saying Holy Ghost. In the later decades of the nineteenth century this adaptation of orthodox dogma to secular civilisation has achieved a deadly triumph—a triumph which spelled disaster both for Church and civilisation. The disaster is visible to all of us, but the roots of the disaster are still unrealised by many—far too many. The moral of all this is—*never allow orthodoxy to drift into social irrelevance.* Guard against it as you would against poison. Let us note, very briefly, some of the theological forms assumed by the brave new artificial relevance.

The central and decisive form of this process of theological adaptation was the prominence assumed by the doctrine of a secularised Kingdom of God. This dictated all the rest of the changes in theological emphasis. It constituted the predominating character of the new climate. The secularising of the Kingdom of God necessitated the transposition of nearly all the great dogmas also into a secular key.

The crucial element in this process was the identification of the Kingdom with historic progress. History, it was assumed, was itself the Kingdom of God in the making. It followed that the Kingdom was something that man had the power to create. Step by step, all the rest followed. The New Testament affirmations about man, re-created in Christ, came to be made about

the natural man. Hence sin, especially original sin, was whittled down to savage survivals—a thesis which was argued at great length, and with considerable acumen and persuasiveness, by Dr. Tennant. Hence, also, the Kingdom inevitably degenerated into mere civilisation. In due course, Christ's Atoning death faded into martyrdom. The dogma of the deity of Christ was transformed into the dogma of the potential deity of humanity. Fundamentally, Christ was like one of us, though which one of us was never indicated. Deep down, every man was a potential Christ. Let civilisation continue with the task of the sublimation of the instincts still operating from a savage ancestry. In good time, biology will become theology, and all will be well. Time, gentlemen! That was the supreme desideration. And that was guaranteed by a God more immanent than transcendent.

This whole process can be surveyed in the inflated maturity of the classic Liberals of the early 1900's—Harnack in Germany, Sabatier in France, Adams Brown, Peabody, Shailer Matthews in America, Rashdall and the Anglican Modernists in England. Their work constituted the dominant theology. The wicket on which the Liberals were batting was such a paradise of a wicket that the bowling of Forsyth even could make little impression. Only three of Forsyth's forty books achieved a second edition in his life-time. Up to 1914, or thereabouts, theological Liberalism was bursting with superiority feeling.

Alas! The scene has changed. Nobody, at least, contends nowadays that theological Liberalism is part of the mental furniture of the time. In military parlance, the initiative has fallen from its hands. Theological Liberals may not believe in the Fall of Man, but they have no option about believing in the Fall of Liberalism. Whether or not Liberalism is true, there can be no doubt that it is supine. Every man a potential Christ doesn't sound quite so convincing to a generation that has smelt the fetid breath of a Himmler. Not even Canon Raven, one of the last of the barons, can disinfect that breath. We are living in a different climate. Orthodoxy is once again thumbs-up, with its head well back and chin well forward. Let us glance merely at the high spots of the change.

The leading personal figures in the recent process of theological change, its creative force in other words, all tend to suggest the

importance of what I have called the sociological factor in thinking—in theological thinking as in secular thinking. They all found themselves, spontaneously so to speak, in revolt against the established Liberalism. There is nothing in their work or their experience to suggest that they started from the remote, abstract point of dispassionate consideration of existing theological ideas. The Liberalism that they inherited they suddenly began to suspect, not in terms of this or that idea, but as an attitude, as an organic entity, as a co-related system. Their suspicion ripened swiftly into revolt and rejection. Neither the suspicion nor the rejection was the result of a prolonged, conscious process of ratiocination. It was suddenly *there*—unavoidable, inescapable, ineluctable. There was, of course, a process of logic in the rational analysis and testing of the suspicion or the intuition of the unsoundness of their inheritance. But the intuition was not the fruit of individual reflection. That was the involuntary, sociological factor. So creative genius has also its element of determination. Creative genius in theology, as in secular culture, is partly a product of the age, of the social process. Let us note a few.

Barth, whose essential contribution to theology was made in 1918, was partly a product of defeat and disillusion. He transformed the whole theological scene. He dictated the issues and problems of theological thought for a whole generation. His word became a bridge from one theological epoch to another. I am not concerned here whether Barthianism is true or not. The immediate point is that he, more than any other single theologian, dethroned Liberalism. He profoundly influenced the process towards a new set of dominating theological ideas and values. Barth's work made many of the issues uppermost in Liberalism appear secondary and even trivial. He reopened what the dominant theology had long since regarded as questions finally closed and settled. The stone which an age-long triumphant Liberalism had complacently rejected, Barth made the head of the corner.

