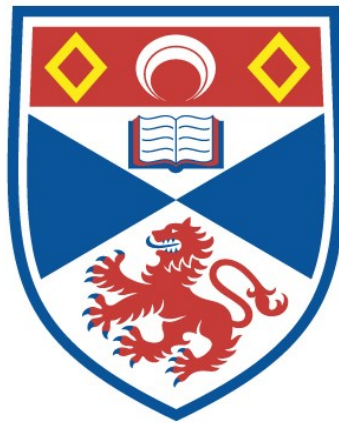


**THEOLOGICAL THEMES IN THE PREACHING
OF D.M. BAILLIE : THE EXAMINATION OF A
THEOLOGICAL SYSTEM RECONSTRUCTED
FROM SERMONS, COMPARED AND
CONTRASTED WITH LECTURES AND OTHER
WRITINGS**

Nicholas B. Van Dyck

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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being a thesis presented by

Nicholas B. Van Dyck

**to the University of St. Andrews,
in application for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.**



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DECLARATION

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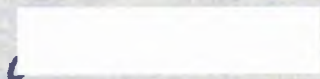
STATEMENT OF TRAINING

Upon completion of a course of study at the Colleges for Men, Rutgers University, New Jersey, I was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1959. I matriculated at Union Theological Seminary, New York, graduating in 1962 with the degree of Bachelor of Divinity.

I matriculated at St. Mary's College, St. Andrews University at the beginning of the Michaelmas Term in 1962, as a Research Student.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that Nicholas B. Van Dyck has spent nine terms at Research Work in St. Mary's College, St. Andrews University, that he has fulfilled the conditions of Ordinance No. 16 (St. Andrews), and that he is qualified to submit the accompanying thesis in application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



DEDICATION

**David Bevier Van Dyck
1892 - 1963**

PREFACE

This thesis is written with an eye toward making three contributions: (1) to set forth the theological themes which appear in the sermons of D. M. Baillie with an examination of the method and criteria which lie behind the presentation of these themes, (2) to bring to light the full scope of D. M. Baillie's theological system which is contained in published, and to a large extent unpublished, sermons and other writings, (3) to provide a bibliography of D. M. Baillie's works, published and unpublished, in order to facilitate future study of his thought.

The dissertation is not directly concerned with techniques of preaching or homiletical method. The examination concentrates upon the sermons and parts of sermons preached by D. M. Baillie in which he deals with major doctrinal themes, e.g. God, Creation, Providence, etc. The primary foci of attention are on the theological content of Baillie's preaching and the theological method which lies behind his presentation of Christian doctrine

in preaching. Although reference is made to a variety of authors in order to clarify and identify Baillie's treatment of doctrinal themes, the major emphasis will be upon an examination of primary source material, viz. 259 sermons and 184 other theological writings of D. M. Baillie. The unpublished material (unless otherwise noted) is in the custody of the Faculty of Divinity, St. Mary's College, St. Andrews University.

The punctuation, footnotes and format of the thesis conform to the recommendations of Kate L. Turabian in A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), supplemented by A Manual of Style (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949). Spelling and word usage conform to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield: G. C. Merriam Co., 1956). Every effort has been made to quote the manuscript material as it appears in Professor Baillie's hand. Where there are inconsistencies in capitalization, particularly in the case of pronouns referring to the Deity, the repeated use of [sic] has been abandoned in order to avoid an unnecessary cluttering of the text. The only alterations involve the writing out of abbreviations such as "N. T.",

"O, T.", "Xt", etc.

Professor Gordon Rupp has written that "the recording of acknowledgments is one of the devices by which the undistinguished compound for their obscurity by making more reputable scholars go bail on their behalf."¹ However, without abrogating one whit of the responsibility for what follows, it is only fitting to mention some of those who have made this study possible. Shortly after this research project was conceived, President Henry P. Van Dusen of Union Theological Seminary in New York drew my attention to the existence of the Baillie manuscripts. Principal Matthew Black of St. Mary's offered his encouragement and gave me access to the boxes containing the sermons, notes and lectures which had been left in the custody of the College. Professor W. R. Forrester is to be thanked for having collected and preserved D. M. Baillie's papers at the time of his death. It was he who placed in my hands many articles which would have been difficult to track down had it not been for his assistance. Mrs. John Baillie, D. M. Baillie's literary executrix, has kindly permitted

¹Studies in the Making of the English Protestant Tradition (Cambridge: The University Press, 1947), p. vii.

me to quote freely from the unpublished material. My research and writing have been carried out under the helpful and critical supervision of Professor James Whyte. I am deeply indebted to him for his time, interest and openness. In the hours we have spent going over this work and exploring other areas of mutual interest, I have been rigorously reminded of the importance of sound theological discipline, particularly as it applies to preaching. Appropriately, this thesis is itself a demonstration of the particularly inseparable and mutually dependent character of practical and systematic theology. The staff of the St. Andrews University Library is to be thanked for their co-operation, especially Miss Georgina Nicol who had the unenviable task of typing the final copies of this thesis. Lastly, yet in pride of place, gratitude must be expressed to my wife, not only for her assistance with the bibliography and the proofreading, but most of all for her quiet encouragement which made this work possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	vii
<p>The purpose, scope and sources of the thesis. Notes on style, format and word usage. Acknowledgments.</p>	
INTRODUCTION	1
<p>The general problem which challenges preaching and why the works of D. M. Baillie were chosen as the subject of the thesis. It is my task to show how Baillie preaches Christian doctrine which is true to its sources and which reflects and addresses human experience.</p>	
<p>PART I: TOWARD A THEOLOGY FOR PREACHING</p>	
Chapter	
I. THE NATURE AND TASK OF THEOLOGY	9
<p>The starting point for theology: preliminary definitions of faith, experience and revelation. The language of theology is primarily historical.</p>	
II. FAITH	34
<p>Faith is an attitude of mind with objective reference to history and the demands of human experience. Faith is dependent on a deeper witness than mere external authority. The combined authority and freedom of the Church, properly understood, is an important contributing factor. Reason plays an important part; faith is the highest exercise of reason.</p>	

- III. EXPERIENCE AND FAITH** 50
- Faith cannot be abstracted from experience. Together they form the basis of theology. It is a basis which is informed by the requirement for life together, i.e. love.
- IV. REVELATION, EXPERIENCE AND FAITH** 65
- Revelation takes place in the encounter of persons with events and other persons. Preaching is an example of this. Revelation involves the meeting of the objective activity of God with the subjective response of men to the demands of this activity. Revelation provides theology with its source material.
- V. THE PLACE OF PARADOX IN THEOLOGY** 75
- The statements of theology, based on faith-experience and measured by revelation, end in paradox but point beyond. From the paradox of grace to the meaning of the Incarnation: a summary example of theological method.
- VI. SOME DANGERS WHICH THREATEN THE TRUE PRESENTATION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE** 84
- False institutionalism, false practicalism, false intellectualism, false dilletantism, narrow confessionalism and extreme ecumenical liberalism.
- VII. CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE; A STORY WITH A PLOT** 102
- It is necessary to preach Christian doctrine. Christian doctrine is a "story with a plot". The Church exists in order to preach Christian doctrine.

PART II:
A THEOLOGY FOR PREACHING

I. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

114

The problem of addressing genuine questions:

The Doctrine Preached

p/ The Paradox of morality raises a genuine question. The presence, power, love, wrath and suffering of God are presented in terms of what happens within the context of human experience.

The Doctrine Preached
and the Doctrine Taught

Genuine paradox which is useful in preaching is lived and actualized in faith-experience. The preaching concentrates on telling what God does.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

231

The problem of relating supra-historical events to historical experiences:

The Doctrine Preached

God's creative work is a continual process; some experiential consequences; the confusion arising from creatio ex nihilo.

The Doctrine Preached
and the Doctrine Taught

A criticism of the use of creatio ex nihilo in sermons: The doctrine of creation tells what happens.

III. THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE

268

The problem of reflecting the whole experience of suffering in order that it may be addressed:

The Doctrine Preached

The doctrine is presented in three ways which suggest three very different forms of pastoral counsel.

**The Doctrine Preached
and the Doctrine Taught**

The sermons are criticized on the basis of the message intended by the doctrine as it is taught.

IV. THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

310

The problem of preaching about Biblical myths:

The Doctrine Preached

Creation in the image of God and the Fall are presented in terms of what man is and does.

**The Doctrine Preached
and the Doctrine Taught**

Biblical myths refer directly to human experience, but they need to be distinguished from historical language.

**V. THE DOCTRINES OF SIN AND
THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.**

341

The problem of presenting the Gospel message about sin:

The Doctrine Preached

"Sin" is presented as a religious word which has meaning only within the context where forgiveness is possible. Sin is essentially self-centeredness; realization of its true nature as sin against God's love leads to repentance and forgiveness.

**The Doctrine Preached
and the Doctrine Taught**

These are some dangers of speaking about sin in the wrong context. Confession is an integral part of the experience of forgiveness.

VI. THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE

373

The problem of relating a technical theological term to human experience:

The Doctrine Preached

Grace is a gracious personal influence. Men are responsibly in possession of free

will. When men live in love faith-experience says it is "Not I, but the grace of God."

The Doctrine Preached
and the Doctrine Taught

Grace and nature cannot be abstracted from each other. This is demonstrably true in human relationships. Morality is treated within the context of grace.

VII. THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION

411

The problem of presenting the paradox of the Incarnation in terms which reflect and address human experience:

The Doctrine Preached

Jesus was fully human and that which He did was the achievement of God in Him. That is the perfect example of the human experience of the paradox of grace.

The Doctrine Preached
and the Doctrine Taught

Some criticisms and a defense of this treatment of the doctrine are presented on the basis of a theology for preaching.

VIII. THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

471

The problem of preserving the tension between the gravity of sin and the victory of God's love:

The Doctrine Preached

Costly forgiveness within the context of victorious love is seen in human experience. The Cross addresses a genuine need.

The Doctrine Preached
and the Doctrine Taught

There are some difficulties surrounding the terminology of the doctrine: some analogies which are false to historical event.

IX. THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

507

The problem of relating past history to present experience:

The Doctrine Preached

The Holy Spirit is presented as the epistemological dimension of grace which makes it known that it was the same grace active in Christ that is active among men today.

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

The presentation is criticized on the basis of internal inconsistency resulting from a failure to integrate this doctrine with the doctrine of grace.

X. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

534

The problem of defining the Church without compromising the universal thrust of the Gospel:

The Doctrine Preached

Where ever and in so far as men live in love toward one another, there is salvation and there is the Church.

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

The presentation is criticized for an implication limiting salvation and the boundaries of the Church by the Word and Sacraments on the basis of internal inconsistency.

XI. THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

581

The problem of explaining the place of the Sacraments without falsely imposing an external authority:

The Doctrine Preached

There is a genuine human need for sacramental expression. The Sacraments meet that need and relate it to concrete historical experience. The Sacraments as a means of grace.

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

The Sacraments can claim indirect dominical institution. There are some difficulties with the terminology of the doctrine.

XII. THE DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

611

The problem of presenting supra-historical dimensions of the Gospel as they are based on human experience:

The Doctrine Preached

The assurance of a particular kind of life after death arises from a faith-experience. There is much we cannot say except in symbolic language. The Kingdom of God is a symbol based on fragmentary human experience.

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

There is no logically coherent Biblical doctrine of the Kingdom; the word embodies many different themes. Negative inferences about eternal punishment are not drawn on the basis of faith in God. The Christian hope is based on what has happened.

XIII. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

641

The problem of presenting a sensible reason for the faith of the Church without denying the inadequacy of all human language about God:

INTRODUCTION

The Church exists to proclaim a message. It exists to proclaim what God has done and is doing in order that men and women may live in the light of that message. Preaching is the central means by which the content of that message is communicated, and to fulfill its task preaching must be understood by the community in which it is heard.

Few will contest the existence of widespread ignorance concerning the content of the Christian message. There are many reasons for this. One of them is the immediate concern of this thesis. The message of the Church is often couched in the language of Scripture and theological formulation which does not readily communicate itself to those for whom the message is intended. The language, particularly doctrinal language, is often quite foreign to the linguistic frame of reference within which the community is used to speaking of its own experience. The language of theologians often becomes nothing short of meaningless jargon when it falls on the ears of men and women seated in church on Sunday morning.

Language is defined as "the body of words and methods of combining words used and understood by a considerable community."¹ Preaching must be understood by the community of those who gather to hear the message proclaimed. The following dissertation is a demonstration of the thesis that the message can be presented in terms which reflect and address the experience of the community, and by virtue of the nature of its content, it is necessary that Christian doctrine be so preached.

"I am convinced, and have long been convinced, that we ought to be preaching Christian doctrine much more than we are."² These are the words of D.M. Baillie, late Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of St. Andrews. These words reflect a major concern which had a profound influence on his preaching and teaching. Preaching, Baillie believed, must undertake the task of presenting Christian doctrine in order to communicate the Christian message.

There has, in the past half century been far too much preaching, in Scotland and England at least, which consisted mainly of general moral and religious reflections, sermons which were elegant

¹Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1956).

²D. M. Baillie, The Theology of the Sacraments (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1957), p. 141.

essays on human life and religion, without any firm content of the Christian message. But the Christian pulpit exists in order to deliver the distinctively Christian message. And that means not a system of timeless truths, but a definite story with a plot, a story of something that happened, with a quite stupendous interpretation of it, a dogma of God becoming man and bearing the sins of the world. That means a whole system of dogma, and that is what we have to preach. If we do not preach that, we might as well close our Churches altogether.

But the preaching of Christian doctrine is not a matter of merely repeating traditional words and theological formulae. Baillie spent twenty years in the parish before he taught theology at a university. Speaking from his experience he describes the attitude of many people toward the content of the Christian message as it is often presented:

They may very probably say: "I do not understand that language. It conveys nothing to me. When you use words like Creation, the Fall of Man, Sin, Forgiveness, Incarnation, Atonement, Sanctification, Grace, I do not know what you mean. They do not ring a bell. They leave my mind blank. They have no content for me. Can you put it in simpler more realistic words?" That is how many people feel, even if they do not say it; and even people within the Church.

¹D. M. Baillie, "The Content of Preaching Today" (Book 50), p.13.

²Ibid., p.4.

Hereafter all works cited will be those of D. M. Baillie unless otherwise noted. Published works will be cited with the title, or in the case of articles, the journal underlined.

This sort of response is not an occasion for a preacher's lament; it is a challenge to be faced. Baillie offers a criterion by which doctrinal preaching must be measured:

If the doctrine we preach does not bear upon daily human life, then it cannot be the real thing at all. And the great problem for us, who have had a theological training, is to preach Christian doctrine in a way which does not become "theological" in the professional sense: to do it in such a way that all the time we shall be speaking directly to the condition in which people find themselves, and they will know what we mean and feel its relevance. Can we do that? It is very difficult. . . . But that is just what we must learn: to preach Christian doctrine in such a way that it will become the word of life to the people amid the pressing problems of life and work and society and politics, their personal problems and their social and political and industrial problems, in this complicated and tragic modern world.¹

Doctrine must be preached, but it must be preached so that it can be understood in terms of human experience. A criterion for the language of preaching is that it reflect the language used to describe the experience of the community to which it is addressed.

There is another criterion for preaching, the importance of which was often stressed by Baillie. It is not just human experience which is to be preached; it

¹Ibid., pp. 13-15.

is a particular message which has a definite basis and definite sources and which has to be thought out theologically if it is to be truly preached. He would tell his students:

There is a danger of ministers . . . going out into the world with considerable knowledge of how to put a sermon together and how to preach it, but with very little knowledge of what to preach, because they have not taken their theological study seriously enough, they have not thought out their faith--they hardly know what they believe--certainly they do not know it clearly enough to be able to help the people in the pews to think out their faith.¹

These sentences introduce Baillie's lectures on systematic theology. His theological task is undertaken with a serious view toward the basis and sources of Christian theology as well as toward the practical necessity of presenting doctrine which genuinely addresses the people of the congregation.

Drawing not only on Baillie's published works, but also on his unpublished lectures and addresses, and, most importantly, on the mass of his sermons (the vast majority of which are unpublished), I have taken it as my task in this thesis to show the way in which Baillie

¹"Systematic Theology," Vol. I (Book 8), p. 14.

preaches Christian doctrine which is true to its sources and which reflects and addresses human experience. Criticisms of Baillie's presentation will be made from time to time. These will be based on the internal consistency and inconsistency of his theological system and method of preaching Christian doctrine.

The exposition of theological themes in Baillie's preaching will involve the answering of two general questions. Before the examination of the themes which emerge from the sermons, it will be necessary to present Baillie's answer to the question about the nature and task of theology. This will be done in Part I, entitled "Toward a Theology for Preaching". Part I includes the definition of the key words "faith", "experience" and "revelation". Here too, I will make a preliminary examination of Baillie's view on the relationship of paradox to theological truth. Some dangers which threaten the communication of Christian doctrine will also be discussed. The chapters in Part I serve as prolegomena to the major portion of the dissertation, Part II.

Part II, "A Theology for Preaching," will answer the question about the theological content of the Christian message in the sermons. Here, each major doctrine treated

in Baillie's preaching and teaching is examined. Each chapter begins with a statement of the problems for preaching illustrated by the examination of the doctrine under consideration. This is followed by an exposition of the doctrine as it appears in the sermons. The doctrine as it is preached is then compared and contrasted with Baillie's formal treatment of the doctrine, its sources, and its traditional and contemporary expressions, as he taught it to his students and wrote about it in his formal theological works.

In the Conclusion, the results of the research presented in Parts I and II are drawn together into a statement of the method and criteria which lie behind Baillie's presentation of theological themes in preaching. The Conclusion offers some representative criticisms of the points at which Baillie's preaching failed to be consistent with his method and criteria. It also presents a selected summary of some notable examples in which the preaching of Christian doctrine is true to its sources and genuinely reflects and effectively addresses the human experience of those who gather to hear the Gospel proclaimed.

PART I

TOWARD A THEOLOGY FOR PREACHING

Eden Centre

Books

THE SIZE OF A PERSON

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE AND TASK OF THEOLOGY

Baillie approaches his task as a theologian with his feet firmly planted on the soil of the world in which he lives. His theology begins where the objective facts of human existence are informed and given meaning by inward experience; it is based upon the religious consciousness of mankind. "The Christian word for the religious consciousness," he writes, "is faith. So theology means thinking out our faith, or thinking out what we believe."¹ The faith of a Christian is initiated by God and given to man, but the Christian's faith is not a matter of knowing about a remote Being, but a consciousness of the presence and activity of God in the world. The Incarnation in Christ is the keystone in the full arch of Baillie's theological system. The keystone is not an abstract God beyond all reaches of human experience whose Word is immediately grasped in faith; it is God who was Incarnate

¹"What is Theology?," (Book 14), p.2.

in Jesus Christ. This presence and activity of God within the realm of concrete human experience is a criterion for all theological statements about God, but this presence and activity is not limited to the historical past. God is ever present and active in the lives of men and women. Baillie approaches his theological task from the experience of the Word of God incarnate in the faith and life of the Christian community. In point of contrast, Karl Barth's theological system may be called a "Theology of the Word", whereas Baillie's can be called a "Theology of the Word made flesh".¹

Theology is not a disinterested academic discipline. It must be rooted in the experience of the individual and the community in which it is pursued. Based as it is upon faith found in men, theology runs the danger of becoming false to its vocation when the religious consciousness of men is abstracted out of the context in which it is found. Theology cannot legitimately be abstracted out of the persons to whom faith has been given.

The kind of realities of which faith speaks cannot be known at all by a detached objectifying kind of knowledge as from a spectator attitude, but can only be known in a personal commitment, an involvement of the

¹ Baillie owes much to Barth although his theological method is quite different. The contrast of emphases noted is Baillie's own in God Was In Christ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p.53.

whole being in what we seek to know, a kind of "I and Thou" relationship between God and us.

A pre-requisite for the task of theology is faith, faith which is integrally related to human experience. The nature of faith will be discussed in detail in Chapter II.

The word "experience" will appear frequently on the following pages and it will be well to make a preliminary note of the sense in which the term is used. The word "experience" is used to refer to the response which men and women make to the world of people and events around them. The word is used within the context of theological epistemology in contrast to that which is known by a process of speculative conceptualization, i.e. experiential knowledge is distinguished from conceptual knowledge as that which is gained from the actual encounter with persons and events. The adjective "experiential" is used in preference to "existential" because Baillie's thought cannot readily be identified with any formal school of thought which bears the name "existentialism".² For the same reason the adjective "empirical" is not used except with reference to the methodology of natural

¹"What is Theology?," p.9.

²Baillie makes occasional use of the word "existential" in a general sense, but for the most part he uses it with reference to a particular thinker or school of thought, or with a clear explanation of the sense in which the word is being used.

sciences. A full exposition of Baillie's understanding of experience and its relationship to theology is presented in Chapter III.