Berdyayev is another significant, creative figure. He too is partly a product. Whereas Barth was partly the product of a national defeat, Berdyayev was partly the product of a victorious revolution. He found himself in a process of conquering Marxism. He realised, as in a flash, that the Kingdom of God cannot be institutionalised, and so he broke with Bolshevism. Berdyayev

made Christian orthodoxy relevant by revealing the contradictions inherent in civilisation. He has renovated the whole problem of eschatology.

Niebuhr is the third member of the theological Directorate that has been guiding the whirlwind to the new climate. He started as an aggressive Liberal, but before his student days were over he had raised the flag of rebellion. Thirteen years in Henry Ford's, Detroit, confirmed for him the wisdom of his youthful intuition that his Liberal inheritance was exhausted. Niebuhr was driven to theological orthodoxy by a revolutionary sociology. In order to continue his movement to the left in politics, he discovered that he had to move to the right in theology. It has been one of the most revolutionary and fruitful discoveries in the whole history of theology.

And now abide Barth, Berdyaev and Niebuhr—these three. And the greatest of these is Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher and theologian, from whom they derive unconsciously. There is, of course, a host of slightly lesser lights—fainter stars and brighter moons, of whom time forbids any mention even. Taken together, they symbolise the new theological climate, in which orthodoxy has become the government and Liberalism a dis-integrating opposition.

The outstanding doctrinal, dogmatic features of the new era are few in number, but profoundly and comprehensively significant. The primary one, undoubtedly, is the rehabilitation, nay, the renaissance of the supremely optimistic dogma of Original Sin, with its juster appraisal of the doctrine of divine creation and diviner re-creation. This is where the work of Niebuhr, in particular, is so overwhelmingly important. In his Gifford Lectures, he has revealed the expansion of this single dogma into a solar system of theology, and also into a system of sociology, which is threatening to undermine the foundations of the secular sociologies, as I shall try to indicate at a later stage. In Niebuhr's hands, the dogma of Original Sin becomes an instrument for the permanent deflation of the claim of secular civilisation to aspire to become the Kingdom of God, or the Republic of Man, or the Parliament of Humanity. It is a bomb of atomic capacity for exploding the pretensions of the self-centred, natural man. The dogmatic feature next in importance is eschatological, with its renewal of the Kingdom of God as supernatural, transcendent, and God-given. The big noise here is Berdyaev, who has

directed this dogma into a Christian philosophy of history. In short, the orthodoxy which has again become predominant is revealed as a necessity for the presentation of the possibility of secular civilisation *in this world*. We have always known the significance of orthodoxy for the next world and the Kingdom of God. We are now discovering its indispensability for this world and for the privilege of civilisation to continue being un-Christian. That orthodoxy is a necessity for the salvation of the soul in the next world is an old story. But that it has also become necessary to feed the body in this world is news. Our terribly secularised generation will not say: "Tell me the old, old story." But it had better listen to the new, very new, story. Its physical survival depends upon it.

PART II.—SECULARISM WITHOUT AN UMBRELLA.

The late Mr. Neville Chamberlain always carried an umbrella, even when he had no need of one. On one celebrated occasion, he flew to Germany with his umbrella, when he would have done better, on that occasion at least, to have exchanged his umbrella for a gun. Whilst a gun would have been useless in a shower, it would have impressed Hitler a lot more, even had it rained. It might conceivably have postponed the storm which broke on Europe a year later. However, in the changed climate which secular culture, like theology, is experiencing secularism (or Humanism) has been caught without an umbrella, and it is, in consequence, getting soaked not to the skin, but to the soul.

Now, the point at which theology *visibly* touches secular civilisation is in a theory of human nature—i.e., in sociology and psychology. In these realms of thinking, theology operates directly. The relation, therefore, between theology and sociology is most intimate and immediate. Ultimately, of course, theory of human nature goes back to one's doctrine of God, which, however, does not reflect itself immediately in the character of a civilisation. That is an indirect, long-distance process. That is the reason for the contemporary illusion that belief or disbelief in God, in the Christian revelation of God, makes no difference to the historic, social process. Belief in God makes its impact on society, as distinct from personal relations, through a whole range of related doctrines, of which a doctrine of human nature is the end doctrine. At that point it joins hands with secular sociology.

Consequence is direct. There is no further intervening metaphysic. That also is the reason why a renaissance of religious belief will take time to make itself felt in actual social institutions. We need a renewal of faith now—i.e., the process of renewal must begin now—if mankind is to surmount the next crisis in civilisation. We have secured a breathing space in the present crisis—we haven't solved it by any means—through a dwindling heritage of faith. But that shrinking heritage will not secure the continuity of the Christian, European tradition in the next crisis of civilisation. And there's going to be a next crisis. Don't make any mistake about that. The present upheaval of civilisation is simply formulating the ultimate issues of man's historic existence. It isn't settling them. It is merely defining them. Their solution will most surely involve civilisation in future crises, for the overcoming of which we need the beginning of Christian renewal *now*. Such a renewal will, I believe, be facilitated by a just appreciation of what is happening at present in secular sociology, psychology and philosophy.

I.

The essential significance of contemporary secular sociology can be expressed in a sentence: it is an effort to modify and adapt, without, however, fundamentally changing, a theory of human nature which, under the pressure of recent developments in civilisation, has clearly broken down. This effort takes many different forms, some of which are mutually inconsistent, but all of which are involved in a contradiction of one kind or another. These varying contradictions are inevitable in a sociology which rules out what the Christian faith has to say about the human nature which is the raw material of sociology as a science, or an alleged science, which, of course, sociology is not and never can be. It would, obviously, require at least a volume to elaborate this statement. In a lecture I can do no more than offer a few illustrations. There is no need to spend much time in showing that the classic Liberal doctrine of human nature has broken down. Every single one of its assumptions has been falsified by the grim and undeniable argument of events. Nothing makes this clearer than the contrast between the expectations of the Liberal sociology and their actual historical falsification. Here, for instance, is Sir Herbert Spencer: "The ultimate development of the ideal man is certain—as certain as any conclusion in which we place the most implicit faith, e.g., that

all men will die. . . Always towards perfection is the mighty movement—towards a complete development and a more un-mixed good. . . Progress is not an accident but a necessity. What we call evil and immorality must disappear. It is certain that man must become perfect.” That was written nearly one hundred years ago. What an ironic commentary on these hopes is provided by contemporary totalitarianism, which is a complete exposure of the classic Spencerian sociology.

Reinhold Niebuhr, in his book, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*, shows how complete is this breakdown in his analysis of democracy and the fate which has befallen it in our time. “There is a more fundamental error,” he writes, “in the social philosophy of democratic civilisation than the individualism of bourgeois democracy and the collectivism of Marxism. It is the confidence of both bourgeois and proletarian idealists in the possibility of achieving an easy resolution of the tension and conflict between self-interest and the general interest . . . the social idealism which informs our democratic civilisation had a touching faith in the possibility of achieving a simple harmony between self-interest and the general welfare on every level. . . . The confidence of modern secular idealism in the possibility of an easy resolution of the tension between individual and community, or between classes, races and nations, is derived from a too optimistic view of human nature.” It is this “too optimistic view of human nature” which contemporary secular culture is seeking to salvage and refit for duty in a technical, totalitarian era. In its classic, unblushing, undiluted form it is no longer acceptable. It has ceased to be part of “the mental furniture of the time.” But it is not abandoned, which would be the logical thing to do. The process of secularisation has gone too deep in the modern mind to tolerate simple logic, when logic tends in the direction of Christian dogma. As a man claiming to be scientific wrote recently, “if we cannot find the real cause of social injustice, we would be forced to go back to the absurd doctrine of original sin.” And that would never do, be it ever so scientific! *How can the Liberal theory of a self-sufficient human nature be made workable in the new situation?* That’s the dominating problem in current sociology, psychology and philosophy.

II.