The word "revelation" is closely related to faith and experience. It is important to see what Baillie does not mean by the term, as well as what he does mean. Revelation does not mean the communication of a set of timeless truths or infallible proof texts. It is not a matter of a simple external authority. "Revelation is something much more direct and practical and personal." As in the case of faith, revelation cannot be abstracted from the persons involved. Revelation is an experiential event in which "God reveals to us not doctrines, but Himself, and a self can only be revealed in some kind of personal relationship."¹ The revealed aspect of the sources of faith is not to be confused with a "Wholly Other" or totally objective "Word". Theology can speak of revelation with intellectual integrity and practical realism because it is firmly grounded within the context from which the theologian speaks. Revelation as a source of faith is rooted in human experience.

¹ "What is Theology?," p.10.

It is through our human personal relationships, with the claims they make upon us that God asserts His claims upon us. It comes to us in that network of personal relationships and that is why there is such a close connection between religion and morality. Our knowledge of God is always of that kind, not, theoretical and detached, but a practical faith.

With the starting point of the theologian's quest for truth grounded in faith which is a matter of practical experience, and the revelational character of his source material established within the context of his human experience, it will be instructive to delineate the relationships and differences which set theology off from other human pursuits after truth; viz. philosophy, science and history.

As to sources, theology is set off from philosophy in that the theologian is committed to a religious tradition whereas the philosopher is not.

Theology, while having no interest in many of the detailed problems that occupy philosophers, has its own task to work out in detail the implications of faith in their bearing on religious life. Therefore theology usually moves mainly within the region of a particular religion, and explicates a faith which has grown up in a particular historical tradition, and thus it is often content with appealing to that tradition and its scriptures and symbols.²

¹ Ibid., p.10.

² "Philosophers and Theologians: an Irenicon," The Expositor, (July, 1923), p.78.

There is a wider area of activity for theologians which stands at the threshold of their specifically theological task. In apologetics the theologian must reckon with sources outside his tradition, and here theology becomes philosophy. The theologian must pass over this threshold with a cogent appreciation of the problems encountered, but his detailed task within the church where theology serves preaching finds its sources primarily within the tradition to which the theologian is committed.

Within the context of Baillie's specifically theological work (e.g. God Was in Christ), he seems to reject philosophical theology yet it is clear that he has not left philosophical categories behind, i.e. categories of thought which are independent of a particular religious tradition. The assertion that "personal relationships can only be expressed paradoxically" is a philosophical assertion which stands close to the center of his theology.¹ The reason for this kind of assertion within the scope of Baillie's specifically theological work must be traced back beyond his source material to his

¹Daniel D. Williams, Review of God Was in Christ. The Chicago Theological Seminary Register, XXXIX, No.1, (January, 1949), p.29.

appreciation of a common epistemological basis for both theology and moral philosophy, i.e. the moral convictions of mankind which are faith oriented experiences.

In so far as theology is an academic discipline in search of truth it is also a scientific discipline. Just as physical sciences describe, explicate, and systematize phenomena which exist and are apprehended by man's sense experience, so theology describes, explicates and systematizes the phenomenon of faith which pervades the whole of human experience, particularly in the realm of personal relationships. Theology has an additional task which does not concern the physical sciences. Theology asks and answers questions about the meaning and purpose of all phenomena which impinge upon human life. In this task theology must take seriously findings in the fields of physical and natural sciences. One example of such findings which Baillie finds particularly valuable is the psychologist's explication of the non-rational factors which influence religious life and theological thought. The impact of this finding will be examined in connection with the relationship of theology to tradition and authority.¹

¹Infra, pp. 35ff.

A real difficulty which theology encounters is the temptation to generalize the method of scientific investigation which is applicable only in the physical and natural sciences. "This is not so much by way of conscious theory, but a habit of mind [which] assumes that anything that can't be dealt with in measurable quantities in a laboratory is not real."¹ This method of investigation is inappropriate in theology as it is in aesthetics, and matters of moral and personal concern.

In each of us there are two poles of thought orientation which must be considered in a discussion of theological epistemology. The first is the scientific conscience, the habit of thought conditioned by the empirical methods of natural science and a distrust of wishful thinking and the unconscious motives which psychology has illuminated for us. We are not the rational beings we once thought we were, but the scientific conscience makes us skeptical of all non-rational approaches to knowledge. This can be a salutary check on the temptation to make religion a world of fantasy into which we can escape. The second pole of thought is the constraint to believe, which is not a function of the

¹"The Ground for Belief in the Chaos of Thought," Swanwick Lectures, 1948 (Book 41), p.6.

will (as opposed to William James' analysis). The constraint to believe is that part of each of us which knows that there are realities which involve each of us in this world—realities which transcend our rational capacities of analysis and description. We know we are forced into the use of language which is symbolic. We are constrained to believe in self transcending realities which involve each of us. Revelation makes its claim above the scientific conscience although it must be reconciled to the scientific conscience by rational man. This is part of the task of theology, a part made necessary by the scientific conscience. Unlike the natural scientist, the theologian in his workshop must consider both poles of thought. A dominance of the scientific conscience at the expense of the constraint to believe will lead to religious habit of mind characterized by the "cult of seekers". Here the search for religious truth becomes the end in itself and the futility of this attitude is evident in that the truth is denied as a possibility. A dominance of mere belief, on the other hand, can lead to obscurantism and a denial of the universal claim of the Christian religion upon all men who, be they simple rustics or sophisticated intellectuals, exist within a framework of thought embodying the constraint to believe

as well as a scientific conscience.¹

The nature of the theologian's subject matter involves a meeting between the objective realities of his source material and the subjective apprehension of these realities. Theology must be carried on with an "existential attitude of commitment". This means that

theology cannot properly be studied from the spectator attitude, because it deals with a kind of truth which we cannot begin to apprehend until we are at least to some extent apprehended by it in heart and life. That does not mean that theology is not to be studied scientifically, but rather that from the nature of its subject matter, it would be unscientific to try to study it from the outside, with what you might call a laboratory method and a secularly disinterested mind.

Thus theology is a science with a methodology true to its subject matter. Yet its subject matter is more than the subject matter of natural science. Theology is set off from the physical and natural sciences by virtue of its requisite attitude of commitment, not only to its subject matter but also to the community of persons which shares a similar commitment.

If all religious knowledge depends on the existential attitude of commitment, all true Christian knowledge of God is bound up with a corporate existential attitude in which the I-Thou relationship with God is inseparable from the I-Thou relationship

¹"Science and Religion", in To Whom Shall We Go? (Edinburgh: The St. Andrew Press, 1955), pp. 166-172.

²"Theology in the World Church" (Book 74), p.26.

with our fellows and in a very special way with our fellow Christians in the Church.

Theology is responsible to a community, not just on the basis of a common knowledge of objective criteria alone as is the case within the community of natural or physical sciences, but on the basis of an attitude of the persons within the community which determines their apprehension of their subject matter, a subject matter which speaks not only to their relationship to objective criteria but also, and more importantly, to their relationship to each other. It must be remembered that a scientific community is made up of scientists who are persons in a community. Their existence in a community involves moral commitments in the interests of scientific integrity and a faith commitment to the order of their subject matter in relation to their investigations. Thus, as a person in a community, the life of the scientist cannot be wholly abstracted from commitments which are akin to a religious consciousness. Although the technical methods of scientific investigation do differ from theological methodology, the scientist and the theologian meet on common ground as persons with commitments which transcend the empirical investigations of the

¹Ibid., p. 29.

scientist but which are part of the subject matter of theology.

Christian theology and history are much more closely related as academic disciplines. Theology itself is a function of history in that the Christian message is ever undergoing change in order to bring the Gospel to bear on changing historical circumstances. And Christian theology is grounded in historical events.

Christianity is not simply a system of general timeless truths, but a story of something that happens in history. Certainly the beginning of the story lies away back beyond history altogether and can only be told in symbolical terms . . . in the myth of the creation. And also the end of the story, lying in the dim future can only be spoken of in symbolical terms such as you find in the Book of Revelation. But the middle part of the story is nailed down to earth and runs through history, and the central chapter is about an historical person, Jesus Christ, who lived in a particular country at a particular time and was 'crucified under Pontius Pilate'. That is the very nature of Christianity as an historical religion.

History is a process of events and a story of that process. We are beginning to see that even scientific history and the sacred history of Christian theology are more closely related than was once thought. Sacred history involves the faith of the one who tells the story; but can faith, or a particular attitude of commitment, be separated from any study of history? Baillie

¹"What is Theology?," p. 17.

criticizes Brunner for having a too limited view of scientific history where he conceives of the historical picture of Jesus which historical sciences give us as a photograph.

By a historical picture Brunner means the 'photographic' kind of portrait which would of necessity leave the deepest things out:

History is never of this photographic kind, it is more like a portrait where the interpretive skill of the artist plays an important role.

History itself is not a purely impartial science without any presuppositions or any personal involvement. What the historian finds in the facts depends partly on what he brings to the facts.²

The theologian is dependent on historical investigation for the sources of his study, but the history which is useful to the Christian theologian is history viewed with

¹ God Was in Christ, p.47. The criticism is leveled at Brunner's contention that the Johannine picture of Christ is of no use to the historian because it is not 'photographic'. The Mediator, transl. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934), p. 185.

Brunner has since written of Baillie's criticism: "What he says with regard to my book The Mediator (first published twenty years ago) I have been telling my students for a good many years: that my book does not give the gospel story and the Jesus-picture of the synoptic gospels their due place." Emil Brunner, Review of God Was in Christ, Christian News Letter (21 July, 1948), p. 9.

² "What is Theology?," p. 18.

the attitude of commitment to the central event in history, viz. Jesus Christ.

It is impossible to have a genuine knowledge of such an historical phenomenon from a purely detached attitude: you can have it only if you get into an existential attitude to it. In that sense faith comes into the process even of historical study, and a historical study of Jesus Christ made from an utterly detached point of view would not even be good history.

This is not to say that the historian must incorporate extra-historical criteria into his study of human history. History which is useful to the theologian is history grounded in human events.

It is true in a sense that the science of history cannot directly introduce the supramundane and the divine into its nexus of causes and effects, cannot penetrate into a suprahistorical dimension. In that sense the 'historical' is the 'human'; the sphere of history is the life of man, the dimension of humanity.²

But within this human realm the historian views events from a perspective or vantage point,

history remains a vast and undifferentiated chaos of non-significant detail unless we approach it with some principle of selection, some interest, some questions to ask, and therefore some values to dictate the questions.³

Both the historian and the theologian say that something significant happens in history, something in which they are involved. The historian may bring to bear

¹ Ibid., p. 19.

² God Was in Christ, p. 47.

³ Ibid., p. 73.

a different faith from that of the Christian theologian. He may view history with the questions raised by a belief in economic determinism or any variety of different perspectives. But the disciplines of theology and history are similar in that the questions asked of historical events are conditioned by an attitude of commitment.

Not only is the theologian intimately involved with historical events, but these historical events have a meaning, a direction and a goal.

Christian theology teaches that human history is leading to a goal on which its meaning depends. It rejects the ancient cyclic view of history and it also maintains that the evolutionary view of history, however much truth it may have on its own level, does not go deep enough and is misleading if it is taken as the whole truth.¹

But the theologian's interest in the meaning of history has in recent years become an increasing interest of scientific historians as well. The interest of the historian has increasingly been focused on studies which seek to explicate the meaning of history. Citing the recent works of men such as Arnold Toynbee and Herbert Butterfield, Baillie asks;

What is history? We used to think we knew. But now we are not so sure--not so sure even as to what we are trying to do when we are studying (or teaching)

¹"What is Theology?," p. 20.

history. And surely this new questioning is due to a new suspicion that the study of history is not purely a matter of taking up a detached attitude and studying a mass of data, but is something much more existentialist, in the sense that it depends in a measure on the historian's whole philosophy of life--that is on his faith. That is where the historian and the theologian are meeting each other today.

Historical method and theological method are very closely related. In both cases one is dealing with more than a mere array of data but also with an insight with which one meets the persons involved in the events under consideration. This insight has the character of personal concern or commitment to the persons met in history, and also the sense of purpose in the process of events. In short, historical studies and theological investigations are true to their subject matter when the element of faith is recognized as an essential factor conditioning what is said about historical events. The sacred history which comprises the subject matter of theology is not a speculative matter of suprahistorical events as much as it is the insight that God is at work in and through the events of concrete human history. The focal point in history which is determinative for this insight is the Incarnation. Human history thus becomes

¹Ibid., p. 21.

a 'story with a plot', not a story about events which totally transcend human experience, nor a story of progressive human evolution or advance toward some transcendent reality, but a story of human events in time and divine action through these events. The story begins before history with the creation myths and ends after history in mythical language relating to the final consummation. But the center of the story and its determinative point for Christian theology is rooted in the event of Jesus Christ; an historical event in the fullest sense of the term.

Faith is not wholly dependent on history, but theology which articulates the meaning of the faith by speaking of concrete historical events.

Theology means thinking out what we believe and articulating our thought by means of human language. This language not only speaks of historical events, it is itself conditioned by history.

To say that theological language is conditioned by history is to say that in different times and in different contexts, particular words and formulations have different meanings. Our task as theologians is not so much to abandon old words and phrases but to find out what these words and phrases mean then present the church

with constructively interpretative translations of terms which have lost their intended meaning. The assertion that we need only to repeat old Biblical language and creedal formulations, taking them at what seems to be face value, is a dangerous assertion, one very often destined to obscure the very content of the faith we intend to proclaim. Baillie speaks of the historical conditioning of language and gives, by way of illustration, the changing use of key words in the history surrounding the development of the Nicene Creed.

The word homo-ousios, which was the main battleground, was even in those days a difficult and dangerous word. At the Nicene Council it was, with the aid of a certain amount of political pressure, made the hall-mark of orthodoxy, and Athanasius stood for it against the world. And yet at an earlier Council that very word had been condemned as heretical. When Paul of Samosata used that word it was rejected and condemned by the Council of Antioch in A.D. 269. Yet it was adopted as a watch-word by the great Nicene Council in 325! "Yes," says my orthodox opponent, "but in a different sense and context." Precisely. That is just what I am pointing out: that the words of the famous definition are not, any more than any other words, immune against change and misunderstanding, that it is vain to say we believe these things to be true unless we know what we mean by them.

The meaning of language does change and it is a task for theology to preserve the intended meaning of its doctrinal

¹"The Meaning of the Nicene Controversy for Today," (Envelope 75) p. 2-3.

formulations in each new generation.

But the task of the theologian is not simply to create a new language for presenting Christian doctrine while condemning to death ways of speaking which appear to be meaningless in the present context of human experience.

It is impossible to distinguish what is living and what is dead in Christianity by selecting some doctrines and dropping others. You cannot do that because of the unity of 'the organism of Christian truth'.

The appreciation of Christian doctrine as an organic whole is fundamental to Baillio's theological method. As in the case where the theologian listens to the voices of science, philosophy and non-Christian religions, the process by which he hears and learns from them is not an eclectic or syncretic process at the expense of the organic wholeness of Christian doctrine; so too within the tradition, "the Christian religion cannot be regarded as a collection of doctrines which may be treated eclectically, so that some may be taken and others left."²

Christian use of language to describe faith is an attempt to articulate an integrated view of God's activity among

¹"What is Dead and What is Living in Christianity", Out of Nazareth (Edinburgh; The St. Andrew Press, 1958), p.152.

²Ibid., p. 147.

men in all aspects of human experience and throughout all ages. To a large extent each doctrine implies and is implied by the others. This is true of each doctrine in any integrated theological system; it is also true of the relationship of contemporary formulations to historic formulations of the Church. Historical circumstances alter the questions men ask and the language with which they seek to articulate their answers; Christian theology is dependent upon an examination of the historic definitions in the light of the questions asked at the time of their formulation.

To return to the sense in which the language of theology is historical by virtue of the fact that it speaks of historical events, it is important to see that theological language is both historical and symbolic. When we speak of events in history (e.g. the Incarnation) our language is historical. When we speak of supra-historical events (e.g. the Creation and the Fall) we are using symbolic language. These two types of language are both necessary, neither can be discarded in favor of the other.

Attempts have been made in the history of theological thought to eliminate the historical language by saying that the historical events of which we speak are

only symbols of timeless truths which transcend history. This attempt to eliminate historical language was developed by some 'Hegelians of the left', most notably in David Friedrich Strauss. For Strauss, historical fact did not matter, only timeless truths, so all theological language was reduced to only symbolic utterances about God and man. The difficulty with this procedure lies in the fact that Christianity is reduced to a conceptual pattern of timeless truths with no objective basis. "It might indeed be said that the authentic Christian message is not a system of timeless truths, but a story, and . . . a story with a plot."¹ The language of Christian theology must take time and history seriously because it speaks "not only about what God is, but about what He does and has done--what he did on the hard soil of terrestrial history 'under Pontius Pilate'."² Language grounded in human history is essential for theology.

On the other hand symbolic or mythical language cannot be eliminated. In a sense all words are symbols because they point to something other than themselves. The difference between "historical" language and "symbolic" language is that the former points to events

¹Ibid., p. 153.

²Ibid., p. 154.

within history and the latter to supra-historical realities. But the distinguishing feature of symbolic language or myths which are legitimate in theology is that these symbols point to realities which, although not historical, are inextricably related to human experience in history. The Fall of Man

is the kind of thing that can only be described in a 'myth', since we cannot conceive it as an event that occurred at a particular date in human history on earth, but as something supra-historical, infecting all our history.

Such a myth cannot be understood historically and neither can it be understood conceptually. Conceptual language implies timeless truths which operated independently from human existence and as such have no place in Christian theology. To say that such a myth is inextricably related to human existence does not mean that it is merely a description of a man's existence as it is related solely to his own life as an historical event.

Such a myth can be understood only in our 'existential' relation to God (the God who, as Martin Buber says, "cannot be expressed, but can only be addressed"); but this seems to me to be different from saying with Bultmann that myth must be interpreted existentially as an understanding of our own human existence.

¹God Was in Christ, p.204.

²Ibid., p.216.

Where Bultmann, in the interests of communicating the Gospel in meaningful terms to a generation which no longer accepts the three-storied universe and the cosmology of the Biblical writers as literal fact, seeks to demythologize the Christian message; Baillie sees the possibility of accepting these myths as myths, yet retaining them as valid expressions of religious truth understood by man in his existential relationship to God. Where Bultmann defines myths as the "attempt on the part of ancient man to interpret to himself his own human existence", Baillie would make the distinction that "the ancient myths were to men who believed them an instrument or an expression of their understanding of their own existence."¹

This is not to reject Bultmann's views of myth on the same grounds as Karl Barth. Barth errs in the other direction.

Barth regards myth as a symbolical way of representing general timeless, perhaps cosmological truth about the universe. Thus to him the idea of a Christian mythology savours of the error of regarding Christianity as a set of eternal truths which have no relation to historical happenings, an essence of truth to which the questions of the factual truth of the story is irrelevant.²

¹ Ibid., p. 214.

² Ibid., p. 215.

But this is not the nature of myth properly understood. Myths for ancient man as well as for man today can be more than abstract metaphysical assertions, or statements primarily relative to a conception of cosmology. Barth, with his limited view of myth "maintains that there is no mythology in the New Testament."¹ But without forgetting the historical character of Christianity, we must also remember that much of what the Bible says and much of what we say is supra-historical while at the same time involving our day to day relationship with God and fellowman. Such supra-historical myths, although they may require interpretation, cannot be discounted as valid modes of expression (Bultmann), nor can their existence in the Bible and legitimate theology be denied (Barth).

Baillie maintains that "there is an element of mythology in the Christian message and also that it needs to be interpreted."² Although rejecting Barth's denial of myth, and Bultmann's attempt to purge the Gospel of its mythological elements, Baillie is keenly aware of the difficulties involved in understanding the symbolic language of the Christian message. This language needs to be interpreted.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 218.

The interpretation must be along the line of "existential thinking" in the broad sense of that term. It is just because God cannot be fully conceptualized, cannot be known except in the "existential" relationship of I and Thou, that we must use symbolical ("mythological") terms when we speak of him, and these symbols can be interpreted to us only by the actual "existential" encounter to which they point the way. But theology and the Church can help in that process; and that is what Bultmann is so deeply concerned to do for modern man. . . . We must sympathise deeply with his concern for the interpretation and communication of the Gospel in terms which will be meaningful to modern man.

The language of theology which serves preaching is both historical and symbolical. Neither mode of articulation can be eliminated, denied or confused with the other. Both must be presented in a way that makes it clear which mode is being used in a given context. Both types of language can be understood because both reflect and address human experience. Both types of language are necessary for the task of presenting an integrated and systematic interpretation of the whole of human experience.