The chief answer to this question is being provided by the providential discovery of the irrational element in psychology

and of its vast importance in social and political life. The modern pioneer in this discovery was Freud, who stumbled on his concept of the Id, or Unconscious. When Freud and his kindred and successors came to investigate the content of the Unconscious, they made the shattering, revolutionary discovery that its operations were completely different from those of the conscious mind, of reason. There was a complete absence in the Id of those processes which we call rational—classification, selection, deliberation, co-ordination, etc. It was characterised more by instinct than by reasoning. It was dynamic, assertive, undifferentiated, which are all qualities of will rather than of reason. In fact, the Unconscious of Freudian and co-Freudian psychology is will uninfluenced by reason, by rational ratiocinative process. This would seem to be merely a re-statement of Schopenhauer's concept of the world as blind will. But it is not. Where Schopenhauer's will is blind and self-contained, Freud's Unconscious is neither blind nor isolated. It is pervasive and dominant in the psychic structure of man. Whereas in Schopenhauer reason was an independent activity, in Freudian psychology conscious reason tends to be the instrument of the Unconscious, which accounts for the predominance of the irrational element in human thinking and behaviour. Mind, at least a great deal of the rational process, is a function of the Unconscious, operating to make the fundamental impulses of the Unconscious acceptable to the conscious mind. Much of conscious thinking, i.e., is a process of "rationalisation" which, in effect, is the endeavour to give to the irrational the semblance of rationality. Thus the element of the irrational comes to exercise a preponderating influence in civilisation. This discovery has been a godsend to secular sociology, since it obviates the disastrous possibility of having to fall back upon theology and dogma; orthodox dogma, to boot.

Here then is a general recognition by secular psychologists and sociologists, who cannot be accused of theological prejudice, that social and individual behaviour is influenced more by irrationality than by conscious reason. This is a very interesting admission from the point of view of the theologian. It does not constitute a proof of original sin. Neither that nor any other Christian dogma can be proved in the scientific sense. Revelation does not lend itself to logic. Whilst, therefore, the concept of The Irrational is not a proof of original sin, it is, at least, not inconsistent with original sin. Indeed, it is very much what one would expect, if the dogma of original sin is a reality and not a

fantasy. The dominance and persistence of The Irrational in civilisation is much more consistent with original sin than with the assumptions of the Liberal sociology. That is a most important interim point to note. What is the answer of contemporary sociology and philosophy to the psychological fact of The Irrational? What conclusions do they draw from it? Theology sees in it a rehabilitation of the dogma of original sin. What do sociology and philosophy see in it? Their conclusions can, I believe, be broadly classified into three groups.

First, is the conclusion, which, in fact, is a conclusion of cynical despair, that human nature is incurable, irredeemable; that there is nothing to be done about it except to endure it; that, therefore, in the final analysis, power is the essential reality in human relations, and the only thing that counts in the ultimate issue, since power is alone capable of restraining the irrational. This theory is Hobbes brought up to date, refurbished for the era of technology and the mass-mind. It accepts the inevitability of totalitarianism and endows the minority with the permanent right to dominate the majority. All moral values, principles and ideals are dismissed as mere rationalisations of power; mere devices to make the exercise of power by the few palatable to the many. Morality is the velvet glove worn by the iron hand of power.

Now, the interesting feature about this sociology is that it is the work mostly of disillusioned Marxists, of whom James Burnham and Max Nomad are leading and typical examples. I must be careful to avoid misunderstanding here. I do not say that all disillusioned Marxists fall into this brutal nihilism. They do not. Some do. The point I am making is that most of those who formulate this social philosophy happen to be disillusioned Marxists. Their very honesty and sincerity in recognising the utter contradiction and falsification of the ideals or principles of Marxism in practice do not save them from assent to the oppression which originally inspires their disillusion. On purely humanist assumptions, moral values inevitably dissolve. In the case of the disillusioned Marxist of the Burnham type, the dissolution is direct and immediate. In other cases, it is devious and prolonged, but none the less certain. Few happenings in the war were so morally significant as the ease with which so many disillusioned Marxists went Fascist or Nazi—Quisling, Deat and Doriot are outstanding examples.

This philosophy of what may be termed decadent Marxism is morally better and more significant than any of the orthodox philosophies of mere power, like Nazism, Marxism, Prussianism. In Nazism, for instance, power was still idealist. It was an instrument of racial domination, and therefore had greater power to deceive and lead astray. The fundamental immorality of power is obscured whenever power is presented as the instrument of some ideal, whether it be race, class or nation. The final divorce of power from idealism of any sort does, at least, leave no further foothold for illusion. And that clarifies the ultimate issues of life and death. For this reason, decadent Marxism, since it clears the ground, is of great moral and spiritual significance in the development of civilisation. It does reveal Christian faith as the only real alternative to despair; for the decadent Marxist will not be deceived by the mythical, illusory alternatives, which he has already exhausted.