¹Ibid.

CHAPTER II

FAITH

Faith is the basis of theology. A firm grasp of what is meant by the term is essential to all that will be said about a theology for preaching. Faith was the subject of Baillie's first book, Faith in God and Its Christian Consummation. The exposition of his thought in this chapter and the next is made with primary reference to this work.

Beginning at the point where faith is encountered as a part of human experience, Baillie defines faith as

an attitude of mind, a temper, a disposition, a resolution, and yet also a cognition with an objective reference to truth and reality; a kind of knowledge, perhaps, but a special kind, independent of some of the conditions of ordinary scientific knowledge, and with special conditions of its own; a moral and practical thing, and yet more than moral and practical, taking us into still deeper mysteries, and being identical with the essence of religion.

¹Faith in God and its Christian Consummation, The Kerr Lectures for 1926 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1927), p. 51.

Characteristic of his theological method, Baillie introduces the subject from the perspective of human experience. Faith is an attitude of mind with objective reference to the practical realities and demands of human experience.

Faith cannot be explained as the result of the external authority of tradition alone. The authority of tradition, or the power of religious or cultural suggestion cannot afford the basis for faith alone because much that we experience in life contradicts a primitive credulity in a God who is loving and just. "Life does not look as if it were being ordered by Infinite Love, and it is hard to believe. There is surely here a deeper insight which cannot be reduced to mere suggestion."¹ The strength of faith is a function of an inner conviction which addresses itself to traditional authority, be it the Church or the Scriptures. Faith rests in a "Word of God" which must be distinguished from the word of the Church or the "mere letter of the Bible taken as a unique, homogeneous and infallible whole."² There is an

¹ Ibid., p. 63.

² Ibid., p. 65.

element of "inspiration", or as the Quakers put it, an "inner light", or as traditional theology puts it the inward action of the Holy Spirit, "without which . . . there cannot, as Pascal said, be true (Christian) faith at all."¹ "The ultimate judgement of faith is something deeper than any influence of authority, tradition or custom."²

Although faith, which lies at the heart of theology and preaching, is "something deeper than any influence of authority, tradition or custom," it will be well to pause for a moment to explore the important part which authority does play in the matter of faith. In an essay on the authority of the Church in matters of belief, Baillie weighs this issue extending it directly into the matter of authority in preaching.³

There has been a very real attraction in the Roman Church for thinking men and women who have missed the note of authority in matters of belief in Protestan-

¹ Ibid. Baillie cites with appreciation the emphasis of George Fox upon the inward witness which is present in every believer and adds; "This was of course heresy at that time, and yet it was a deep (if one sided) truth which lay half concealed at the very heart of orthodoxy, setting a limit to mere outward authority, and teaching the faith of the individual to have an inner argument all of its own." p. 66.

² Ibid., p. 65.

³ "Authority in the Church" (Book 31).

tism. The note of authority meets a real human need

amid the uncertainties of the world and the welter of conflicting beliefs, to have a completely authoritative church from which you can take your beliefs absolutely on trust, so that you are relieved of all the worry and responsibility of finding the truth for yourself.¹

Noting a marked flow of intellectuals away from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism (Newman and Manning in the days of the Oxford movement, Chesterton, Ronald Knox, W. B. Orchard, etc. more recently), Baillie offers no simple reason for this flow, but suggests that one factor may be the "new uncertainty about the authority of the Bible."² The impact of higher criticism with its invaluable insights has knocked the pinnings out from under a rigidly authoritarian and literalistic view of the Scriptures. This has been particularly felt in the Protestant churches. To many, the alternatives were drawn in near absolute terms; either

reliance on the private judgement of the individual, the inner light, the response of the heart to various elements in Scripture, and thus a very fragmentary and individualistic version of the testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum, a very subjective standard indeed. Or on the other hand a return to the authoritarian Church, which can tell us what to believe.³

¹Ibid., p. 3.

²Ibid., p. 5.

³Ibid., p. 7.

To many who found their final authority in the Bible questioned, the Church offered the only viable alternative for a faith with any degree of objectivity. The Roman Church, far from questioning the authority of the Bible, gives us the assurance that the Bible is the Word of God.

For the Roman Catholic, the Bible does not derive its authority from the Church; however, the Church confirms its authority for the believer. In a sympathetic illustration Baillie points out the Roman Catholic understanding of the authority of the Bible in relation to the believer by way of the confirming authority of the Church.

Let us imagine a little boy left in this country in charge of a nurse while his parents are in India. One day a letter comes to the boy from his father, with the somewhat unexpected instructions that he is now to go to India to join his parents. When the letter comes, the nurse who is a tried and faithful friend, gives it to the boy, for he has now learnt to read. He reads it, and understands the message, though the nurse has to help him understand the more difficult sentences. The sense is clear, there is no mistake about its main purport; he is to go off to India. So the letter says. Yes—but, is this letter really from his father? How can he be sure? He does not know his father's handwriting. No, but his nurse tells him. She knows his father's handwriting well, and she tells him, "That is a letter from your father". And because he completely trusts his nurse, he accepts the letter on her authority as his father's letter, and that is the end of the matter, he is ready to obey it. That does not mean that the father's letter has derived its authority

from the nurse. The authority of the father is far above the nurse. The father's word is paramount, and yet the nurse's testimony was necessary to authenticate the letter.

This is the Roman understanding of authority at its best. The Church is "wholly dependent on the word of God, but we are wholly dependent on the Church for our belief in it and our understanding of it."²

This is not to say that the Catholic knows nothing of the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. The very acceptance, in some cases deliberate choice, of the authority of the Church is a "leap of faith", or the "divine gift of faith".

And on the other hand, the Protestant, however strongly he stresses the inward witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the individual does not and cannot get away from the authority of the Church.³

From the facts of our life in this world, it is rather abstract and academic to speak of our choice of a faith or a Church. To be honest about the matter, most of us find ourselves in the Church of our fathers'. And in general this is a wholesome and right thing. We should only uproot ourselves from our tradition to choose another under the most extreme conditions of urgency and conviction. We must remember these real reasons for the faith we hold. We do not choose our belief as individuals

¹Ibid., p. 9-10. ²Ibid., p. 11. ³Ibid., p. 12.

in a vacuum. "It would be much truer to say that our beliefs and our Church are chosen for us, or rather determined for us by our birth and upbringing."¹ Thus the Church does constitute, to a degree, an authority for the faith we proclaim. It is not a blind belief in such an external authority alone, for life does not directly corroborate the suggestion of the Church and environmental influences often counter the faith of the Church to the extent that a deeper inward conviction emerges.² A believer,

if he is truly and deeply Christian, has a direct knowledge of religious truth, a reason of the heart, an inward witness of the Holy Spirit, by which he lays hold of truth for himself, though the particular form in which the truth comes to him is largely determined by his tradition, his upbringing and environment--in short by the authority of the Church.³

Taking seriously the experiential realities which make up our life, its choices and beliefs, it is impossible to deny the determinative, although not absolute, authority of the Church. What is the nature of this authority?

The whole problem of authority is the problem of striking the right balance between absolute authority on the one hand and individualistic repudiation of all authority on the other.⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 14.

² Supra, p. 35.

³ "Authority in the Church," p. 16.

⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

The point at which Protestants have real difficulty with the Roman doctrine, "is that it carries the notion of authority to the pitch of infallibility."¹

This notion of the catholicity of the Church's authority as universally binding its followers to an article of faith, not only has its difficulties in practice, but it is also an improper understanding of the nature of the Church's authority and catholicity in matters of doctrine. Baillie finds a most helpful interpretation of the nature of the Church's authority and catholicity in the Eastern conception of sobornost. From the works of Komiakov and Bulgakov, sobornost is defined as catholicity, "not so much in the quantitative sense of universality as in the qualitative sense of 'togetherness'."² Here the catholicity of the Church is neither authoritarian nor individualistic. There are difficulties in the practice of the Orthodox Church which would hardly be congenial to the Protestant, but the understanding of the catholic authority of the Church as sobornost does point us in the right direction because it describes

a certain combination of authority and freedom, a certain integration of the individual in the fellowship which seems to me to be the only sound way of

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 19.

conceiving the authority of the Church.¹

This too, is the nature of authority in preaching. Merely an authoritative tone, with a dogged, repetitive demand for faith will not awaken genuine faith in the hearer. The authority of the preacher is not the tone of the advertiser who persistently tries to sell his wares.

What does by God's grace evoke genuine faith is the preaching of the Christian message by a Church which really believes it, and through the lips of the preacher who really believes it. The true preacher is not merely repeating an official message of the Church; nor is he merely giving his own private opinions. He is speaking as the believing mouthpiece of a believing Church, witnessing to the Gospel of Christ, witnessing to the Word of God. The preaching of the Word must always be a testimony to the Word, the testimony of a preacher who knows whom he has believed and of a Church which knows whom it has believed.

The words of the preacher are not to be identified as the Word of God. They do not bear the authority of the Word of God as such. They bear the authority of the preacher and his Church. By the same token, the authority of the Church is not the authority of the Word of God as such. It is but the authority of witness to the Word of God.

"Thus ultimately the authority of the Church is the authority of testimony, of corporate Christian witness."³

¹Ibid., p. 21. ²Ibid., p. 23. ³Ibid.

The ultimate authority for the Church and its preaching is the Word of God, but the Word of God may never be identified as either the Bible, the creeds or preaching. These are all but witnesses to the Word. The authority of the Church and the authority of preaching are of the same nature, viz. the authority of a witness bearing testimony to that which he has seen and known and believed.

There is still another way in which the authority of the Church is linked to preaching. It is through what has been traditionally known as the Power of the Keys. Whether the Biblical sources for this teaching¹ are the ipsissima verba of Jesus Christ or not, they have in any case committed the church to a responsibility and a powerful exercise of its authority as a witnessing community to these words. The practice of the Church which has grown out of this teaching is quite varied. In the Roman Church it has given rise to the Sacrament of Penance and Absolution. In the Reformers it came to be exercised

¹"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. 16:19 (RSV) "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, even so send I you. . . . Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." John 20:21-23 (RSV).

under the heading of Ecclesiastical Discipline, but this function of the Church in many Protestant circles has fallen by the wayside. But both Luther and Calvin had some very positive things to say about this responsibility to exercise the Power of the Keys.¹ Perhaps it would be well to recall that, for Calvin at least, we have far more than a mere rejection of the Sacrament of Penance and Absolution, and the Confessional as practiced by the Roman Catholics of the sixteenth century. The place of confession and forgiveness of sins, together with absolution is an important part of the public worship of God for Calvin, but also privately between the parishoner and his minister.

"And so, while we all ought mutually to console and confirm each other in a confidence of the divine mercy, yet we see that ministers are constituted witnesses and surities of it that they may afford our consciences a stronger assurance of the remission of sins, in so much that they themselves are said to remit sins and to loose souls . . . Therefore let every believer remember that it is his duty, if he feels such secret anguish or affliction from a sense of his sins that he cannot extricate himself without exterior aid, not to neglect the remedy offered him by the Lord: which is that in order to alleviate his distress, he should use private confession with his pastor, and to obtain consolation should privately implore his assistance, whose office it is both publicly and privately to comfort the people of God with the doctrine of the Gospel." And again after speaking of absolution in the sense of restoration after

¹"Authority in the Church," pp. 26 ff.

public discipline, Calvin goes on: "Nor is private absolution less efficacious or beneficial when it is requested by those who need a particular remedy for the relief of their infirmities. For it frequently happens that he who hears the general promises which are addressed to the whole congregation of believers nevertheless remains in some suspense, and his mind is still disquieted with doubts of the forgiveness of his sins. The same person, if he discloses to his pastor the secret distress of his mind, and hears the language of the Gospel particularly directed to him, 'Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee', will encourage his mind to an assurance and will be liberated from that trepidation with which he was before disturbed. But when we are treating of the keys we must always be careful not to dream of any power distinct from the preaching of the Gospel . . . All the power of binding and loosing which Christ hath conferred on the Church is inseparable from the Word." (Institutes III, iv, 12-18, IV, 1, 22)¹

"It is quite plain that to Calvin the private absolution given by the minister is simply a special application to an individual of the preaching of the Gospel of forgiveness."² In the exercise of the Power of the Keys, the authority of the Church and of preaching becomes a vital part of the life of faith.

Although faith is "something deeper than the influence of authority", in the context of the life of the believer the authority of the Church and its preaching ministry is an indispensable part of faith. By exercising

¹Ibid., pp. 27-28.

²Ibid., p. 29.

the Power of the Keys, the preacher and pastor is exercising the authority of the Church, viz. the "authority of its witness", and so helping us "to accept forgiveness in full assurance of faith."¹

Thus the problem of authority in the Church is not a matter of accepting an external infallible authority, nor falling into a false individualism. The problem for the Christian in his life of faith is a "matter of taking the Church seriously, as of the very essence of the Gospel because its voice is the corporate witness of the community of Christ's people, which is the Body of Christ, in the life of which we can live the Christian life."²

The nature of authority in the Church is analogous to the confirming testimony of the nurse who assures the boy that the letter and its words of instruction are the words of his father. This authority is exercised by a corporate body as an internal witness (sobornost). The authority of preaching is less an authoritative word to the congregation than it is a witness of and for the Church and the faith of its members. Authority is founded

¹ Ibid., p. 29.

² Ibid., p. 32.

and accepted on the basis of faith. The authority of the Church and its preaching depends on faith.

Theology in its task of articulating the implications of faith makes much use of reason. In order to speak intelligibly to the "scientific conscience", logical demonstrations of the implications of faith are essential. But this is not to say that faith itself is wholly dependent on reason. Faith cannot be reduced to "'reason' in the sense of logical demonstrations from natural facts."¹

Why is it impossible to reduce faith to a function of natural reason? The phenomenon of faith exists in men who possess extremely varied capacities for exercising the intricacies of reasoned theological argument. Faith cannot be dependent on the intellectual function of reason, because faith claims not only the intellectually sophisticated but also the simple religious man. Faith is not determined by the reasoning capacities of Christians. "Reason, in the sense of logical demonstration, is insufficient to explain the faith" of either the learned intellectual or the simple religious mind.²

¹Faith in God, p. 54.

²Ibid., p. 67.

Tracing the development of the relationship between faith and reason, Baillie comes to Kant who definitively argued that faith "cannot be reduced to a piece of purely logical demonstration."¹ Demolishing the three traditional proofs for the existence of God which claimed "natural reason" as their basis, Kant has raised for future generations a serious question as to possibility of claiming "natural reason" as a basis for faith. Baillie concludes his survey with Bertrand Russell, who though not a friend of theology and more particularly any "philosophy which bases its conclusions on anything like mystical intuitions or ethical convictions and demands--we might say on faith;" nevertheless makes a legitimately limited claim as to the kind of knowledge which his own "scientific philosophy" can yield. Such a philosophy "can never give us any light upon the great questions of human interest at all". When philosophy offers any sort of theistic or idealistic conclusions it is no longer being impartial or true to "scientific method."²

Mr. Russell here seems to bring against philosophy, as usually practiced, the same kind of charge which philosophy itself has sometimes brought against theology--that it is not scientifically impartial. But

¹Ibid., p. 69.

²Ibid., p. 72.

the kind of impartiality which he desires, the "scientific method" which he advocates, is really identical in principle with "reason" (in the sense of logical demonstration from the observed facts of the world) which the theism and idealism of today are frankly acknowledging to be too narrow a basis. . . . Philosophy which leads up to God turns out, to be based ultimately upon an assumption of faith.¹

On the one hand, faith cannot be reduced to reason, the exercise of which is not within the capacities of the simplest religious mind. On the other hand, faith is not antithetical to reason; faith for the rational man in search of answers to the great questions of human interest and experience is the "highest exercise of reason".²

¹Ibid., p. 73.

²Ibid., p. 77.

CHAPTER III

EXPERIENCE AND FAITH

What of religious experience? Can this be offered as a criterion for faith? Do we believe on the basis of religious experience?¹

The theological analysis of the relation of belief to experience in pre-nineteenth century Roman and Protestant orthodoxy generally took the view that belief was logically prior to religious experience. Belief in the authority of Scripture or tradition (although dependent on the work of the Spirit) was often thought to be a logical prerequisite for religious experience. This ordering is also seen in the Lutheran analysis of notitia, assensus and fiducia, where knowledge and assent to religious truth precedes saving faith, or the actual experience of faith. So too in rationalist theology, except here the authority is reason or nature rather than Scripture and tradition.

¹The following analysis is based upon, "What is the 'Theology of Experience'?", The Expositor, (January, 1920).

Schleiermacher, speaking of religious experience as the "feeling of absolute dependence", developed his thesis in opposition to the traditional orthodox analysis of belief preceding experience. His thesis was intended to oppose the view that the feeling of absolute dependence was itself conditioned by some previous knowledge about God. (Glaubenslehre, i,4) In this development, religious experience became understood as the basis or criterion for doctrine and the content of faith. Religious experience assumed a priority in sequence to belief.

Baillie takes issue with both analyses because he sees in them a serious confusion of the relationship between belief and religious experience and a very muddled abstraction of the word 'experience' among many followers of both camps, but particularly those who follow Schleiermacher.

Analyses which place either belief or religious experience in a position of priority are false. The two are inextricably interwoven with each other.

All the possible religious experiences which a man may have are bound up with a believing attitude of his mind.

¹Ibid., p. 69.

On the other hand no conceivable experience can have religious dimensions if no element of belief is present.

When a religious man in some hour of sorrow experiences God's comforting, that means that he believes in and by faith rests upon God's love and wisdom.

On the other hand belief cannot rest on the external authority of the Church or the Bible, or on an external abstraction of nature or reason. These phenomena must be corroborated by experience. In short "the experience and the belief are one."²

The inseparable character of faith and religious experience is further emphasized by an examination of the source of religious knowledge. Attempts to isolate experience as the basis of epistemology fall into the old empiricist controversy in which sense data is conceived as a purely given experience. Such an abstraction of experience fails to recognize the mind's contribution to the experience, i.e. perception. Knowledge truly comes, not from experience but in experience, in experience where mind and data meet. The perceptual function of the mind in this meeting is a judgement cast upon the sense data. As the epistemology of the empiricist involves a process of perceptual judgement, religious knowledge involves a process of faith-judgement. Religious knowledge, the

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 71.

epistemological dimension of theology, is a function of faith-experience. What of communicating this religious knowledge to one who claims no faith?

The truths of religion cannot even be understood, much less assented to, by an irreligious man. There is in them an incommunicable element which can only be symbolized by dogmas, however excellent, and which is only apprehended in the actual experience of religion, i.e. in personal religious faith.¹

We may draw from this analysis that when we say that the language of preaching must reflect the experience of the hearers, we do not mean merely general experience abstracted from the context of faith. The language of preaching must not merely reflect the words of the Bible or the words of the Church's teaching (doctrine). It must not merely reflect the abstracted sense data gained from nature. The language of preaching must do all this and more; it must reflect the experience of the hearer when he has met these phenomena in faith.

When the nature of religious experience is rightly understood within the context of faith and experience, then we may say that theology is based on religious experience.

That means simply that the ultimate source and norm of our theology must not be found in any external authority nor in general principles, but in the religious

¹ Ibid., p. 73.

life, in the realm of religion, (scriptures and creeds being used as the outstanding evidences of the contents of that realm). But if this is the meaning of the statement that theology must be based upon religious experience, it might equally well be expressed by saying that theology must be based upon religious belief or religious faith.

When we say that faith is the basis of theology which serves preaching we mean faith as it is a part of experience. As the basis of theology, one cannot be abstracted from the other.

With faith-experience as its basis, what is the task of theology?

The task of theology is to analyse religious experience (which, as we saw is a faith-process), discover the doctrines which are inherent in it, and reduce them, as far as possible to a system. Just as natural science analyses sense-experience and reduces to a system the perceptual judgements . . . which compose it; just as ethics analyses our moral judgements which are inherent in it; just as aesthetics analyses our experience of beauty and reduces its artistic judgements to a system; so theology has to analyse our religious experience (our faith), and state as clearly as possible the beliefs which are inherent in it.

In the broad sense of the word, the method of theology is akin to the method of other disciplines, but its criteria are different. The criteria for theology are found within the faith-experience which it seeks to analyse and systematize. The language of theology is in this

¹Ibid., p. 74.

²Ibid., p. 74-75.

regard peculiar to the function which it serves. It would be false to attempt to impose a category of meaningfulness from another discipline upon the use of language in theology. The language of theology must be translated when it is preached but this does not mean that either theology or preaching can speak meaningfully to one who denies the existence of faith or religious conviction.

Baillie offers a strong word of caution to those who over-estimate the value of psychological language in communicating the Christian faith. Greatly indebted as we are to the insights of psychological research, it is false to draw the conclusion that this must be the new language of theology. Since William James' essayed to base religious belief upon an empirical psychological investigation of the religious experience of mankind, the further insights of psychology itself have made this approach to faith rather tenuous. Neither psychology nor theology would care to advance the thesis that the inner arguments of faith can be proved or demonstrated by such an empirical investigation. Faith explained in totally psychological language can easily be explained away. It is helpful to realize that much of our thought about God is a projection of human need, but it is false to rest on the assumption that there is not more to the God of faith. This sort of argument runs into the same problem of iso-

lating experience from faith, for "faith and religious experience are one and the same thing."¹

Theology is indeed informed by external disciplines. Its own insights can be greatly illuminated by the language of sociological and psychological sciences, but its definitive criteria come from a particular kind of experience and therefore its language can only be understood on the ground of faith conviction.

The true theology of experience does not attempt to prove the truths of religion to the outsider. It appeals only to moral and religious conviction. It takes its stand not without but within the religious life. Accepting the realm of religion as a real realm it endeavours to determine by a process of immanent criticism what the truth of religion at each point really is, what genuine religion has to say. Thus the true theology bases itself on religious experience in the sense that it sets itself simply to discover and formulate and systematize the judgements which faith is constrained to make.²

Theology and the preaching it serves are rightly focused, not on general truth or experience, but on the specific truth of faith-experience.

What are the criteria by which theology can analyse and criticize faith-experience? What is the nature of the meeting between faith and experience?

¹Faith in God, p. 117.

²"What is the Theology of Experience," The Expositor, p. 77.

It is important to recall that the experiential basis for theology is not to be confused with the sort of experience which was analysed by William James, in The Varieties of Religious Experience. James gathered together an array of psychological data and then by way of empirical evaluation sought to demonstrate where this data did, and did not justify a hypothesis of a divine being or beings. He was attempting a new kind of natural theology in which religious conclusions could be reached by the isolated analysis of natural data alone. Psychological facts, in and of themselves, do not yield legitimate religious conclusions. Experience based theology is distinguished from James' empirical method in that

it adopts not the external standpoint of the psychologist, but frankly the standpoint of the religious man who knows religion is true. Its task is not to examine or prove the reality of that whole realm for the 'impartial' observer, but simply to let religion speak, and make its authentic voice articulate. It starts with the assumption that religious experience speaks truth, if only one could separate out the genuine religious experience from all the spurious elements which get mixed up with it--which indeed is the task of theology.

How does theology go about the critical analysis of religious experience? The method involves two steps:

¹"Philosophers and Theologians: an Irenicon," The Expositor, p. 66.

(1) the correlation of what is believed about experience with experience itself, and (2) the correlation of the resultant statements about faith-experience with the moral convictions of the religious man which are informed by the demands of love.

(1) Religious experience is

fundamentally a matter of believing. It is by believing in God that we experience Him. And so the task of theology would be to find out by examination of religious experience what it is precisely that the religious man believes, to exhibit that faith which is in the experience. Theology starts with the assumption that this religious believing is fundamentally right. Only the real element of religious believing gets mixed up with all sorts of pseudo beliefs which are wrong inferences or inherited dogmas, and so a man may think he is experiencing things which do not correspond at all to his real religious experience.

This is why it is necessary to undertake the task of theology. If theology is to be true to its calling, and true to the service of preaching, it must endeavour to correlate the faith with the experience which make up the faith-experience upon which it is based. The task of critical theology is to

discover what religious experience really indicates, what the 'believer' really fundamentally believes, or, in other words, to explicate and apply to all relevant problems the essential conviction which we call faith.

To say that the ongoing task of theology is based on faith-experience

simply means that it is to the experience of religious men and women that it goes in order to discover what this faith has to say.

(2) The religious experience of men and women has at its heart not a mere vague feeling of dependence or awe or the like. These are a part of it, but at its heart there lies a concrete conviction of faith with which experience is met.

The fundamental conviction of religious faith is that goodness must somehow be at the heart of things, and it is through goodness and the endeavour after it that the conviction comes. Of course the germ of this idea may be found in various parts of scripture, most notably in the famous Johannine text: "If any one wills to do God's will, he shall know concerning the doctrine." But it has become a clear and familiar idea only in modern times, and especially in the perplexed nineteenth century which had such practical need of it. You find a classic popular expression of it in F. W. Robertson's well-known sermon (preached in 1851) on the above text, entitled "Obedience, the Organ of Spiritual Knowledge".²

It is important to note in passing that Baillie here gives us a concrete example of the sources which a theologian may find authoritative as criteria for the development of theological thought. The Scriptures provide a foundation source for the faith-experience of mankind, so too does the contemporary expression of this faith-experience, i.e. a sermon.

¹ Ibid., pp. 66-67.

² Ibid., p. 68, F. W. Robertson's sermon in, Sermons on Religion & Life (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1906), pp. 127-136.

The conviction which is found to emerge from this analysis is basically a moral conviction, but this is also a religious conviction.

When a man is loyal to his moral conviction, he finds it becoming also a religious conviction or faith that goodness is at the heart of the universe. You may call it an ethical demand or a moral postulate, but that is the seed of faith which, feeding upon the experience of life and the testimony and inspiration of history and the Church (and most especially, a Christian would say, of the teaching and personality of Jesus Christ), grows into the great tree of religious life, the religious experience.

This emphasis upon the nature of faith-experience as resting to a large extent on a moral conviction, a conviction of faith which confronts the demands of experience, has come to the fore in theological thinking since the awareness that faith could not be based upon an absolutely authoritative and infallible book or Church. This basic conviction of faith or trust is inevitably essential to the acceptance of the authority of Scripture and tradition. The moral conviction of religious experience is a fundamental criterion for theology.

The pursuit of the moral conviction which lies at the heart of faith involves the exercise of the will, but does this mean that faith stems from the will? Baillie contends that, although the will of man plays an important

¹ Ibid., p. 69.

part in the life of faith, it can in no wise be thought of as the cause of faith. Faith is not the product of the will to believe, not so much because this is a denial of the essence of faith as something which comes to man from outside himself, a gift from God, but because it is impossible to consciously will to believe. A man cannot voluntarily force himself to believe in the existence of a moral conviction within himself.¹

When doubts are present, the conscious effort to suppress them by the internal exertion of the will, with no reference to external criteria, will have the opposite effect. This is demonstrated psychologically by the law of reversed effort. The conscious focusing of the will upon a doubt in order to suppress it will accentuate its presence in the mind. A real danger in thinking that we can will ourselves to believe is that we shall pretend to believe. Pretending to believe, fitting into a pattern of orthodoxy for the sake of expediency, denies the integrity of the believer which is essential to faith. Of course pretending to believe is

¹ This discussion of faith and the will to believe is drawn from Faith in God, pp. 121-149.

not willing to believe, but it is all that can be done on the basis of man's volition alone.

The doubter can never be led to believe by an exercise of his will power alone. He can be pointed to moral conviction which lies in the heart of every man, a basic conviction that there is some right and wrong in the world, some duty and obedience which is demanded of all men. This is a deeper conviction which penetrates beneath any exercise of the will. This moral conviction which can be the germ of faith in the heart of man demands the exercise of the will but it is not itself grasped or apprehended by the exercise of the will.

The ground of faith in human experience, when stripped of all other possible sources, may at rock bottom be found in moral conviction. But two things must be said about the faith which then arises. Faith is that which arises from a basic conviction in man, in a sense it depends on the experience of man. Yet at the same time it does not depend on man in the sense of being chosen by man. We shall come to fuller discussion of the paradoxes of faith, but for our immediate purposes suffice it to say that faith cannot arise out of a will to believe. Faith-experience does not arise in vacuo, it arises from an intimate connection with the moral consciousness.

Baillie's emphasis upon the place of moral consciousness in the life of faith is directed at the important truth that the faith-experience which is the basis of theology is intimately involved with the moral demands of life together. Faith does not operate in a realm foreign to finite human experience. Faith in God is inseparably related to human experience. Baillie is duly appreciative of the elements of mystery and awe which are part of the life of faith, but he is impatient with Otto's overemphasis on the contention that God can only be apprehended as the "wholly other" through a feeling for the numinous. ✓

This is where we cannot follow him. The element of mystery is essential, but it seems equally essential to insist that our only positive clue amid the mystery lies not in an uncanny revelation of the numinous, but in those moral realities and values of our human life which present themselves as the true though symbolic and incomplete, revelation of God. It is only by following out these values as far as we can, that we come to have any knowledge of God at all, or rather, come to realize and develop that elemental knowledge of God which expresses¹ itself partially through the moral consciousness.

To say that faith arises out of moral conviction is not to say that faith depends on moral conviction. In fact

¹ Ibid., pp. 216-217.

the existential exercise of moral convictions depends on faith, which is the gift of God. "But why should it be any less his gift because it comes through conscience?"¹ God is known in a faith-experience which is rooted in material and practical experience.

God is what we really love whenever we truly love our fellows. God is what we dimly know, even in apprehending our duty in the commonplace details of practice.²

Thus faith-experience is more than mere morality and more than mere esoteric fancy. It is real knowledge of God. When we attempt to think out the full dimensions of faith "we lose ourselves in paradox"³ but passing from theological analysis into the life of faith we find our knowledge of God "being rooted and grounded in love". Faith is a gift of God, a gift grounded in the demands of love in human experience.

¹Ibid., p. 217.

²Ibid., p. 223.

³Ibid., p. 224.

CHAPTER IV

REVELATION, EXPERIENCE AND FAITH

The key to the Christian knowledge of God which is apprehended within the context of human experience is the Incarnation. For our present purposes it will not be necessary to develop Baillie's doctrine of Incarnation which is central to his whole system of doctrine. This will be done in Part II of this thesis. However, it will be helpful to note one point which relates the Incarnation to faith as the basis for a theology for preaching.

An outstanding characteristic of faith is that it can only be communicated through persons. We have seen that where faith can arise by way of a basic moral conviction in the heart of man, no man can erect a mature system of belief adequate to his experience unaided by outside influences. "Each man is very largely dependent on what is presented to him as the fruit of past ages of faith and the work of faith's greatest exponents."¹ The

¹Ibid., p. 232.

apprehension of these truths by faith may be characterized as the further awakening of faith-experience where faith-experience meets truth and grasps it as revelation. This revelation would have never come to him had it not been for the persons who were the instruments responsible for the further awakening of faith. No language can be used to fully communicate the content of faith. "Religion can never be summed up in a system of dogmas."¹ Words alone, even if uttered by the greatest exponents of faith, cannot adequately communicate the Gospel. Even when words of faith are coupled with their essential counterpart, the actions of faith (e.g. the Sacraments in the liturgy of the Church), they are but mutually interpretive and depend themselves upon the persons who speak and the persons who administer the sacraments. In every case a person is present. This is not just an accident of necessity, but it is essential to the very nature of the faith being communicated.

The only complete expression of faith is in personality; the personalities of believers, individually or in fellowship. Nothing else can really 'reveal' to us what faith is, and what the words of its doctrine mean. Nothing else could be an adequate symbol. Nothing else could transmit the revelation. . . . It is only through the revealing influence of believing men and women that we can be made to understand what faith means, and thus to see faith's Object.²

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 233.

It is here that we see the central importance of the historical person of Jesus Christ to the Christian faith. Teachings alone could not communicate faith in God.

His actual historical personality would be the only adequate symbol of the faith he represented, or the revelation which he mediated, for the calling forth of faith in other men.

The fact that the encounter of persons is essential to the communication of faith in God, the fact that it is through persons that faith-experience is awakened, this fact ^{underlines} ~~belies~~ the essential place of preaching in the Church. Theology, in order to be communicated as faith, must be mediated through the personal confrontation of preacher and congregation. The words of the preacher are most important, but the essential factor is the faith he communicates as a person. Shared witness to the Word of God is preaching, and this shared witness can never be abstracted from the persons involved. Preaching is a means by which the faith, which has always been embodied in historical persons, is communicated from the time of Christ onwards. Our faith in God is dependent on persons who

¹Ibid., p. 234.

communciate, mediate and reveal the faith. The person of Christ can be met in the faith communicated by the person of the preacher.

Our knowledge of God is a faith-experience which forms the basis of theology. It is apprehended through a basic conviction of good at the heart of existence and is awakened through persons who proclaim the faith as it was supremely proclaimed by Jesus Christ.

Our Christian faith in God depends utterly on the story of Jesus; and yet not in a mechanical way which would leave us at a hopeless disadvantage as compared with the original disciples who were actual eye witnesses; for through that story the Living Divine Spirit who was manifested in Jesus can work in our own hearts and kindle our faith in Himself . . . Jesus lived in the bosom of the Father with perfect faith and love, and He is thus to our faith a supreme revelation; yet not as proving anything, but as revealing something which our faith leaps out to meet-- the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who seeks us out through His Son that we may know Him as our God and Father too. There have been many ways of describing this experience; but the simplest and most universal for both the ancient and the modern world is to speak of faith in God through Jesus Christ His Son our Lord.

Faith is our knowledge of God in so far as we are able to apprehend it within the context of human experience. It arises out of the experience of persons and yet its content is revealed to us.

¹Ibid., p. 264.

Having seen the importance of personality to faith, supremely demonstrated by the person of Jesus Christ, the preliminary definition of revelation as "an experiential event in which 'God reveals to us not doctrines, but Himself, and a self can only be revealed in some kind of personal relationship',"¹ can be more fully understood. The apprehension of faith involves revelation, and revelation takes place in the encounter of persons. Faith and revelation are correlatives; what is given by revelation is received by faith. The personal character of revelation can be further understood, if it is remembered that our knowledge of God does not depend upon the isolated efforts of the individual. It depends upon the activity of something which transcends the individual. Revelation, as the source of knowledge about God involves the active communication of God to man through persons, not merely man's search for a distant, impersonal God, in much the same manner as man searches for abstract truths in philosophy or impersonal data in science. Revelation is the source of knowledge about God which is available to all men regardless of their ability to conduct an

¹Supra, p. 12.

intellectual search for Him. As such revelation involves the active outgoing initiative of Him who is self-revealed. The analogy may be drawn from the way in which one man comes to know another. He can know little about a person by merely standing in front of him and looking at him. Size, weight, dimension etc. will be all that can be gained from such an impersonal observation. The person is not known as a person until he communicates himself by actively relating and responding to the man in search of his true nature. In this process a relationship of persons develops; it develops as the man takes the initiative of communicating himself.

Thus when we talk of divine revelation, it means at least this, that we believe in a real God, a living God, who can do things for us, and who does not leave us to find Him for ourselves, as if He could not help or did not care, but takes the initiative in seeking us and drawing us to Him.¹

This personal character of revelation precludes the possibility of gaining knowledge of God from the mere examination of impersonal data, be they observable facts of the natural world, the literal words of a sacred document or the formulations of theological doctrines alone.

¹ I Believe in God. Church of Scotland Committee on Publications, Edinburgh, 1937, p. 14.

On the objective side, God reveals Himself

by what He does, being a Living God; His doings in History which really means His dealings with man writ large, and especially in connection with the people of ancient Israel, culminating in Christ and His Church. For there we have not only God's doings on a large scale but the interpretation of these doings by prophets and apostles, and by Christ Himself.

This does not mean that revelation comes through the study of history alone, for the meaning of the events have to be interpreted by men who see the hand of God at work. Here we come to the subjective side of revelation.

We have seen that the germ of faith rests in the heart of man in the form of a basic conviction or moral consciousness. Revelation is the kind of knowledge which elicits a response from this basic conviction. Response to revelation is not limited by intellectual ability or theological acumen. It is

a kind of knowledge which does not depend on cleverness and learning but on child-like simplicity of heart . . . through simple honest listening and obeying.

The revelation of God's action is met by obedience. Or one might say, God's action in the world becomes revelation to man

¹"Criterion and Method in Theology" (Book 6), p. 15.

²I Believe in God, p. 15.

by making a direct moral claim upon him in his everyday environment and assuring him of its support as he responded to the claim.

Thus revelation is more than mere historical facts, and more than the response of mere morality. It is the meeting of these two sides, which from the human perspective can be called the objective side of God's action as a person who communicates Himself, and the subjective side which is realized by an inward constraint to believe and compulsion to act according to one's basic moral conviction. It is in this meeting that the knowledge of God becomes interpreted as revelation, as the Word of God. It is in this sense that revelation is the criterion of theology.

But it is necessary to be more specific when we speak of criterion and method in theology. When it is said revelation is the criterion, what is being said about Scripture, the doctrines of the Church and preaching?

The important point is that Scripture is the supreme written expression of God's revelation to man, the supreme witness to the Word of God. The Bible is not identical with revelation. It is not identical with the Word of God. . . . It is impossible to commit the divine revelation wholly to writing. . . . There are no human words that can wholly contain it. Doctrines

¹"Man and the Unseen World," Out of Nazareth, p. 175.

and dogmas can be put into words, but it is not ready made doctrines and dogmas that God reveals to men, but something more immediate, which we have then to try haltingly to express in doctrines and dogmas.

Because the Word of God is only fully realized in personal revelation and perfect response, the only adequate expression of the Word is in the person of Jesus Christ. It is here that the 'Word was made flesh'.

The Word of God is Christ, and it comes home to the individual and becomes to him God's revelation through the Holy Spirit.²

The Holy Spirit is that which elicits in man a response to the objective side of revelation. And the Holy Spirit uses for its purposes the

testimony of those to whom the Word originally came; and that is what Scripture is. It is the supreme witness to the Word of God.

The Bible as the supreme written witness to the Word, becomes the primary documentary source for theology and is thus a criterion in this qualified sense.

But the Bible is not the only witness to the Word. Secondary sources, sources which are themselves based on the Biblical witness, are found in the creeds of the Church and the preaching of the Church. "All these are witnesses

¹"Criterion and Method in Theology," p. 15.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³Ibid.

to the divine revelation."¹

Thus, in so far as theology can have any external criterion, the Scriptures are this criterion. "But that does not mean that we have to accept a ready-made theology from the Bible, or treat the Bible as a compendium of infallible proof texts regarding doctrine."² Theology measures and criticises its formulations on the basis of the criteria, first of Scripture, then the traditional formulations of the Church and its preaching, but it must ever keep an obedient ear open to the inward witness of faith as it is experienced in each new generation.

Scripture is not the only witness, and therefore not the only court of appeal or the only guide in the working out of our theology. The testimony of the creeds, the testimony of the saints in all ages, and of all Christian preaching and theology is quite valid evidence for anyone working on a theological problem.³

The function of these witnesses is to awaken faith-experience, therefore they have to "meet with the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, and then we have a faith of our own", which we then can seek to articulate by means of a theology which serves preaching.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 17.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 18.

⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE PLACE OF PARADOX IN THEOLOGY

Thus far it has been shown that the basis of a theology for preaching is faith within the context of experience, and the sources for such a theology are revelatory. What can we say about the nature of the articulations of theology, the things it says about the faith it thinks out? The language of theology is necessarily fragmentary and partial, for it is impossible by the very nature of its object for theology to fully contain the knowledge of God in words. It is true that faith is revealed in terms which can be grasped at a basic and simple level in the hearts of all men, but when this faith meets the more complex aspects of experience then there is a real danger that wholly unjustified inferences will be made and a simple faith will become extended beyond its rightful bounds. But surely the Christian faith must be addressed beyond the bounds of the simplest, primitive sort of experience. It must be brought into the market place where the issues at stake are not always so clear.

. . . most of the great heresies arose from an undue desire for simplification, and undue impatience with mystery and paradox, and an endeavour after a common sense theology.

Rigorous theology, theology which is true to faith-experience, is bound to preserve a tension in the way it speaks of an infinite God who is active in a finite world. "Ultimately all our theology ends in paradox" at its deepest level and at its crucial points.²

The reason why the element of paradox come into all religious thought and statements is because God cannot be comprehended in any human words or in any categories of our finite thought. God can only be known in a direct personal relationship, an 'I-and-Thou' intercourse, in which He addresses us and we respond to Him. As it has sometimes been put, God cannot legitimately be 'objectified'. This does not mean that religion is thrown back on the 'subjective', against which we have so often been warned by the wise counsellors who tell us to turn away from our own feelings to 'objective realities' of our faith. In that sense, in contrast with religious subjectivism, it is wholesome to be reminded that God is an objective reality. Yet we cannot know God by studying Him as an object, of which we can speak in the third person, in an 'I-It' relationship from a spectator attitude. He eludes all our words and categories. We cannot objectify or conceptualize Him. When we try we immediately fall into contradiction. Our thought gets diffracted, broken up into statements which it seems impossible to reconcile with each other. How then can we have any theology, since theology is bound to objectify God, to speak of Him in the third person, with human words and the categories of finite minds? The answer is that we must

¹God Was in Christ, p. 65.