It is not necessary to say much about orthodox Marxist sociology, which has always done more justice to the irrational element in the historic process than the Liberal sociologies. But the insight of Marxism vanishes when it comes to analyse this irrationality. It attributes it to external economic relations. When capitalist ownership is abolished, then society will become rational. Perhaps the best comment on this were the Moscow Trials of 1936-1938. They were supreme examples of rationality! As Mr. Churchill once said, they were the conclusive manifestation of the gulf that yawned between the Communist mentality and the Western.

In the second group are the sociologists and philosophers, political philosophers, whose faith in reason is paradoxically fortified by the fact of irrationality. They are the re-edition of the eighteenth-century rationalists. They formulate a new rationalism, which is but a fresh version of the German Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Professor Laski and Professor Haldane are examples. They cling the more desperately to reason because the only alternative they can see is unreason. Having ruled out revelation, they have nothing left but reason, without which their whole world collapses. They are in the position of gamblers who have only one card to play. That card must win the trick, since failure to do so simply cannot be contemplated. They remind me of the Englishman who, when talking to a foreigner who doesn't understand what he is saying, simply repeats himself *in a louder voice*. The fellow must be

able to understand. His trouble must be a little deafness. So say it louder. It is as easy as that! They continue to cling to the fatal assumption that *reason*—the faculty of *knowing*—is capable of correcting or solving the contradiction of the will, the faculty of *doing*, behaviour. They persist in affirming, in spite of all the evidence, that perversity in conduct is due to ignorance in the mind. That is what I mean by faith in reason. Denial of trust or faith in human reason must not be confused with unreason; with unbelief in reason as an instrument for dealing with experience, as a factor in personality. Lack of faith in reason is not equivalent to unreasonableness. In fact, the opposite is true. The unreasonable man is he who attributes to reason powers which it does not possess. One of these powers is ability to transcend basic human egoism. That is precisely the error of the new rationalists.

In the third group are the social philosophers of the half-way house, of whom the outstanding example is Mr. Lewis Mumford, one of the leading American sociologists. These are not they who are arrayed in white robes, for the simple reason that they have not yet come *through* "the great tribulation." They are still in the midst of it. These, rather, are they who want to eat their cake and have it, who endeavour to combine Christian realism with secular illusion. Among this group are some of the finest and acutest minds in contemporary culture. I've mentioned one of them—Mr. Mumford. Aldous Huxley is another. Mr. Arthur Koestler is a third. Ortega Gasset, the Spanish philosopher, is a fourth. They represent what is still sound, what has so far escaped corruption in European culture. They are, therefore, of immense significance for the Church in relation to our profoundly secularised generation. They are the pioneer rebels against a culture which has been completely secularised, a culture which has become wholly confined to the one dimension of this world.

The relevant feature of their social philosophy is their urgent plea for the recovery of the Christian values of civilisation whilst refusing to face the fact of their theological foundation, *without which they cannot be maintained as social forces*. Christian values and principles of social development are the fruit of Christian theology. The—what shall I call them?—"semitarians" want the social values of Christianity but they shy away from the theology.

PART III.—THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL VALUES.

I.

In order to illustrate the "semitarian" social philosophy, I will present and analyse a single example. This method will, as I see it, best enable us to appreciate its merits and estimate its defects. I choose for my example Mr. Arthur Koestler, a man of acute and passionately sincere mind. Mr. Koestler is a Jew, which I mention, not to decry him, but rather to enhance his significance. Let me say a word or two about him personally.

Mr. Koestler is a Hungarian, an ex-Marxist who has played a very active part in the revolutionary struggle in pre-war European politics. This is a fact of importance in Mr. Koestler's significance, because his revolutionary activity brought him terrible suffering, from some of which he lifted the veil in his books, *Spanish Testament* and *Scum of the Earth*. He spent three weeks in one of Franco's prisons in daily anticipation of being shot. A man cannot exist for twenty-one days suspended between life and death without something happening. And a great deal happened inside Mr. Koestler. For instance, he acquired a merciless eye for ultimate spiritual realities, an eye which penetrated every disguise of humbug and rationalisation. Suffering transformed his sight into insight. In due course, insight nearly always produces hindsight and foresight as well.