²"Doctrine of God" (Book 6), p. 21.

indeed do these things if we are to have any theology at all, and we must have a theology; but we have to pay the price--it will always be a theology of paradox.¹

Paradox is not merely an internal necessity of theology, it is inevitable since theology is addressing itself to more than an academic analysis of God and His actions. Theology is addressed to the faith-experience of believers who are in a relationship involving persons with God. Baillie illustrates the inevitable paradoxical character of any language which seeks to speak of this relationship.

The attempt to put our experience of God into theological statements is something like the attempt to draw a map of the world on a flat surface, the page of an atlas. It is impossible to do this without a certain degree of falsification, because the surface of the earth is a spherical surface whose pattern cannot be reproduced accurately on a plane. And yet the map must be drawn for convenience' sake. Therefore an atlas meets the problem by giving us two different maps of the world which can be compared with each other. The one is contained in two circles representing two hemispheres. The other is contained in an oblong (Mercator's projection). Each map is of the whole world, and yet they contradict each other to some extent at every point. Yet they are both needed, and taken together correct each other. They would be either misleading or mystifying to anyone who did not know that they represent the surface of a sphere. But they can serve their useful purpose for anyone who understands that they are intended simply to represent in a handy portable form the pattern covering the surface of this round earth which he knows in actual experience. So it is with the para-

¹God Was in Christ, p. 108.

doxes of faith. They are inevitable, not because the divine reality is self-contradictory, but because when we 'objectify' it all our judgements are in some measure falsified, and a higher truth which reconciles them cannot be fully expressed in words, though it is experienced and lived¹ in the I-and-Thou relationship of faith towards God.

Only paradoxes which speak of a higher truth experienced in this I-and-Thou relationship of faith to God can be admissible into a theological system. The theologian can never rest on paradox or build on paradox, for the inherent tension of paradox drives him back to the basis and sources of theology itself. Theological statements may end in paradox but faith passes beyond. Baillie, who has brought the matter of paradox so vividly to the fore, would be the first to affirm that the experience of faith must pass beyond paradox, and it is in this direction that theology must point.

A healthy faith will always be acknowledging the antinomy, yet always also struggling against it, striving for a fuller light and a deeper² experience in which the paradox will be less acute.

But paradox in theology is not something of which to be ashamed. "the very strength of Christianity is in its firm and living grasp of apparent opposites."³ The criterion of

¹Ibid., 109.

²Faith in God, p. 304.

³Ibid., p. 305.

theology is the revelation of the Word of God which meets faith in human experience and its integrity and its strength lie in "its willingness to sacrifice the requirements of logical consistency rather than those of moral faith".¹

Theology must remain honest to its criteria and its method. This will involve it in paradox. But the preaching which theology serves must not point back to the theology which nurtured it, but beyond to the point where theology passes into faith. Preaching must not see its goal as the mere exposition of the paradoxes of faith, it must point beyond.

. . . it is not altogether by thinking the matter out, but rather by living it out in daily Christian faith and love, that we arrive at a deeper insight in which the paradox becomes less acute.

It is in this direction which the preaching of Christian doctrine must point, the direction of the life of faith, the obedient experience of revelation.

Before passing on it will be well to mention the way in which paradox (which will keep re-appearing in the following exposition of doctrines) has already permeated what has been said about the nature and basis of theology itself.

¹Ibid., p. 307.

²Ibid., p. 308.

It has been shown that the germ of faith was found in man in his basic conviction that good does exist and that the demands of morality informed by love are real. But here at the heart of his experience man runs into the "paradox of moralism, the fact that the quest of goodness defeats itself". The volitional manipulation of the self towards an ethical goal for the sake of being an ethical individual is self defeating. The quest must be oriented outside the self, i.e. true freedom of the will to do God's will depends on the grace of God upon whose will the quest is focused.¹

It appears to be true in a very plain and practical sense that a man is not really free to live as he ought to live until he passes beyond a self contained morality into a relationship which the saints² have described as dependence on the grace of God.

The paradox of moralism is but the human side of the same coin which when turned over reveals the central paradox of Christian life, the paradox of grace.

Its essence lies in the conviction which a Christian man possesses, that every good thing in him, every good thing he does, is somehow wrought not by himself but by God. This is a highly paradoxical conviction, for in ascribing all to God it does not abrogate

¹"Philosophers and Theologians on the Freedom of the Will" reprinted from the Scottish Journal of Theology, 4, No. 2 (June, 1951), in The Theology of the Sacraments, pp. 127-137.

²Ibid., p. 137.

human personality nor disclaim personal responsibility.

We have seen that revelation is personal in character. So too with grace, for the experience of grace is the receiving of revelation by faith.

The grace of God is simply His personal influence upon us . . . to be thought of on the analogy of the influence of a father upon his child.²

It is by this personal relationship and influences that the moral conviction of man is lifted out of its interminable paradox into a place where the moral convictions of man can be met without the negating immorality of pride in the good deed done. Thus Christian faith is raised beyond morality into the realm of faith-experience which finds its Biblical expression in I Corinthians 15:10 ff. where it is linked directly with preaching as the reason why men can assume the audacity to proclaim the Word of God. Paul declares,

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I but the grace of God which is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believe. (RSV)

At the very heart of theology the paradox of grace

¹God Was in Christ, p. 114.

²The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 52.

points us to the fact that all that we do, be it ethical actions or the preaching of the Word, is subsumed under grace which we know in our faith-experience. There can be no ethical good or preaching apart from faith-experience. And throughout the tension between the two sides of the paradox must be maintained, the tension between our personal responsibility to the criteria of the theology which serves preaching and the conviction that when we preach it is 'Not I, but the grace of God'.

Baillie's whole theological method can be summed up in the manner in which he understands the faith-experience of the paradox of grace as pointing to our knowledge of God Incarnate. We do not start with a 'wholly other', or totally objective Word. We come to know God through faith-experience. Theology attempts to explain what is meant by the Incarnation by drawing on experience.

Our theological task is to try to make sure that we know what we mean by it, what it means and what it does not mean; to try to make sure that, while it remains the mysterium Christi, it is not sheer meaningless mystery, but becomes truly Christian paradox to us. And I am suggesting that this can happen because in our own experience, however poor and fragmentary, we know something of the paradoxical grace of God, something of the God who was incarnate in Jesus.

¹God Was in Christ, p. 124.

When theology points to the Incarnation, it points away from itself. We know what Jesus did and what he taught, these historical facts are essential, and this historical knowledge passes into faith when we see that Jesus is "the only man who claims nothing for Himself, but all for God".¹ When theology points beyond itself to the life of faith, when it serves preaching which is a part of that life, it points to and beyond the preacher who can exercise the fullest personal responsibility and integrity as he seeks to communicate the truth and yet affirm throughout that it is "Not I, but the grace of God with me". The tension of this paradoxical experience drives us from theology through preaching to the life of faith and devotion.

¹Ibid., p. 127.

CHAPTER VI

SOME DANGERS WHICH THREATEN THE TRUE PRESENTATION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

To further illustrate and clarify the nature of the tension that runs through all theology, it will be helpful to restate what has been said about criterion and method in another way. Theological method is obedient to its criteria, the use of language in theology is determined by its function; or to put it still another way, the intellect is obedient to revelation. We have seen that theology is based on faith. How does one exercise one's intellect in faith?

It has sometimes been said that Christian faith involves a sacrifice of the intellect. But that mustn't be misunderstood. Sacrifice does not mean destruction but offering. And what a Christian is called to is not a jettisoning of a liquidation of his intellect, but rather the dedication of it as an unblemished offering freed from pride and prejudice.

Such is the goal of the theologian, at every turn of the

¹ From a discussion presented on the BBC in the "Freedom and Order" series, Second Series, No. 5--Theology, Taking part: D. M. Baillie and D. M. Mackinnon, April 5, 1949, 10:15-10:45, Aberdeen Studio, script p. 17.

road his intellect must be sacrificed to truth. It is his task to see that nothing qualifies his love of truth, his obedience to its call wherever it may lead. But the task of theology is a human task and

the Christian's understanding of his faith is continually being perverted by the selfishness of his human nature.

What are some of the dangers which continually threaten the theologian's and the preacher's true presentation of the Christian message?

Certainly one of these dangers is the danger of "false institutionalism". Theology is carried on in the church, by the church and for the life of the church, but can the interests of the church as an institution with a tradition legitimately qualify the theologian's love of truth? No.

It hardly need be said that a true institutionalism has its important part to play in the apprehension of truth, as in every other department of Christian life. It is not to complacent self-sufficient individuals in isolation from each other that divine truth is most surely revealed, but to a fellowship of seekers and finders, a Church, with a communion of saints and an inheritance of faith, handed down in a warm and living tradition which goes back to prophets, apos-² tles, martyrs, and all holy and humble men of heart.

¹Ibid., p. 18.

²"Concerning the Love of Truth", The British Weekly, XCVI, No. 2491 (Thursday, July 26, 1934), p. 1.

But the danger is "a false institutionalism in which a sense of the prestige of the institution would stifle the pure love of truth."¹ This is particularly acute in our day when the church has lost much of its prestige in the world at large, and the concomitant inferiority complex of those within the church may turn (as is so often the case in individual psychology) into a false superiority complex which elevates the institution of the church far beyond its legitimate bounds. A healthy church demands its "self-forgetful absorption in objective realities."²

There is a danger that we should confound the stream of the church's dogma, with the river of God and the river of truth, and therefore endeavour to quench the thirst of our age in its sometimes turbid waters, instead of going to the fountainhead of truth for ourselves in our own day and generation.

Truth in the present must outweigh the tradition of the Church. The ecumenical thrust in our day must never permit the belief in institutional authority to override the truth sought for and found.

Perhaps the greatest danger comes in the face of ecclesiastical controversy where the temptation is strong to hold to party lines rather than be open to new truth.

¹"Concerning the Love of Truth", The British Weekly, XCVI, No. 2491 (Thursday, July 26, 1934), p. 1.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

It is a perilous thing in the realm of religion to come to love anything more than truth, not only form and ceremony, decorum and liturgical beauty, but even tradition and orthodoxy, antiquity, catholicity, even unity. Not one of these is as sacred as truth.

The over-arching criterion for theology is that the theologian cares for the truth he is seeking. It must not merely be the idol of any tribe or party, but that which totally involves the person with the truth. What is needed today is "deep and hard theological thinking . . . with a sense of the greatness of the ocean of truth and the insignificance of our present knowledge."² As theologians we are committed to the church, to work within the community of believers in which we have been called to serve, but we are not committed to any church or tradition, to any institution, as we are committed to truth.

A second danger which threatens the love of truth is "false utilitarianism", "false pragmatism" or less philosophically, "false practicalism". A practical view toward theological study is a healthy outlook for any theological student. His study in a theological college is for the purpose of preparing him for the practical work of the Christian ministry. It is well to have the practical

¹"The Danger of Party Government in Theology" (Book 68), p. 12.

²Ibid., p. 27.

end of theological study always in sight. But theoretical pursuits and practical pursuits are not divergent from one another but essential to each other. It is essential to preserve the tension between the quest for theological truth and the practical task of communicating this truth in the parish. The loss of one means a temptation to sacrifice truth for action, and the loss of the other means retreating into the irrelevancies of an ivory tower far removed from the needs of the men we have been called to serve.

The danger of false practicalism is particularly felt when our interest is focused on the practical task of preaching. Here the danger is that one's reading will be degraded into a professional utilitarian exercise where each novel and essay is read with an homiletical eye on the look out for next Sunday's illustrations.

The best preaching of the Gospel will not be done by the man who is interested in nothing¹ but the immediate claims of his office and craft.

True insight springs not from an exclusively religious or professional perspective, but from an ability to be interested in different things for their own sake.

¹"Concerning the Love of Truth" (Envelope 75), p. 16, (an unpublished manuscript covering a broader scope than the published article cited above which bears the same title, p. 58).

Religion does not flourish on a too narrow spiritual utilitarianism. It is not good for religion. In the same way and, as a consequence it is not good for preaching.¹

The same false utilitarianism can be a danger in our use of the Bible. If the Bible is used merely as a book wherein to find a sermon text, what a degradation of its place in our lives this would be. So too, if we turn to Scripture for ready made doctrine with which to interpret the Gospel today. One cannot find that sort of universal interpretation of doctrine in the Bible. The Bible cannot be understood if immediate practicalities such as a sermon or a situation in life dominate our use of the text. This method

destroys honesty and courage, it makes one afraid to give one's mind to the eager study of the sacred documents, afraid to follow out the argument lest it should lead to consequences that would not suit our own practical purposes.

Our business when we read the Bible is not just to teach and preach, but also to learn.

A third error against which we must guard is the danger of "false intellectualism". Practical prejudice must not color our quest for truth, but the disinterested

¹Ibid.

intellectual quest for truth can only be realized if our aim is leveled with the deep desire to hit the mark.

Disinterested indeed we must be; but it is precisely because we are so deeply and desperately interested in very truth itself that we cannot afford to be anything but disinterested in the quest of it. We must have the truth, we are not going to take any risks of being deflected from it by any kind of prejudice or preference; because truth is a matter of life and death. Therefore we will not be put off by any shallow kind of logic, we will not be cool and glib and cocksure and easy. We will be eager and alert, patient and watchful, like a mariner with his eyes upon the compass when life and death depend on his striking the course that leads safely between shoals and rocks in the darkness or fog, to his desired haven. No one is more "disinterested", more impartial than he, because his purpose is not immediate ease or comfort, or a swift course running down the wind, but a true course, however hard to find and keep, if only it will lead him safe home at last. That urgent purpose sharpens his wits and quickens his instinct. Still truer is it in this great theological voyage that nothing but an urgent desire for the haven of truth can quicken our instinct for the finding of it. Religious truth cannot be found at all by a cold hard intellectual process.

The temptation of false intellectualism is to see the very basis of theology, faith-experience, as something separate from the intellect. Intellect without an instinct for truth is not true intellect at all, certainly not intellect placed in the service of theological truth. There must always be a hunger for the truth, "for it is hunger that sharpens the instinct."² The world around us

¹Ibid., pp. 19-20.

²Ibid., p. 21.

and the people of the church become impatient with the-
ology which smacks of mere detached academic interests,
and rightly so.

The study of theology is a poor barren display of
intellectual gymnastics when there is, none of the pure
eager desperate love of truth itself.¹

That is the danger of false intellectualism.

False intellectualism at its worst can rear its
head as an even uglier danger which threatens the love of
truth; the danger of "false dilettantism". This is the
search for truth for the sake of the search.

Every student has heard of Lessing's famous dictum that
if he were offered the gift of truth itself with one
hand, and the search for truth with the other and had
to make his choice, he would choose the search for
truth. We know very well what that great seeker after
truth meant, and how right he was in what he meant.
For there is a deep sense in which we cannot really
possess truth until we have pursued it. Truth is not
the kind of commodity that can be delivered ready-
made in a parcel and then laid up in a napkin and kept
as a safe and settled possession. There must be a
continual quest. And yet—a great man's dictum may
lead smaller minds far astray (great minds nearly
always take the risk of that); and in this case the
dictum must not be taken without a grain of salt. For
we can never afford to forget that, after all, what
the true seeker fundamentally desires is not the quest
but the truth. He is not like a mere sporting squire
who hunts the fox for the love of the sport and the fun
and glory of the chase. He is much more like the
primitive man who lives by his bow and his spear, who
hunts for food in real earnest. He may enjoy his food

¹ Ibid., p. 22.

all the more because he has hunted for it in the sweat of his brow, and he may even enjoy the hunt, or at least the memory of it in the repose and cool of the evening. But the food matters to him more than the hunt. He is a hungry man and he hunts for food knowing what he wants and satisfied only when he has got it. That is the real seeker. The mere sportsman wants only the excitement and glory of the chase. But if the seeker after truth should become a mere sportsman, if the search for truth should become to any student of theology like the mere field of sport—that would be what I mean by false dilettantism.

A pernicious example of false dilettantism which ends in disaster is the danger of a "perverted love of originality". This is particularly acute in the field of theology. There is always the temptation to be caught up by an ingenious idea, a truly creative thought and pursue it to the ends of the earth at the expense of the one thing that matters--truth.

A man studying a theological problem, or a passage of scripture, strikes a new scent, hits upon a novel idea, is fascinated by the thought of making an original contribution, follows the trail, blinded by the interest of the great sport. He works out his idea, collects evidence, makes his argument so persuasive that he half persuades himself, and so adds one more to the stock of the world's books, of the making of which there is no end.²

His book may indeed present an original theory, but the integrity of his endeavour may be shattered by the simple question: "It is very original and ingenious, but do you

¹Ibid., pp. 23-24.

²Ibid., p. 25.

really believe it to be true?"¹

The nature of theology with the ever present tension between its basis of faith-experience and its criteria of revelation make this danger especially acute for those engaged in theological writing because there is

the danger of writing with one's eye more on one's own theory than on the object, and one's mind more occupied with the idea of originality or distinction than with the pure love of truth, until without any conscious dishonesty, one is mesmerized by one's own argument, and the excitement of chasing one's own idea, and the truth vanishes altogether.

But the same danger can be present even if we are not writing books and presenting positive, if misguided, original contributions to the field of knowledge. There is the negative danger as well. There is the kind of false dilettantism which falls at the other extreme of false institutionalism. This is the kind of false dilettantism which delights in iconoclasm, and proudly assumes that the institution can only offer false answers to life's most pressing questions.

But the cause of truth is . . . ill served by the false dilettantism which jauntily assumes that the institution and the tradition must always be wrong;

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 26.

which delights in iconoclasm and is vainly proud of heresy; which is impatient of all that one can not understand; 'the spirit that continually denies', the spirit that loves doubting more than believing; the spirit that loves wit more than wisdom; the spirit that loves novelty more than truth. All that kind of thing belongs to those to whom the study of theology is at best no more than a great game.

These are the dangers which continually beset the theologian's true presentation of Christian doctrine. As the discipline of theology properly undertaken inevitably involves the person who is thinking out his faith, he must continually be on guard against these dangers, and continually obedient to truth. Neither theology, nor the preaching which it serves, need be self-conscious or self-centered, but always open-minded and ready to learn in faith from its sources, if its primary concern is the love of truth.

Here is a story Baillie often repeats when the matter of the task of theology is brought up.

There is a story of St. Thomas Aquinas which I love to tell, . . . He was indeed a great lover of truth, and I need not remind you that his great treatise, the Summa Theologica is one of the greatest works of theology ever written. But it is unfinished, and this is the reason why. Some two years before his death when he was still working at his magnum opus, one day as he was celebrating the Eucharist in a church in Naples, he had some wonderful visionary experience. It made him put his pen and inkhorn on

¹Ibid., p. 27.

the shelf and for the rest of his life he never wrote another word of his great treatise. When asked about the book, he replied: "I have seen that which makes all that I have written seem small to me".¹

These then are some of the dangers which confront the theologian as he goes about his task. It is clear that Baillie's attitude as he approaches theology is one of profound humility and deep personal integrity. No treatment of Baillie's understanding of his theological task would be complete, however, without mention of his passionate concern for the theological task of the church at large. His theology is always set within the context of the ecumenical church. Two further dangers which threaten the theological quest for truth can be seen in two extreme tendencies within the ecumenical movement to which D. M. Baillie contributed so much of his time and effort. Out of Baillie's sensitive concern to guard against these extremes emerge his dedicated emphasis upon the importance of preaching Christian doctrine.

In an address on "Tradition and Christian Unity" delivered in 1937, Baillie spoke of the tenor of the times which differentiated the Lausanne Conference of 1927 from the forthcoming Edinburgh Conference. The Lausanne Conference met in a spirit of ecumenical liberalism where the

¹ Ibid., p. 29.

emphasis was upon the areas of agreement between the churches. The temper of the churches ten years later was one which had been greatly influenced by the new wave of confessionalism, particularly on the Continent. Now the areas of difference would receive the emphasis. Danger exists in theological discussion whenever either one of these emphases is taken to its extreme.

The danger is that in these matters the issue should come to be too narrowly drawn between what has been called ecumenical liberalism on the one hand and narrow confessionalism on the other; on the one hand a spineless good natured liberalism which is willing to shake hands all round and unite at once with anybody, because the issues of doctrine do not greatly matter, and on the other hand a hard blind confessionalism which learns nothing and forgets nothing, but which makes one take it for granted that one's own church is always right. Both of these tendencies must obviously be wrong, and must be fatal to the cause of Christian unity.

Speaking in 1937, Baillie took the opportunity to speak to the second of these tendencies by pointing out the tremendous influence which tradition has upon our religious convictions, tradition in the broad sense of "a religious and ecclesiastical heritage into which the individual is born and which largely determines the bent of his convic-

¹"Tradition and Christian Unity", (Envelope 75), pp. 5-6.

tions."¹ These influences are real and play an important and positive part in the development of our religious life, but it is important to appreciate the true nature of many of these influences.