It is interesting to note that profound and extreme suffering has played a vastly important rôle in the most influential and creative minds of our time. Berdyaev is a case in point. Chesterton once said about Dickens, who as a boy had worked in a blacking factory, that he learnt how to whitewash the universe in a blacking factory. So Berdyaev learnt the inner meaning of freedom in prison. Mr. Koestler is among the *élite* who have come to reality through suffering. This fact alone would be sufficient to establish his significance for contemporary culture. But this is by no means his only significance. He is an ex-Marxist, whose disillusionment with Marxism has resulted in a creative spiritual experience, of which we get more than a hint in his book, *The Yogi and the Commissar*.

Mr. Koestler's disillusionment has been prompted by the way in which Soviet Russia has developed. The Socialism to which he had looked for a deep and abiding liberation of the human personality has resulted in a new slavery for the individual, far exceeding in ruthlessness and thoroughness all

preceding tyrannies. Communist totalitarianism, says Mr. Koestler, has not only destroyed personal liberty, it bids fair to destroy human personality itself. This historic result of Marxism in Russia has made Mr. Koestler a rebel against Marxism, which is the final logic of secular self-sufficiency. His discovery is, not that Marxism has been wrongly applied, but that totalitarian suppression is its necessary logic. The greatest of all the secular hopes of the modern world, says Mr. Koestler, has proved to be a mockery and a contradiction. "The tragedy is that only those realise what oxygen means who have known the torture of suffocation; only those who have shared the life of the ordinary native in Nazi Germany or Stalinite Russia for at least a year know that disintegration of the human substance which befalls people deprived of our basic liberties. . . . The English journalist does not know the difference between a limited freedom of expression and the status of a human teleprinter. The English highbrow, fed up with a statesman's cigar or a general's photo-mania, has no idea of the abject idiocy of regimented, byzantine leader-worship. The English public, disgruntled but secure within the law, does not know the shivering insecurity, the naked horror of an autocratic police state. They only know their own frustrations. The atmosphere of democracy has become a stale fug, and those who breathe it cannot be expected to be grateful for the air which it contains. The predicament of Western civilisation is that it has ceased to be aware of the values which it is in peril of losing." (*Yogi and Commissar*, p. 218.) Mr. Koestler's great problem is: "How can these values be revived?" (*Ibid.* p. 218.)

The answer given by Mr. Koestler to this question reveals very clearly his half-and-half attitude. It reveals his pathetic, desperate clinging to the remnants of secular illusion. It shows up the moral cowardice of an intellectually brave man, the fatal reluctance to exercise the logic of his own realism. His answer is an anti-climax, a bathos, like an elevated oration concluding in a vulgar doggerel, or a Beethoven cadenza trailing into a jazz croon. "In other words," says Mr. Koestler, "the traditional values can only be revived by the forces of progress"!! He expects the renewal of the traditional European values, which are supremely Christian, from those very forces which have been progressively and ceaselessly undermining them for the last five centuries. He expects the renewal of traditional values, which are rooted in a two-dimensional order beyond time, to

come from those forces which are obsessed with this world only. He looks for the renewal of the values of personal liberty, of worship, of the absoluteness of conscience, of the sanctity of truth and the pledged covenant (which are the traditional values), from social forces which have insisted on the relativity of all truth and conscience, on the absoluteness of collective humanity, on the subordination of liberty to material security. He expects the restoration of the Europe of Augustine, Aquinas, Shakespeare, Goethe, Abraham Lincoln, Gladstone to come from the Laskis, Haldanes, Kingsley Martins! Could anything so eloquently proclaim the paralysis and bankruptcy of the sociology of the halfway house? Mr. Koestler himself is reluctantly and uncomfortably aware of this, for he goes on to say that "without a spiritual renaissance the socialist movement will continue on the road of bureaucratic ossification to the end." (*Ibid.*, p. 219.) "The age of enlightenment has destroyed faith in personal survival; the scars of this operation have never healed. There is a vacancy in every living soul, a deep thirst in all of us. If the Socialist idea cannot fill this vacancy and quench our thirst, then it has failed in our time. In this case the whole development of the Socialist idea since the French Revolution has been merely the end of a chapter in history, and not the beginning of a new one." (*Ibid.*, p. 226.) The desperation of Mr. Koestler's case is abundantly demonstrated by his utterly fantastic hope that the Socialist idea can fill the vacancy in the soul of modern man caused by loss of faith in immortality.

What does Mr. Koestler mean by the spiritual renaissance of the Socialist idea? He means by it "the creation of a new fraternity in a new spiritual climate, whose leaders are tied by a vow of poverty to share the life of the masses, and debarred by the laws of the fraternity from attaining unchecked power. If this seems utopian, then Socialism is utopia." (*Ibid.*, p. 225-6.) Mr. Koestler is quite evidently in some doubt about the possibility of this. I share his doubt, in spite of the fact that the Left Wing intelligentzia have gone so far in participating in the life of the masses as to wear corduroy trousers, which, by the way, have ceased to be a proletarian fashion. History, at any rate, does not encourage the idea that spiritual revivals originate from trousers, even though they be made of corduroy. If clothes have anything to do with spiritual renaissance, which cannot be dogmatically affirmed, then there is better historical ground for associating spiritual renaissance with the cassock than with trousers. But that is another story.

This, in varying degree, is the situation in which the "semi-tarians" find themselves trapped, like butterflies in a bottle, inside which they are beating their beautiful iridescent wings in vain. I'm not being ironical. Mr. Koestler's wings *are* beautiful. There is purity in his passion for the tormented spirit of our time. There is more than a breath of nobility in his aspiration for the liberation and redemption of our civilisation. But he must escape from the last remaining illusion that frustrates him. And that goes for all the sociologists and philosophers who are huddling together for some warmth and protection in the shelter which the lightning has struck. Mr. Mumford, too, is desperately aware of the need for spiritual renewal. "Our society is now," he writes, "at a stage when conversion—an inner change and redirection—must precede every interchange or transformation. . . . That inner change, under the pressure of a powerful experience, universally shared, is the prelude to every significant outer change." (*The Condition of Man*, p. 394.) But he leaves us entirely in the dark regarding "the powerful experience" itself. He confesses that rational demonstration is powerless to bring it about. What then can do so?

II.

The fundamental illusion, which seems to be common to all the secular sociologies, is the assumption that the creation or the changing of social values is a self-contained process, quite independent of prior belief or doctrine. The sociologists of the half-way house are urging a return to values which grew out of faith in a revelation, about which, however, they are either silent or unsympathetic. They are labouring under the delusion that the social values, recovery of which they so sincerely desire, can be detached from the beliefs in which they are rooted, theologically as well as historically. This is like believing that roses have a life of their own independent of the tree from which they have been cut; that the bloom they enjoy on the tree can be transferred in perpetuity to the rose-bowl on the dining-table. They seem to think that the temporary shelter in which they have found refuge can be made into a permanent home. They apparently take for granted that it is within modern man's capacity to erect what is, in effect, a Christian civilisation on a basis of secular belief. There is no realisation of the vital,

organic relation between Christian values and Christian doctrine ; that social ideals and principles are derivatory, and not fontal and primary. The pursuit of Christian social values, dissociated from the theology out of which they derive their existence and nourishment, is a pursuit of phantoms ; a foredoomed attempt to isolate the shadows from the sun. Here is the immediate secularist strong-point on to which Christian theology must direct its attack. Here is the practical issue which emerges for the Church out of our survey of current social philosophy.

My confidence in the soundness of this conclusion is considerably fortified by a recent work of Mr. C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, from which I quote: "This thing which I have called for convenience the *Tao*, and which others may call Natural Law or Traditional Morality or the First Principles of Practical Reason or the First Platitudes, is not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value-judgments. If it is rejected, all value is rejected. If any value is retained, it is retained. The effort to refute it and raise a new system of value in its place is self-contradictory. . . . What purport to be new systems or (as they now call them) 'Ideologies,' all consist of fragments from the *Tao* itself, arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation, yet still owing to the *Tao* and to it alone such validity as they possess. If my duty to my parents is a superstition, then so is my duty to posterity. If justice is a superstition, then so is my duty to my country or my race. If the pursuit of scientific knowledge is a real value, then so is conjugal fidelity. The rebellion of new ideologies against the *Tao* is a rebellion of the branches against the tree ; if the rebels could succeed they would find that they had destroyed themselves. *The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary colour, or, indeed, of creating a new sun or a new sky for it to move in.*" (My italics.)