To put it in a more provocative way which is more in line with the language of modern psychology, the non-rational element enters into our church allegiances and our church divisions to a far greater extent than we usually realize. . . . These non-rational causes are the influences of custom, early training and suggestion, social environment—all may be summed up in the word "tradition". Thus among the many things which a man believes there are many which he believes for no reasons at all, whether ratiocinative or intuitive, but because they have been suggested to his mind in purely non-rational ways. Any explanations he gives afterwards are not really reasons but only rationalizations.

These are real factors, and there is no reason to be ashamed of the traditional heritage in which we have been nurtured. They are in many cases creditable factors and indeed inevitable from the simple fact that the church is made up of communities of believers each with varying historical and cultural backgrounds which legitimately influence the expression of faith; "it is absurd to say that the doctrinal and traditional differences between churches do not matter at all."³ The quest for truth does not necessarily mean the uniformity of doctrinal expression. In

¹ Ibid., p. 6.

² Ibid., pp. 6-7.

³ Ibid., p. 17.

the case of two divergent traditions such as the Roman Catholic and the Protestant, Baillie writes

You can't put things right either for them or for us by making a hasty hybrid of two different traditions, sacrificing truth to good natured compromise and vague uncertainty.¹

The problem rests, not so much with the diversity that exists but with the reasons why we cling to diversity. The problem rests with our temptation to deny the non-rational character of our differences, differences due so often to nothing more than historical accident. No church or tradition is entirely right within the context of the whole Church.

I believe it is indeed true that different individuals may require different expressions of religion, and therefore instead of blank uniformity there is great room for diversity. But surely the diversity need not always mean ecclesiastical separation; for if it does, then the benefits of diversity are not really available to all and sundry, and the differentiation defeats its own ends. Therefore it is dangerous to go too far with the doctrine that each church has its own separate "vocation". And moreover it is not only dangerous in practice, but also highly compromising as regards the question of truth. Behind all the diversities of tradition, truth is one, and it is surely part of the vocation of every church to strive hard to overcome its own non-rational prejudices and seek the truth itself, wherever the truth may lead.²

In this context, Baillie is primarily concerned to stress that the church and particularly its ministers

¹ Ibid., p. 19.

² Ibid., pp. 20-21.

have a vocation to be open and informed about the doctrinal diversities represented by other traditions. The task of theology which serves the preaching of the church involves being open and clear as to the doctrinal content of its message within the perspective of the whole Church. Preaching must take on the task of presenting the doctrines of the church, unhampered by the fear inherent in the denial of the non-rational elements which have gone into the making of a particular tradition.

The practical conclusion from all these thoughts is that it is vital for us (above all, for us ministers) to take the pains to understand the positions and traditions of other churches, and to set in the clear light of our Christian thinking, the things that separate them from us. . . . we in the churches must learn to humble ourselves, to empty ourselves, by thinking not only of what we stand for, what our church stands for, but still more of what the other churches stand for.

Thus the practical conclusion which arises out of the danger of narrow confessionalism leads directly into the matter of preaching Christian doctrine. The theology which serves such preaching must have an open and obedient ear to the voices of the whole Church. And the preaching which arises must give a clear expression of the doctrinal content of the faith it proclaims.

The same conclusion is reached by a different path which presents the dangers inherent in an over-emphasis on the spirit of ecumenical liberalism, the "spineless

¹Ibid., p. 22.

good natured liberalism which is willing to shake hands all around and unite at once with anybody, because the issues of doctrine do not greatly matter".¹

The violent swing of the pendulum in this ecumenically liberal direction leads to the kind of thinking wherein pulpits will advocate unity with plenty of goodwill and little concern for what they believe. This tendency ends in the greater danger of compromising what faith (articulated in doctrines) the people do possess. Many congregations are left with pulpits which are more concerned with goodwill than with truth and the people are left adrift. Baillie sees this already happening in many parts of the world Church.

The danger is that it should be a Church based on compromise or vagueness, rather than on truth; and that it will develop a sort of preaching which has very little in it of what we might call the Catholic Christian Faith. I believe that danger has already reached a high pitch in America, with the result that many pulpits have hardly any definite message about God and His ways, about His Incarnation in Jesus Christ, about the Cross, about the Atonement, about the Forgiveness of Sins, about the Life Everlasting, but are satisfied with Emersonian sentimentalism about human character and experience, with thanksgiving ² for the great open spaces and the wind on the heath.

It would be hard to give a better diagnosis of the illness that plagues many American pulpits, possibly some others

¹ Ibid., p. 5.

² "Christian Unity and Theological Thinking" (Book 68), pp. 41-42.

too. Surely the treatment of this theological anemia involves a renewed emphasis upon the doctrinal content of preaching, not in the defensive and fearful sense of a narrow confessionalism, but in the sense of an open, clear-headed search for the truth which the Church does believe and a proclamation of that truth. This is the end toward which theology must serve preaching today.

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE: A STORY WITH A PLOT

Theology is "thinking out what we believe"; doctrine is what is said and taught about these thoughts. Doctrine is the articulation of belief: doctrine is the content of the Christian message proclaimed. But why is doctrine necessary? If the essence of Christianity is a faith-experience, why do we have to concern ourselves with what we say about it? Why is doctrine necessary? Why, in short, preach Christian doctrine?

These questions are not altogether academic. When the subject of the importance of doctrine in the life of the church is brought up, negative comments may well be expected. "We are not interested in doctrines but in life, . . . and the one seems sometimes to have very little to do with the other." It is easy to answer by saying that doctrines which are not intimately related to life are not worthy of the name, but what do we mean by that? Or someone might say; "So far as we are going to go in for thinking about religious realities, we are going

to do it freely and unfettered, we are not going to inquire what is the Christian doctrine on this point or that." What are we to say to such a comment?¹

A false start to the answer of these questions is made when we think of doctrine as a secondary reflective product of experience. It is false to isolate one from the other by saying:

Religious experience is the important thing. It is the warm living reality. Christian doctrine may very well come afterwards, because theologians will wish to reflect upon the experience and describe it and account for it and formulate its laws.²

The mistake here lies in thinking that religious experience is merely a matter of feeling, when in fact it is an "experience of believing". "Religious experience is a faith-experience; it is an experience of being constrained to believe."³

Now to believe at all means to believe something. Belief must have some content, and as soon as you try to say what it is that you believe in your religion, at once you have the beginnings of doctrine. The doctrine is really implicit in the believing, that is in the religious experience. Christian doctrine is not simply a subsequent reflection upon the experience. It is in the experience.⁴

¹"What is Christian Doctrine" (Book 71), pp. 2-5.

²Ibid., p. 9.

³Ibid., p. 12.

⁴Ibid., p. 13.

To those who are impatient with doctrine and cite the example of Jesus as one who was "so different from the theologians and the doctrine mongers of His day, like the Scribes and the Pharisees", we can point to the teachings of Jesus which comprise the greatest part of what is known about Him. True, the teachings of Jesus are not doctrines in the sense of timeless truths which we can lift out of their context and apply immediately to contemporary situations. Doctrine is never of that sort. Jesus' teaching was the immediate reflection and articulation of a faith-experience. That is doctrine.

Do we forget that Jesus spent most of his time teaching? And not simply teaching practical precepts, but teaching deep religious truths, about God and His nature and His ways; challenging current thoughts about God and leading people on to better thoughts and conceptions of Him; making people think about these things. Now of course Jesus was not a theologian, and yet all that was doctrine, and once you started on that intelligent way of taking religion, you can't stop and draw the line; and the whole of what we call "Christian Doctrine" is but a natural development of that.

To be sure, faith is revealed to the simple and obedient heart, but this does not mean that is the end of

¹ Ibid., p. 15.

the matter. "From the very beginning Christianity did expect its followers to take their Christianity in an intelligent kind of way."¹ Christianity is intended for people from every walk of life and degree of intellectual ability, but in every case it has always expected an intelligent and informed response to faith.

Look at St. Paul's Epistles--sometimes so difficult in their doctrine that they have kept commentators busy for nearly nineteen centuries. And yet these letters were for the most part addressed to very ordinary people, not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, but simple unlearned people in narrow circumstances; and Paul expected them to understand his arguments and to be interested in them. It was not for the learned commentators that he wrote his difficult doctrinal passages, but for those ordinary folk, many of them slaves, in Corinth and Ephesus and Colossae and Rome. And another New Testament writer writing to a similarly mixed crowd of ordinary Christian people, says, "Be always ready to give an answer to anyone who asks for a reason concerning the hope that is in you."²

And the form of this "reason" is always doctrine. Christian doctrine is the responsibility, not just of a theological elite, but of every Christian who claims the faith.

The fact is that the Christian religion, above all others, is a religion which emphasizes doctrine, because it is a religion of believing, a religion of faith. It expects all its people to take their religion intelligently.³

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 16.

³ Ibid., p. 17.

Baillie used to tell a delightful little story, not by way of precept or procedural recommendation for those who would teach doctrine, but by way of illustration and criticism of the way doctrine should play a part in the life of mature Christians.

There is a charming little story that I like to sometimes tell which will appeal especially to my own countrymen from Scotland, but it will perhaps not leave others quite cold. When the great American evangelist D. L. Moody was visiting Edinburgh in the course of one of his missions nearly half a century ago, he was one day addressing a vast congregation of children in the Edinburgh Assembly Hall. He had chosen Prayer as the subject of his address and he began by asking, as a merely rhetorical question, "What is prayer?"--not expecting an answer, and never thinking that these were the exact words of a question in the Shorter Catechism. No sooner were the words out of his mouth than a hundred hands shot up all over the hall. Moody picked out one boy at random to give his answer. Without a moment's hesitation, the boy stood up and said: "Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of all His mercies." They were the words of the Shorter Catechism, and any one of these other hundred boys and girls could have said the same thing. Moody listened and then said: "Thank God, my boy, that you were born in Scotland". Now some of you can't thank God for that; and perhaps if you studied the Shorter Catechism for a bit and thought of it as a book for children you would thank God that you were not born in Scotland. I am not defending the doctrine of the Shorter Catechism, or the method of it--especially as a doctrine or a method suitable for children. That is not my point at all. But I do like the story as illustrating the ideal of a virile intelligent Christianity that knows what it believes and can give an answer to anyone who asks for a reason. No doubt the Shorter Catechism, and many another method of

teaching the young, has tended to make the mistake of treating children as grown up men and women, fulfilled Christians. But at least that is not so bad as the opposite mistake of treating grown-up Christians like little children.

The point of the matter is that true doctrine, not merely memorized formulae lifted out of an ancient document or Scripture verses quoted indiscriminately to support a point, is intended to be a part of every Christian's life so that whenever the occasion arises, be it from the questions of his own heart or those of a friend, he will be able to reflect from his experience and learning and give a "reason for the hope" that is in him. And the preaching ministry of the Church is a primary means by which men and women can be taught Christian doctrine.

There is still another reason for the necessity of doctrine becoming a lively interest in the life of every Christian. There is the ever present fact of distorted doctrine, which though novel or even superficially plausible, does not stand up in the face of intelligent appraisal, and cannot be admitted as speaking for the Christian faith with any degree of integrity. Guidelines must be offered, essential and necessary guidelines for

¹ Ibid., pp. 17-19. See also "Intelligent Christianity" in To Whom Shall We Go?, pp. 63-64.

our reflection upon the experience of belief, in the form of Christian doctrine; not in popular doctrines loosely identified with a Christian or western democratic way of life. Surely the Christian pulpit is one place from which these guidelines must be offered.¹

And whence cometh doctrine? All that we have said about the basis and sources of theology make up the soil and seed from which doctrine springs. Doctrine is not dropped from heaven ready-made for human consumption; it was not perceived all at once by any man's faith working in isolation.

Doctrine is the product of collective reflection of generations of religious men. Each of them had their experience of divine things; for indeed their faith was but the human side of that which on the other side is God's revelation. . . . Doctrine doesn't come ready-made from God, but the revelation God gives to faith has to be described in human language, reduced to order and coherence and that is a great perennial work of conscious and unconscious co-operation.²

The system of doctrine upon which we build today is not a system of dogmas that was once delivered to the saints, but a faith; and the system of dogmas or doctrines is but the result of a long co-operative endeavour to put in systematic form what faith has to tell us about God and His works and His ways.

¹Ibid., pp. 20ff.

²Ibid., pp. 28-29.

This has to be done in order that the truth may be handed down from age to age, to call forth the faith of the individual and enable him to see for himself. For the faith of the individual is largely dependent on the system of dogma. But at the same time, the system of dogma depends on the faith of the millions, and its ultimate purpose and use is to enable each believing individual more and more to see it all for himself, with a full grown faith.

Doctrines, by virtue of their very source, are the responsibility of all Christians. Doctrines form the content of the ongoing Christian message. The content of the Christian message has been considerably clarified anew by recent Biblical studies together with the critical impact of the anti-religious secularism of the early twentieth century which developed into the quasi-religious secularism of the present. The latter has forced us to answer the question, "What does the Church have to say that is in any way unique or significant in the world?" The former has taught us that the Christian message is not mere historical information, nor is it ready-made theology. New Testament studies have brought to the fore the central concept of kerygma, which brings to light the life and unity of all that the New Testament, indeed all that the Bible, has to say to us today.

¹ Ibid., pp. 30-31.

We have learned again that the Christian message is not a series of timeless truths, it is not a mere ethic, telling us what to do. The kerygma, or Christian message, is not an imperative, nor just a present indicative, but an aorist indicative. It is the story about something that happened, which has and will have direct bearing upon all of us.¹

The full sweep of this story will occupy our attention for the remainder of this dissertation. The whole story is implicit in each doctrine, and each doctrine sheds a particular light on the whole story. By way of a preview, here in Baillie's words is a summary of the Christian message, or as he often put it the "story with a plot".

The central doctrine of Christianity is the Incarnation. The belief in the Incarnation, truly understood, involves a view of the whole nature and meaning of the universe and of human existence. And even in the workshops and factories of this technical age that is surely a deep need and desire of men, to know whether life has a meaning. How does Christianity answer the question? Not precisely by offering a system of general ideas. But by something much more exciting. By telling a story, and we might say a story with a plot. The earliest chapters of the story can't be told in ordinary historical terms, but only in highly pictorial or symbolic language. That is--stories of the Creation and the Fall.

¹ "The Christian Message Today" (Book 31), presents a full development of this theme, but for a brief allusion to it in published form see The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 56.

The same is true about the final chapters-- about the consummation which lies beyond history. But the middle part of the story runs right through human history--through your life and mine. And the central chapter tells of an episode at a particular time in a particular country on earth. That is--the Incarnation.

The plot is somewhat as follows. In God's creative purpose, all mankind is intended to live in a unity of love, in perfect community, a fellowship of free spirits as one body united in the love of God. But somehow, things have gone wrong. The one body has got broken up into a host of independent little atoms--each man making himself, instead of God, the centre of the universe, and thereby separating himself not only from God but from his fellowmen. What we see in the Incarnation is God Himself appearing as a man whose life was a reversal of that fatal error. Unlike all other men, this Man claimed nothing for Himself, not even life. So that in the unreserved sacrifice of Himself, He died a criminal's death. But Christians believe that this was actually God, bearing the sin and suffering of the world--and winning the victory over it. And thereby a new community was created in the world, by which other men could be drawn back out of their self-centeredness into the true life of community with God and man, even if this can never be completely accomplished in this life on earth. That community is the Church.

That is how the Christian faith, properly understood, points us outwards to the life of community, and all that it means in the industrial civilization of the 20th century.

The Christian message is "a story with a plot".

It is a unique and significant story; unique because only a certain community can tell it, significant because

¹"Freedom and Order", B.B.C. broadcast script pp. 19-22. For another more fully developed summary of the Christian message, see "Epilogue: The Body of Christ" in God Was in Christ pp. 203-210.

it tells of something that happened which involves each and every one of us.

The message is embodied in a community we call the Church, so that the Church becomes part of the essence of the message. . . . It is only the Church that can tell the story because the story is not mere history; it is a witness, a testimony, and the Church as a body is the only possible witness. That is because the Church is part of the message, witnessing to a redemption which it has received from the hands of God in Christ, and calling others to come and share it.

The message is not just proclamation but the very presence of the Church in the world. The Church exists to proclaim a message, it exists to tell its story. The preaching of the Church is the means by which it tells its story. The doctrines of the Church are the chapters in the story which make up the Christian message. The theology of the Church serves to clarify and articulate these chapters in each new generation. In short, the Church exists today in order to preach Christian doctrine. By the preaching of Christian doctrine, the Body of Christ is made known in the world. It is by the preaching of Christian doctrine that the Church tells its story, to wit:

God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and² entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

¹"The Christian Message Today", pp.19-20.

²II Corinthians 5:19 (RSV).

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PART II

A THEOLOGY FOR PREACHING

CHAPTER I

DOCTRINE OF GOD

The Doctrine of God covers the whole of Christian theology. It is at least implicit in every one of D. M. Baillie's sermons. In this chapter I will examine the theological themes which are treated by Professor Baillie in his lectures on the Doctrine of God. The doctrine as it is preached follows no systematic outline as in the lectures, and it has been necessary to glean from as many sermons the themes which correspond to those in his lectures. This chapter will serve as an introduction to the full scope of Christian doctrine which follows; all the ensuing doctrines are dependent upon it, and it is incomplete without all the others. This is the first chapter of a story, "a story with a plot".

The Doctrine Preached

The major thrust of Baillie's preaching on the Doctrine of God is not directed toward arguments con-

cerning the necessity, essence or existence of God. His major thrust is an affirmative answer to the question, "Does belief in God matter?" How is this question presented in the sermons? How is it given an affirmative answer which points toward faith in God?

In a sermon entitled, "Does Belief in God Matter?",¹ Baillie presents an argument which places this question at the root of the contemporary quest for religious truth. This is not the question which was first asked a generation ago. Recalling his own quest, Baillie preaches:

When I was a student, some of us were deeply perplexed about religious belief; as to whether it could be justified, whether it was true, whether one could really be quite certain of the existence of God. . . . That was quite a common experience. And it was not a new experience in the early decades of this century. You can't read the serious literature of the nineteenth century--Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning--without noticing the same thing there.²

But the contemporary question is less abstract and more penetrating.

It often seems to me today that young people have a different kind of perplexity now and are asking a different kind of question. They are not asking, "Can we be sure of the existence of God?",

¹"Does Belief in God Matter?" 2 Timothy 1:12 (un), 1940.

²Ibid., p. 1.

but "Does it matter?". They are not asking anxiously, "Can it be true?", but "Is it relevant?" . . . To expand the question a little: Even if it can be shown to be true that there exists an invisible infinite Being, a supreme and perfect Person whom you call God, what difference does it make to my daily life and aims and ideals whether I make such speculative flights of thought or not, any more than it makes a difference whether I know of the existence of some distant star which is not visible with the naked eye? I can live my life and pursue my aims and ideals without any such belief.¹ And do I lose anything? Do such beliefs matter?

To frame the question more precisely a further question is asked: "What are you going to live for?"² What are the aims and ideals which we claim as efficacious in driving us toward worthwhile goals?

The development of a good character is such an ideal. "The awakening soul of youth tends to give that answer. 'I am going to cultivate my character, make myself into a pure noble good man or woman.'³ But the man who predicates his existence on the establishment of good character in himself is faced with the paradox of moralism which negates all his efforts.

Many a young fellow, with the earnestness of awakening youth, has tried making lists of his faults and temptations to be overcome, drawing up rules and working away at the business of moral self-culture. At first he never noticed what a

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 2.

³Ibid., p. 3.

self-centered aim it was. But he soon does. After all the very thing we have to get rid of is our selfishness. And you can't do that by a self-centered method. So you discover that all your self cultivation is not making your character beautiful. . . . In some emergency situation, perhaps, you find yourself instinctively sacrificing other people's interests to your own, and you make the unwelcome discovery that you are as selfish as ever.

In that way you discover what I might call the moralist's paradox. Everybody has heard of the hedonist's paradox. If you aim directly at happiness you will not attain it. But this other paradox is even deeper, though many moralists have never noticed it: If you aim directly at goodness, you will not attain it. The quest of character defeats itself.

Another ideal which motivates many men and women is material security. But here too, we encounter a paradox which must drive us further, the paradox of acquisitiveness. Control of property and financial security, as important as they are, can often be elevated beyond their rightful place to a point of ultimate concern.

I think Jesus used to be tremendously impressed with the sadness, the almost ridiculous sadness, of the man that comes to that pass: The man who gains the whole world but loses himself, because he hasn't got anything to him but his possessions; his property has taken the place of his soul and then suddenly when one night his life comes to an end he has nothing left. . . . And of course the same thing is true in a broad sense not only of those who live for possessions, but of all who live just by their instincts, to gratify their instincts, for gain or

¹Ibid., pp. 3-4.

pleasure or power, to get what they can. They get all and lose everything, with their motto: What I can get is my portion.

The ephemeral nature of possessions and property creates a deep-seated insecurity in many men, an insecurity which demands a firmer ideal upon which to build if they are to build with integrity and hope.

A nobler ideal which has fired the imaginations of many is the service of mankind. Here the problems of introverted self-interest seem to be avoided. "You are going to forget yourself, and serve your fellows, join the great perennial crusade against human ills, do some good in the world and try to make the world a better place and leave it a little better than you found it."² Certainly the man who lives up to this high aim has begun to plumb the depths of true meaning in life, but even here an analysis of human experience exposes the inadequacy of the ideal of service in and of itself. If you venture forth with the ideal of service as the sole object for which you will live,

you will very soon make some very strange discoveries. Very soon you will discover that the world is a much bigger place than you imagined, much more difficult to redeem than you thought, and that there is much more wrong with it than a mere disarrangement which we can put right by a little pulling together.

¹"The Lord is my Portion" Lamentations 3:24 (518), 1929-34, p. 3.

²"Does Belief in God Matter?", p. 5.

How many eager souls have made that discovery in these dreadful years in which we live! And then you begin to wonder whether your puny little efforts are making any difference or whether they are worthwhile.

The disillusionment which so often results when ideals are pitted against experience demands a higher aim in life than service to mankind.

And service, the giving of oneself to others, is accompanied by another defect which negates its value as an ideal by which to live. Upon closer examination your service to mankind takes on a self-centered dimension.

You begin to suspect that it isn't very unselfish. There is a good deal of self satisfaction about it. You like being busy with good works, because it makes you feel good. So you have thrown yourself into a fussy activity. But you begin to suspect it, and to suspect yourself. You come to ask yourself; "What right have I to try to change the world into a better₂ place? I have much more need to be changed myself."²

Once again the paradox of morality forces us to look further.

The ideal of building a good character is a noble ideal but we are forced to look further if we are to avoid becoming turned in upon ourselves. The drive to make

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 6.

good use of our material gifts, to increase the material security of ourselves and those with whom we love, is a worthy drive to be accepted with integrity, but we must look further if our property and security are not to become an insecure end in themselves. The service of mankind is a noble aim, but the inherent difficulties of the task and the tendency toward self-righteousness force us to look for a higher aim in life. It is at this point that belief in God makes a difference. If we press on for an answer to the question of what we are going to live for, the word "God" becomes relevant.

What does the word "God" mean to those who as Christians believe in Him? Not a remote and solitary monad whose existence we establish at the conclusion of a train of speculative argument, but the infinite Love which is at the heart of the universe, the source and aim of existence, the origin of all we call our ideals, the one real link between ourselves and our fellows, the one reality worth living for, our Heavenly Father.

The aims and ideals which drive us to greater heights are functions of God's love which draw us to Him. Our moral consciousness is confronted by the paradox of morality, not in order to negate morality, but to point us toward its source. The paradox of morality serves to draw our consciousness of moral demands away from a static,

¹Ibid., p. 7.

impersonal conception of morality to an awareness of its creative purpose.

What we call the moral law is not a dead impersonal law at all. It is living and personal; it is God's love pressing upon us perpetually persuading us to love our fellows.¹

The question, "Does belief in God matter?" is raised by experience which is morally conditioned. The answer to the question is given within the context of human experience. True, it is belief in God who breaks into human experience, but the language used to describe this phenomenon is not the language of metaphysical speculation concerning the nature of God, as much as it is the language of experience describing something that has happened.

Now when I really come to believe and trust in that God, that covers and transforms everything--all my cultivation of my character, all my serving of mankind--it is all transformed now and made right and wholesome. Now my mind will no longer be fixed on my own character, but on the blessed will of God. And when I fail, and realize my failure, when I see my selfishness, instead of brooding with fallen pride upon my own poor spoilt character, I feel ashamed of having sinned against the love of God. That makes it even worse. But then it makes it better because now, instead of being merely sick of myself, I can confess my sin to God and accept his forgiveness. And if God forgives me and accepts me still, that matters more than all my wretched character, and I can make a new beginning. But can I really make a

¹ Ibid.

new beginning if I can't change my selfish character? Ah well, I can't change my character by trying to cultivate it. But our characters do get gradually changed in this daily recurring process of confession and forgiveness. God's love slowly cures our selfishness and kindles in our hearts at least a tiny little fire of love to our fellow creatures, so that we begin to love God in them and them in God.¹

Now our service of mankind

is no longer a self important round of good works. Now we get away from the intolerable priggishness of trying to do people good when we don't really love them. Now we take our humble place in the great human family, we accept the spirit of community, we forget and lose ourselves in the fellowship of others and so enter on the genuine service of mankind. Even in those moments when our fellows seem unworthy and unloveable we can serve them for the sake of the love of God of which we are so unworthy ourselves. . . . Now we know that we are not redeeming the world, but God is.²

The question, "Does belief in God matter?" is raised by the human need for forgiveness which cannot be met by self-centered character building; by the need for hope and confidence with which to meet the future which cannot be met by the acquisition of possessions; by the need for love which is absent from a self-centered confidence in one's ability to serve mankind. These three needs, forgiveness, hope and love, which cannot be met by our own efforts, point toward the vital relevance of

¹ Ibid., p. 8.

² Ibid., p. 9.

an affirmative answer to our question. The meeting of these needs in human experience points toward the objective reality of a God who acts. It remains to be seen how Baillie describes these acts.

Our Knowledge of God:

The knowledge of God is always, "knowledge mingled with wonder".¹ Our knowledge of God and his acts is always fragmentary and incomplete. The conscious awareness of this fact is the beginning of true wisdom, not only when we are dealing with the knowledge of God, but in other areas of human knowledge as well. The element of mystery is a prerequisite of any quest for knowledge, it is the unknown in the world that drives on to a fuller understanding of our environment.

We look upon the face of nature, beautiful in all its changes; and we sometimes feel that it is but the garment which clothes a profound mystery. We look on human life, the human soul, ourselves our neighbours. But what are we? Whence come we? Again, in spite of all our knowledge there is a great cloud of mystery. We look at the fact of death, and try to see beyond it and to imagine what lies on the other side. But we cannot imagine it and our minds are helplessly lost when we try to do so. . . . We try to look forward into the future of our lives on earth and we cannot do it, except to a very limited extent. . . . But perhaps it is the troubles and miseries of

¹ "Scattered saying of Jesus: No. 1" (553), 1930-33, p. 13.

life that above all fill us with the sense of mystery. There are so many wretched things that don't seem to admit of any decent explanation.

Mystery is a pre-requisite and component of all human knowledge, so it is with the human knowledge of God. The unknown moves us to seek knowledge; the unknown complements knowledge. Mystery is not something to be feared, but a challenge to be accepted. Paradox plays a strong part in Baillie's theological thought, not because paradox is an end of knowledge, but because it challenges the thinker to press on. We can never rest on paradox but must press on, preserving the inherent tension, into the life of faith. Knowledge of God comes with an acceptance of His mystery.

For there is a whole world of inscrutable mystery surrounding all our beliefs about God, and it is salutary to be made to realize it. Everything that we say or sing about God is but an attempt to put into our poor blundering human words something that can never be perfectly expressed in human words; stupendous divine realities too great to be grasped by human minds or comprehended in human categories. When we forget this we are apt to become smug and self-satisfied, narrow-minded and intolerant, in our religious beliefs, as if we were in possession of the whole truth, and all other traditions must be wrong. We need to be reminded that God cannot be contained in any of our statements: He breaks through them all, and makes us think again.²

¹"The Secret Things and the Things Revealed", Deuteronomy 29:29 (578), 1923-31, pp. 3-4.

²"The Mystery of the Trinity", Out of Nazareth, pp. 70-71.

Yet the knowledge of God is not simply a matter of mystery. The very nature of God's action in human affairs involves our real knowledge of his activity. There is more than mystery in our apprehension of His acts;

mystery is not enough. It is a very good thing to have an aura of mystery round every kernel of religious belief. But it would be a very poor thing to have the mystery without the kernel. We can't live on mere mystery. Moreover it is highly important to learn that in the New Testament this word 'mystery' never means sheer mystery. It always means a divine secret which it has pleased God to reveal to men; a secret so mysterious that we could never begin to discover it for ourselves by a human search, if God had not taken the initiative and given us the clue. But he has done this in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. And so the mystery of our religion might be described as God's open secret: a floodlit patch of truth which fades off all round about, into thick clouds of darkness, but which is enough to give us what we need, a faith to live by, in this rough and tumble world.

Knowledge of God comes through His actions within the realm of human experience, actions through which God has revealed Himself to us. Our very quest for knowledge of God, moved by His mystery and met by His self revelation, is all the work of a prevenient God. Our questions and His answers are both His work.

It is God Himself that makes us ask these questions because He means to answer them. Or, in other words, it is not just a matter of human discovery, but of divine revelation. Through countless ages men have

¹Ibid., p. 72.

been asking and seeking. And through all these ages God, who prompted us to ask and seek, has been revealing Himself, revealing the nature of His will to men. That happened especially in ancient Israel, and we have the record of it in the Old Testament; and above all in Jesus Christ, and we have the witness of it in the New Testament, and all that has come to us in the Church of Jesus Christ, a great deposit, a great patrimony of truth about God.¹

The witness of Scripture and the witness of the ongoing Church (the limits of which remain a mystery in God's hands) describe the content of the knowledge men have of the objective actions of God.

But the content of our knowledge of God must be met by our experience of this knowledge. How does knowledge of God make a difference? What are the characteristics of this knowledge when it is found within the heart of men?

Mystery and revelation, the dual nature of the knowledge of God points to the characteristic manifestation of trust. A story is told about

Marshall Turenne, who was Marshall of France in the time of Louis XIV. One night, when he was going round the camp unknown to his soldiers, he overheard some of the younger men complaining (as we should say, "grousing") about the discomforts

¹"The Secret Things and the Things Revealed",
p. 6.

of the march. Then he heard an old soldier, newly recovered from a severe wound, speak up and say: "You don't know our father. He would not have made us go through such fatigue unless he had some great end in view, which we can't yet make out." Isn't that just what, by Christian faith, we must say about God? Wasn't that exactly how Jesus was always trying to make people think and feel about God? "Have faith in God"--it was the very heart of his message. There are many things in our lives that make it extraordinarily difficult from time to time to trust in God. But this is what we have to learn if we would be good soldiers of Jesus Christ--to admit there are many things we can't understand, and then go on with Paul to say: "But I know whom I have trusted, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to Him." [2 Tim. 1:12]¹

The knowledge of God is experienced as trust in One Who has the end or purpose of life in view and One Who will carry out this purpose to its appointed end.

But trust in God is not a passive matter. Knowledge of God and His will is also characterized by obedience.

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the word of this law." [Deut. 29:29] That is the constant simple duty of the good soldier. Very often we cannot understand, sometimes it may be extremely difficult to trust, sometimes the great Commander-in-Chief will seem very far away from a common soldier . . . and it is very hard to see and feel the glory of the campaign whose plan he cannot follow, but whose hardships he has to endure. He feels like a pawn on the board, and there isn't much romance

¹Ibid., p. 8.

about it. But there are always his daily orders, and his first duty is to obey . . . That always remains. Even when the glory is dim, the path of duty remains, the clean chivalrous loving path of the Christian life, the simple following of Jesus Christ, honest obedience to the will of God. That is always fundamental.

Here again we see Baillie's emphasis upon the fundamental character of the moral consciousness. Obedience to one's conscience runs headlong into the debilitating paradox of moralism when the dictates of the conscience are thought to be internally generated. But when one's conscience is informed by the content of the knowledge of God, obedience becomes not only possible but an imperative laid upon life from without. At rock bottom, the knowledge of God is characterized by obedience to a conscience informed by the content of this knowledge. The knowledge of God is not an abstract or speculatively academic matter. It is the wedding of demand and obedience. These two are never absent from human experience and there is always the opportunity for knowledge of God in obedience to the demands of love.

The knowledge of God is also characterized by wonder. There is an element of surprise and amazement which accompanies the quest for such knowledge. Those

¹Ibid., pp. 9-10.

who have come to a knowledge of God "have passed through this experience of wonder and surprise and amazement: it has played a part in their experience. The quest has been characterized by wonder."¹

Wonder is a characteristic of the quest both in prospect and in retrospect. When confronted by the content of the knowledge of God, who is not driven to wonder?

- . Do we never wonder at it and about it? God, invisible, infinite, everywhere present, immortal love, giving us Jesus Christ, speaking to us through even Christ's cross, calling us to receive from him forgiveness, renewal, strength, fellowship, light, joy, peace. . . . Do you never wonder at it all? Did you never wonder, first of all, in a bewildered questioning sort of way, with the wonder of a seeker who hasn't found?²

And even after a partial knowledge of God has been attained, the element of wonder is still present. This is because the content of knowledge is not a fixed body of truths which can be predicted, it is rather a kind of knowledge which is addressed to each individual in his own place, it is addressed to men who respond in different ways because they bring different frames of reference to the encounter. In retrospect, there is profound wonder at the unexpected

¹"Scattered Saying of Jesus, No. 1", p. 6.

²Ibid., pp. 8-9.

personal nature of the knowledge of God.

Did you never wonder afterwards, when you had begun to find and to see the truth for yourself, wonder again in a different sort of way--slowly, gradually, joyfully--because the finding was different from what you had pictured, and at first you hardly realized it was the real thing; but then if it was different from what you expected (because each soul is different from every other), it was better than you expected?

The process of knowing God is always a matter of anticipation and reflection, prospect and retrospect; it is never complete and it is never uninformed by previous experience. In all these there is an element of wonder, yet this wonder is not to be confused with the remote wonder of one who "senses" the numinous from afar. The wonder of which Baillie speaks is always an involved wonder where the source of wonder is not totally other than the man who perceives. The human apprehension of God is never sheer wonder, "it is knowledge mingled with wonder".²

Our knowledge of God is not always a welcome knowledge. Because of its character of personal address, the knowledge of God also involves deep self-knowledge.

¹Ibid., p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 12. See below (p.52) for Baillie's disagreement with Otto's idea of the "numinous".

Preaching on Jonah 1:3, Baillie presents the side of knowing God that makes us want to flee from his presence. There are

men and women who have uneasy consciences, a sense of guilt, a knowledge that there have been things in their lives that were wrong. And they don't want to know it, to see it, to feel it. They feel as it were, a hand pressing on them, a voice speaking to them, speaking very plain--kind and firm and plain. And they know it is God, the searching voice of God, the searching presence of God, that will uncover every secret in their lives and make them see and know themselves. . . . People flee from God, like Jonah, because God is calling them to do something they don't want to do. . . . People are afraid of being made to see the wrong in their lives, because they don't want to put it right. Some wrong in their business perhaps; something shady, or something upon which at least they can't ask God's blessing; something that they know is not according to God's will, something that they know they ought to give up, and if they really lived in God's presence, God would make them give it up; something they are leaving undone that they ought to do, and they don't want to be always hearing God's voice calling them to do it. So they stop their ears and run away from God like Jonah.

There are an infinite variety of escape mechanisms by which men avoid true self-knowledge: "trying always to be in the company of other people, never alone, always talking, always busy"; "salving their consciences with the praise of men, enjoying public esteem"; filling up their lives "with countless activities, as if they

¹"Jonah Rose up to Flee", Jonah 1:3 (521), 1929-33, p. 7-8.

must always be doing something."¹ And the man who pauses for a moment, pauses to consider God's will for him even where it may run counter to the life he has been leading, this man comes to see himself in a penetrating light. "Self-knowledge is one of the things that comes very sure and plain when we get into God's presence. To know God will be to know ourselves."²

But the knowledge of God is far from a mere subjective introversion, as wholesome as self-awareness may be. There is in the knowledge of God an objective foundation which undergirds all the changing circumstances and attitudes of life. This permanent, abiding undercurrent is the joy which accompanies knowledge of God Who is permanent, abiding, unwavering in His love. This is not to say that those who know God are chronically manic, perpetually feeling joyful with none of the more subdued and negative emotions. The joy which characterizes the knowledge of God is a calm, often quiet joy which springs from the ultimate security afforded by the abiding presence of God. The man who knows God has this joy.

¹Ibid., pp. 8-9.

²Ibid., p. 6.

Deep down beneath all the changes of circumstance, and the changes of mood and feeling, he has a fundamental joy, based on the things that abide. He has a deep well of happiness.

The knowledge of God is characterized by joy.

In so far as man knows God, he knows Him as Creator and himself as created. This lends to the knowledge of God its humble sense of dependence. This is not an emotion or feeling of dependence which comes and goes with the needs of the moment. The man who knows God is one who views his knowledge with a profound sense of humility.

His whole life is dominated by that sense of dependence. So he "prays without ceasing". Of course he is not thinking of God all the time. But his whole life is like a prayer. He has a deep sense of creatureliness—he knows and feels he is not the Creator, and he is not an independent being—he is a creature, dependent on God for everything good, in body and soul.

And further, this knowledge of our dependence upon God, is a knowledge characterized by gratitude. "There is nothing closer to the heart of Christianity than the spirit of thankfulness."³ The conscious knowledge of God is always filled with gratitude for its "tremendous debt to the generosity of God."⁴ Baillie recalls;

I remember a friend of mine saying to me that he believed gratitude to God was the very source and foundation of all Christian living. That means,

¹"Practical Atheism and the Spirit of Religion" Psalm 10:4, Thessalonians, 5:16-18, (629), 1933-49, p. 6.

²Ibid., p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 10.

⁴Ibid., p.12.

above all, gratitude for what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

The Christian's knowledge of God is characterized throughout by gratitude.

Knowledge of God is more than an emotive response to the content of such knowledge. It involves the conscious exercise of rational facilities. The purpose of Baillie's preaching was to inform the minds of his hearers. In preaching to those who seek to have a knowledge of God, he concludes a sermon entitled, "Intelligent Christianity", with these words:

You will think much and often of what you believe, that you may know the Gospel and never be ashamed of it, but be able, with both heart and mind, to give a reason for the hope that is in you.²

The knowledge of God is perhaps education at its highest and best. The truly educated man is not one whose mind is merely filled with information, he is not one who can recite at length facts, figures and concepts. The truly educated man is the man who can respond to new situations in an informed manner, his knowledge is never knowledge in vacuo, but knowledge in response. If there

¹ Ibid., p. 10.

² To Whom Shall we Go?, p. 65.

is any kind of knowledge that comes to a man demanding only the exercise of mental acumen, "it is quite certain that the knowledge of God comes in a different way altogether. It is an assurance, an understanding, a revelation, given to humble honest obedient hearts."¹ The knowledge of God is characterized by an assurance which enables the knower to expose his knowledge as he seeks to understand God's hand at work in new situations. Furthermore, this assurance commits the knower to participation in new situations. The spectator's attitude is not the attitude of one who knows God.

Nothing can be more unreasonable than the attitude of those who are content to be benevolent spectators, pursuing the truth only in an otiose and uncommitted way, hardly expecting to find anything positive; as if life could wait indefinitely, and almost as if genuine seeking² and finding and believing did not greatly matter.

The knowledge of God demands the keen exercise of every faculty possessed by man, not the least of which is his mind. And the knowledge of God demands the exercise of the mind in a manner which is committed to both the content of such knowledge and the context in which knowledge touches existence.

These are the characteristics of the knowledge

¹"Science and Religion", To Whom Shall we Go?, p. 169.

²Ibid., p. 171.

of God which emerge from the sermons: trust in a transcendent God who cares is coupled with obedience to the immediate demands of our moral consciousness; the magnetic fascination of wonder in the face of a personal encounter with God who addresses man is matched with the repellent fear of coming to know oneself; joy and a humble sense of dependence and gratitude are wedded to the committed and honest exercise of man's rational faculties. The one word which sums up all these characteristics of the knowledge of God is faith, we know God by faith. Faith can be identified by all the characteristics we have examined, but the matter cannot rest here. The affirmative answer to the question "Does it matter?" has appeared throughout, but it will be well to examine further the way in which Baillie describes how faith matters in concrete experiential terms.