Now, if instead of the word *Tao* we read the word *Revelation*, the significance of this becomes clearer. Christian faith is the revelation in Christ of what God is in His own being, character and relation to mankind. Christian social values are the reflection of that revelation in human relations and social institutions. Dogma is the affirmation of what is, of what is the nature of absolute, transcendent Reality, which determines what shall be our social values, our principles. Values are not a casual creation

of the human mind; to be adopted in accordance with what we may happen to think good or desirable. It is values that decide what we think of as good, and our values, which dictate the character of civilisation, are determined exactly by what we believe about the nature of Reality, of God. Changes in social values cannot be effected on the historic level, merely on the level of human reason and organisation. The source of the process of change in values goes back to what we believe about God, not as the result of an operation of logic, but as the result of an act of pre-rational acceptance. The Christian revelation—or Word—of God confronts man with a demand for a Yea or a Nay, as something to be accepted or rejected; not as something to be logically investigated, tested, weighed in terms of pros and cons and finally adjudicated. We either accept what Christ manifests of God or we don't. Reason is incapable of deciding the truth or falsity of that manifestation in the first place. The values determining the social process are an involuntary consequence of our initial acceptance or rejection of Christ's Word about God. Theology precedes and determines sociology. Theology affirms elemental existence, being. Sociology affirms derived existence.

Now, the reaction of secular philosophy to this argument (or position) is to despise it as an attack upon reason. The charge that Christianity constitutes an attack upon reason frightens the theologian so much that he becomes merely apologetic. Theologians are even yet too flurried to make clear the distinction between reason as an instrumental function of experience and reason as the supreme arbiter of basic being, of elemental reality. What Christianity does involve, emphatically and indubitably, is an attack upon the pretensions of reason, upon reason inflated with the assertion of its own omnipotence. When reason claims to be able to decide, for instance, the question of the very existence of God, then it is laying claim to omnipotence. It is affirming its own deity. That is what theology must reject lock, stock and barrel. It must affirm the incompetence of reason to decide the verity, the prior timeless verity, of revelation. What theology spurns is the pretensions of reason.

The claim of reason to adjudicate on revelation fails to substantiate itself in the purely secular field of experience. Mr. C. S. Lewis makes this point with conclusive force. By claiming to go beyond "first principles," knowledge itself ceases to be

possible. By carrying rationalism to the n^{th} degree, the world is reduced to irrationality. If reason is to be reliable as an instrument of experience, there must be a point at which it stops. If it goes beyond that point—first principles, postulates, axioms, or what you will—the very possibility of reason vanishes. As Mr. Lewis puts it, by “seeing through” everything, it finally sees nothing. “. . . . extreme rationalism, by ‘seeing through’ all ‘rational’ motives, leaves them creatures of wholly irrational behaviour . . . you cannot go on ‘explaining away’ for ever: you will find that you have explained ‘explanation’ itself away. You cannot go on ‘seeing through’ things for ever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be transparent, because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. How if you saw through the garden too? It is no use trying to ‘see through’ first principles.” (*Abolition of Man*, pp. 33 and 40.) What therefore divides the Christian theologian from the secular philosopher is not whether revelation is or is not subordinate to reason, but whether revelation shall be immune to the corrosive of reason.

Hence the struggle over social values, and personal values too, is supremely and directly a theological struggle, since it is theology that decides. This discovery transforms the whole situation of the Church in the modern world, which ought to transform also the long-established inferiority psychology of the Christian ministry in relation to the world—to the nihilistic sociologies which frankly abandon civilisation to the devil in the garb of totalitarianism; to the superficially rationalistic sociologies which turn a blind eye on their own fundamental assumptions; to the half-way sociologies, which pull up midway in their pendulate swing, and thus conclude (if I may vary the metaphor) by being “neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring.” In this situation, theology can begin to walk with a swagger.

The problem now is not the survival of the Church, but the survival of European civilisation. Before another decade has passed, the problem of even the physical survival of any sort of civilisation may find its way to the agenda-paper of history. The atomic bomb announced a grim and sinister possibility. “My concern,” said Pastor Niemöller in his famous interview with Hitler in 1934, “is not the Church, but the Third Reich.” “You can leave that to me,” replied Hitler. Eleven years and the Third Reich is no more. Is that a parable of things

to come? I do not know. What I do know is that secular civilisation can no longer be left to a secularist sociology of any kind, if disaster is not to intervene. "War is too serious a business to leave to the Generals" (Clemenceau). So is civilisation. The Church has a tremendous stake in the historic process, in social development. The hour has struck for theology to become aggressive. So "to your tents, O Israel."