In a sermon entitled "Faith", Baillie notes; "as we read the Gospels it is a most remarkable thing how Jesus always seems to be looking for this quality of faith."¹

Jesus prized faith almost above all else. Well when we examine the Gospels further to see what he meant by it, we find that he meant something extraordinarily simple and practical and human. He didn't mean any-

¹"Faith", I Corinthians 13:13 (25), 1921-41, p. 3.

thing mysterious or mystical or unreasonable. He didn't mean anything sanctimonious or unnatural. He didn't mean anything theological or theoretical. The people whose faith he admired and commended were often people who knew no theology at all, and who would not have been called pious in the ordinary sense of the word. . . . One time we are told it was a heathen woman of Canaan who wanted Him to heal her daughter, and persisted pluckily and confidently in her request whatever he said to her. She was a heathen, and knew nothing of the God of Israel or of Jesus and his aims, except that he had the reputation of being able to heal diseases. And yet Jesus said to her, "O woman, great is thy faith!" Another time it was a pagan soldier who showed the same brave, alert spirit of confidence in asking Jesus to cure his servant. That was all there was, no word of religion. And yet Jesus said, "I have not found such faith as this even in Israel."¹

Faith, in these examples, is less a matter of religion than it is a matter of a trusting obedience, a confident dependence on a healing power from without that breaks into the realm of existence. The references to faith in the Gospels are often of that sort. "Very often it was a case of disease or suffering and [Jesus] wanted the patient to regard the situation in a confident spirit-- that was what he called faith."²

Where we find the Gospel writers recalling instances of faith or lack of faith, these instances are usually associated with very practical problems of everyday life. They are less often cases where it is a matter

¹Ibid., pp. 5-6.

²Ibid., p. 6.

of an intellectual question than they are cases where the mind is wrestling with practical, tangible issues which involve the whole person.

When those fishermen-disciples of his lost their heads in a storm on the Lake of Galilee, Jesus said it was because they had no faith. When people made themselves old with worry about their livelihood, Jesus said it was because they had so little faith. When people spoke wearily of insurmountable obstacles and impossibilities, Jesus told them these words would not exist for them if only they had faith. Read through the Gospels looking for this word, and you will be surprised to see in what a practical human way it nearly always comes in. It was such a simple, almost unconscious thing; the spirit that made people willing to rise above their troubles and sufferings, that kept people from worrying, that kept them cool in danger, that made them dauntless in face of difficulties; a thing that had very little to do with theologies or mysteries, but had everything to do with the woes and problems and tasks of daily life. That is how the word "faith" appears in the ministry of Jesus.

And turning to the eleventh chapter of Hebrews:

To begin with you might think you had a much more abstruse and theological account of it, for it begins, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen". But before you have read many verses further you will see that here again we are absolutely in the realm of practice. We are hearing of brave deeds and noble choices, and great ventures, and heroic endurance. And we wonder perhaps what all this has to do with the subject. For [the author] doesn't seem to be dealing with faith at all. But he is, for that is his conception of faith and how it works. By faith Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith Moses chose poverty and danger instead of ease and luxury. By faith he carried out his great deliverance. "By

¹ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

faith men subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of the fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." . . . That is his conception of what faith is and how it shows itself. It appears as an utterly practical force, coming into human life to make men able to do and to endure, just as Jesus said it would when he looked for it among the peasants of Galilee.

Faith, the knowledge that God is creatively at work for good in the universe and in the human situations of this world, is a practical force which has appeared in the lives of men and women. It is further described as "a certain attitude to life. It is not just the holding of a set of doctrines. It is a certain way of facing the various elements of human life."² The knowledge that it is God who is at work in the world is not the sort of knowledge that can be proved, or even logically inferred, from an examination of the natural world in which we live. The knowledge that God is at work can, however, be articulated in terms which describe the practical force for good seen in human experience.

First Baillie rejects natural theology:

We look around us in the universe and see little trace of God; much evil, much chaos, much that seems haphazard. Many facts persuade us that there is no meaning in it at all, no purpose, no providence, no God. So we are sometimes disposed to take that dreary Godless view of life.

¹Ibid., pp. 7-8. ²Ibid., p. 9. ³Ibid.

Then he makes a brief description of faith in general and immediately proceeds to describe what he is talking about in concrete terms:

But then there rises up in our hearts something which tells us . . . that somehow, underneath all the chaos and evil there is a splendid purpose of good, . . . that is faith. And then it applies itself to all the situations of life. Sometimes a man is depressed by a consciousness of sin and failure and imperfection. And when he rises bravely above it, forgiven and undaunted, that is the work of faith. Another time a man has many worries confronting him. And the spirit that calmly keeps him from being worried by his worries--that is faith. Another man is engaged in a noble enterprise which simply seems impossible in face of all the difficulties. But he won't for a moment believe that it is impossible, and the thing that carries him over the incredible barriers, that is faith.

By faith God is known, it is "a matter of believing in God". But it is more than a profession of belief, it is more than the affirmation of formulations, it is "to believe in God in [a] practical way--the belief that comes to the same thing as courage and calm and confidence and indefatigableness--that is faith."² Faith in God as a living force can be described from these manifestations in our own lives, yet it also has its objective foundation. For Christians the criterion of faith, is the faith manifest in Jesus Christ.

That is what we Christians always come back to-- God is a great mystery, and our minds flounder about

¹Ibid., p. 10.

²Ibid., p. 11.

in thought and prayer, not knowing how to conceive or realize Him, tossed about by perplexed and shifting imaginations. But then we bring our minds back to Jesus Christ, how he spoke of God, how he prayed to God, how wherever he went he helped men to believe in the God he believed in, and his very presence made men see what God was really like, until their deepest instincts told them it was true.

Faith was definitively demonstrated by Jesus Christ, "the great believer in God".²

Faith is never a thing which you can prove in black and white. It has a different sort of argument, rising up within our hearts, if we will only dare to listen and believe. And it is Jesus that can help us to see it and feel and dare it. For he was the great believer in God. That is why the author of that old epistle [to the Hebrews] called him "the author and finisher of our faith".

The message of the Church concerning the faith of Jesus Christ comes alive as a compelling body of truth when we can give an affirmative answer to the question, "Does it matter in our human situation?" And an affirmative answer can be given when we describe what we have seen and heard and experienced of the creative, practical force for good that is at work within the context of human experience. Baillie preaches about knowing God by describing the content of Scripture and tradition as it

¹"God in Christ and in our Fellow Creatures", Out of Nazareth, p. 43.

²"Faith", p. 12.

³Ibid.

comes alive in the living experience of faith.

But the question, "Does belief in God matter?" is not adequately answered by simply describing our knowledge of His activity among men. What is the nature of that activity? Baillie defines God's activity by presenting the traditional "attributes" of God in terms which reflect human experience.

The Presence of God:

The "omnipresence of God" is a means of describing the experience wherein the phenomenon of guilt is universally present in man. It is a way of talking about God who addresses Himself to all men by raising in their minds a question as to their relationship with Him. A task of preaching is to enlighten men to the understanding that the simple matter of knowing that all is not always right in their own lives is a manifestation of God's presence. The sense of guilt is a universal experience; it is God who is omnipresent.

Preaching need not be pre-occupied with instilling a sense of guilt in the hearts of the hearers. It is already there. Preaching has the task of illuminating the reason for the presence of guilt. Preaching is addressed to

men and women who have uneasy consciences, a sense of guilt, a knowledge that there have been things in their lives that were wrong. And they don't want to know it, to see it, to feel it. They feel, as it were, a hand pressing on them, a voice speaking to them, speaking very plain--kind and firm and plain.

Given this universal experience of guilt, Baillie describes it in a way that opens up positive possibilities. His task is to illuminate men's understanding of guilt so that

they know it is God, the searching voice of God, the searching presence of God that will uncover every secret in their lives, and make them see and know themselves.²

The affirmation that God is omnipresent first raises the question in the mind of man; his sense of guilt is a manifestation of God's presence, His searching presence in the hearts of all men everywhere. Paul, preaching at Athens, looked upon the beauty and the wisdom of that ancient city and knew that even here he had a message which could illuminate the hearts of the Athenians. And he had another thought, he also knew that even in pagan Athens God was present, searching out the hearts of men. He might well have thought that

all mankind is dimly seeking God, and how even pagan worship was being directed towards the very same God whom the Christians worshipped, only the pagans didn't know very much about Him. That was, as we may say,

¹ "Jonah Rose up to Flee", p. 7.

² Ibid.

Paul's second and deeper and more sympathetic thought about the religion of Athens.

God's presence cannot be limited to a community which acknowledges His presence. No, God is universally present, even in the hearts of pagans. When we say God is omnipresent we are saying that God raises a question in the hearts of all men everywhere.

To proclaim the omnipresence of God is to affirm the universal experience of guilt as God raising a question in the hearts of men. But it is also to proclaim the universal redeeming activity of God. God is present at work in and through men who are beyond the pale of any exclusive community. This was the lesson Israel learned through the Exile. The tension between exclusivism and universalism was to follow them into the post-exilic period, but the die was cast in favor of the truth of universalism through the exilic preaching recorded in Second Isaiah. To the people who were cut off from a God they had tried to localize, the prophet of the exile proclaimed a message of comfort.

This great prophet stood up and told them in the most eloquent language, what no one had ever said so clearly before: Their God was not just the God of

¹"Life of Paul: (12) Paul at Athens," Acts 17:22-23 (263), 1922-25, p. 9.

Israel but the God and creator of all the world. . . . And so it was all from God, all that had happened and all that was happening, and He was their God and all would be well. . . . Even Cyrus, the Persian conqueror was just an agent in the hands of God, for after all their God was the God of all the earth. There was King Cyrus, a pagan prince, knowing and caring nothing about Israel or Israel's God. And yet, says this prophet, it was God who raised Cyrus, though he didn't know it. God raised him up to carry out his gracious purpose towards Israel. . . . What a great thought of God that was, and with it this prophet comforted his people. They were dejected and afraid and hopeless in the grip of their enemy. And the prophet said to them, as it were, "Have you forgotten God, omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal, maker and ruler of all the world and your guide,¹ and friend. "That was his great message to Israel."

The message that God is present in the lives of men even when they appear to be unpromising lives; the message that God is present in our own lives even when we seem to be in captivity, this message is truly a message of comfort. Baillie pushes right on to the pastoral comfort offered by the message of Second Isaiah:

You waken in the morning with weary eyes and weary heart, and you look without zest or joy into the day before you, as if your life were a captivity. But aren't you forgetting that the earth is God's and that through rain or shine the sun of His love is always shining, and that all things work together for good to those who love Him. That is the one really joyful message in all the world. Therefore no wonder the prophet of the exile said, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings . . . that saith unto Zion,

¹"The Prophets of Israel: (9) Deutero-Isaiah" Isaiah 40:1-2 (334), 1933, pp. 7-9.

'Thy God reigneth'", [Isaiah 52:7].¹

The presence of God transcends all boundaries. God cannot be localized within a particular community, within a particular nation, or within particular emotional states which seem more congenial to our thoughts of joy and gratitude than do moments despair or captivity. God is omnipresent.

The "omnipresence of God" is not a spatial metaphor. God is not omnipresent in space but in relationship. The experience of this presence of God is

God present in our lives in such a way that every day He forgives our failures and gives us a new start, and strengthens us by His friendship, and binds our hearts in love to our fellows, so that we can't help serving them.²

God's presence is universal in that forgiveness is given to all men in answer to the question raised by guilt. This is the joyful message which is ours to proclaim.

In summary, four themes emerge from Baillie's preaching under the heading of God's omnipresence; the universality of the question raised by the experience of guilt, the universality of the activity of God in giving the comforting answer of forgiveness, the incorporeality of God who cannot be localized within any limited context of existence, and the nature of His omnipresence as

¹ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

² "The Lord is my portion," p. 11.

presence in relationship manifest in positive and creative human relationships.

But before leaving the doctrine of God's omnipresence a qualifying theme must be examined. In a sermon on Isaiah 55:5, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near", Baillie qualifies, not God's omnipresence, but the human apprehension of His presence. God's presence, although unlimited by time and space, is by virtue of human insensitivity more readily apprehended in particular human situations.

There are periods of a man's life when religion comes easily, and other periods, other ages, when it does not come so easily. Shakespeare tells us that "there is a tide in the affairs of men", and there is indeed a spiritual tide when the soul is easily borne out upon the great deep of religion in the quest of God. And that tide will of course not last forever. These are plain facts of human life. And they put plain meaning into the words of our text, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near".

God's presence is more easily apprehended for the first time as a living force when one is young. Baillie observes that

most of the men and women who went down to the grave in a noble and religious old age were men and women who sought God while they were young. . . . They are

¹"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found,"
Isaiah 55:6 (168), 1919-1931, p. 2.

not the men and women who just began to think seriously of religion when youth was passing away, because they were getting on in life, and religion seemed to be the proper respectable thing for the head of the household. Religion is not a kind of standby for men when the best of life is past. That is a poor and mean way of thinking of it, and it is not by treating it so that anybody will ever enter into its secrets at all. . . . Of course a man may repent and turn, but then when youth is past it is not so easy to turn, and you are not so likely to turn. . . . If you want life to be a noble thing, give your life passionately to all that is noble while your heart is still fresh and young, while the glory of youth is still yours. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found", seek Him while you are young.

The noble ideals which mediate the presence of God to our apprehension are often received with enthusiasm and dedication in youth. The preaching ministry of the Church has a special obligation to frame its message in language apprehendable by the young.

There are also times and situations in life which stimulate our awareness of the questions raised by existence more readily than others.

There is a tide in the affairs of men, there is a spiritual tide in their souls, and they sometimes feel themselves being borne away from their old comfortable moorings in the shallows out into the deeps of life and the deeps of religion. Sometimes in the midst of our complacent worldliness we are suddenly disturbed as by a spiritual influence breaking in on our slumbering souls. We become dissatisfied

¹ Ibid., pp. 4-6.

with our poor past, we are filled with longings and yearnings for deeper things. Conscience speaks to us of our faults and failings, duty speaks to us of a higher way. The deep realities of religion come home to us and challenge us. We hear the voice of God. It is as if He had come near.

Once again Baillie's emphasis upon the fundamental character of our moral consciousness comes to the fore. The question raised by this consciousness is universal in all men, but there are times and places when the question is raised with painful force. It is at these times that the human heart is most naked and sensitive and open to the comforting truth of God's forgiving and healing presence. These opportunities are not to be stifled; they are to be welcomed as the searching hand of God which has found its mark.

One last word of caution is offered in this sermon concerning the perennial temptation to view the future as a guaranteed time for God to rest His hand upon the heart, when in fact we live and have a primary responsibility to the present.

We picture ourselves perhaps doing noble deeds, living a high and heroic and steadfast life. That is what we somehow would like to live and that is how we paint the future. But we never begin it. We trust the future to bring its own transformation, and so we put off our new beginning from day to day. The possibili-

¹ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

ties of the future, the romance of the future, the splendour of the future, that is what we dwell on as the present slips through our fingers.

But that is all a delusion. . . . What are we waiting for? Why are we not beginning? The opportunity for it will never be nearer than it is now. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." That means, above all, seek Him now.

The very preaching of this sermon provides an occasion for the apprehension of the presence of God. God is omnipresent, yet the human sense of His presence can be so dulled by habits of resistance and wishful thinking about the future that the attention to the immediate situation becomes of primary importance. The preacher should never underestimate the immediacy of the good news he proclaims. For someone in the congregation the sense of God's presence may never again be as urgent as it is at that moment.

The presence of God is universal in the framing and the answering of the basic question of existence, i.e. "Does man's relationship to God matter?" But this omnipresence of God must never dim our eyes to the way in which conditioning circumstances are used to stimulate our insensitive apprehension of His presence. Among the directions in which this truth can point us is the cen-

¹Ibid., pp. 10-11.

tral importance of preaching as a conditioning circumstance which can be used by God to stimulate the sense of His presence, indeed to reveal His presence.

The Power of God:

In the examination of the presence of God it has been noted that presence has a quality about it. When we speak of God's omnipresence we also point toward the power of His presence. The "omnipotence" of God is a way of describing a universal question and God's answer from a perspective which compliments the affirmation of his omnipresence.

The experience of human imperfection drives us to seek a power that swallows up our imperfection to the extent that we can creatively cope with life.

When you are weary of the hopeless task of making this world a better place, when you feel you are not fit for it yourself . . . what do you want then? You want some great influence that could, as it were, come down from heaven, and swallow up all your imperfections in its own perfection of beauty and goodness and light and love. Nay, you want not just some influence—you want that very Being who put in your heart the desire for a nobler character and a better world. . . . You want that God to come to you and forgive your imperfections of character and make them to be swallowed up in His love and send you out again in His service.

¹"The Lord is my portion", pp. 9-10.

The question raised by human imperfection is more than a desire to know our relationship to God, it is more than a desire to know that God is present. It is also the desire created by God in our hearts to know the power of his presence. We need to experience the unlimited power of His forgiveness. The question raised by the universal experience of imperfection is the question that seeks the answer of God's omnipotence.

The manner in which God's omnipotence is described in one of Baillie's sermons demonstrates the way in which doctrine can spring from Scripture and come to life when reflected by human experience. Taking the whole of Psalm 29, as the background, the affirmation in the final verse comes to life, "The Lord will give strength unto His people: "The Lord will bless His people with peace."

Throughout the Psalm the name of the Lord is repeated over and over again and in each case it augments the rising crescendo of a familiar experience of the psalmist.

Throughout the psalm it has sounded in tones of thunder and flood. It is a word picture of a terrible thunderstorm sweeping over the country from Lebanon in the North to Kadesh in the South. The thunder is conceived as the voice of God, breaking the mighty cedars, cleaving the rocks, stripping the forest. It is an august picture of the elemental powers of nature in all their force and terror. And through

it all there sounds this phrase, "The voice of the Lord", repeated over and over again. That tremendous exhibition of the forces of nature--that is a revelation of what the Lord is, so the poet means. And so you see that familiar name has a tremendous effect when in the last verse he suddenly drops his voice to tell us that, "The Lord will bless his people with peace".¹

The entire text of the Psalm is read by Baillie in the sermon, then he asks:

Is it some little God that is only the God of Israel, some God of limited power? No, it is the God who rules over all the forces of nature, who can make or mar the cedars of Lebanon, it is the Eternal King who sat enthroned at the flood. That is the tremendous meaning which the psalmist by his thunderous notes has put into the familiar name of "the Lord" before he comes to his quiet last verse. And so that is the God in whom he now rejoices and puts his trust, the eternal and omnipotent King.²

It will be well to pause for a moment to note the way in which Baillie is using natural phenomena to describe God's omnipotence. It has been shown that Baillie rejects natural theology in demonstrating that a mere examination of the natural world will not yield a proof or a rational explication of the existence of God.³ But this is not to place Baillie in the camp of those who reject natural theology so thoroughly that they make their only appeal to supernatural revelation. Natural phenomena

¹"The Lord will give strength unto His people," Psalm 29:11 (249), 1922-30, pp. 3-4.

²Ibid., p. 5.

³Supra, p. 139.

(as in the sermon under examination) and particularly the natural phenomena associated with personal relationships do provide for Baillie a valid means of explicating religious faith. Natural phenomena and human experience provide valid analogies for a rational explication of faith, for our language about God.¹

The human question which is addressed by the doctrine of God's omnipotence is inadequately answered by a simple deductive or inferential observation of nature. The processes of the universe seem largely indifferent to human endeavour.

The universe in which we live seems a universe of hard facts and blind laws. It often looks to us as if it were a mere material universe with no regard for the spirit of man. It seems to be full of senseless accidents and mishaps which upset our plans, just as if human life and love were of no account in it. Do the stars in their courses fight for us? No, the stars move indifferently on. The course of events works itself out, the laws and forces of nature have their way without regard to our desires and wishes. It looks for all the world like blind chance and dead matter, a material universe in which we are strangers, so that we may look helplessly to the skies, but there is no response.²

¹ See a parallel statement by John MacQuarrie, "The Philosophical School of Logical Analysis," Expository Times, LXXV, No.2 (November, 1963), p.47, where he offers a blueprint for "a new natural theology or rather, to make it clear that we have in view something new and different, a philosophical theology."

² "The Lord will give strength", p. 8.

But within the heart of man, manifest by the courageous elements which are observable in human experience, there is a deeper conviction. Men do not all live in continual despair. Creative enterprise and positive human relationships can readily be seen. The conviction that integrates human existence with the material universe is described as the power of God which is present throughout.

The central conviction of religion is that all that material universe, that seems so blind and indifferent, is but the garment of an infinite love, a spirit of love that rules everything, and that cares for us. "He is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand." And amid all the warring elements, the Lord who controls them all will bless his people with strength and peace.

The fruits of this conviction can be seen in the lives of men and women of courage. The conviction stems from experience, personal and in relationship to others. But the paramount example of the kind of life which is a living testimony to the strength behind this conviction is the life of Jesus Christ, a testimony to God's omnipotent love.

And so in Jesus, in his own life and faith and in his Gospel, there appeared more wonderfully than ever before the religious conviction that at the helm of

¹Ibid., pp. 8-9.

this great overpowering universe is a will and purpose of absolute love, which loves us, each one, infinitely, and which we can absolutely trust.

To speak of God's omnipotence is to describe the power, the strength and the peace, which underlies the kind of courageous and creative life seen supremely in Jesus Christ. It is also to describe the quality of life seen in men around us which reflects Christ, the quality of life which manifests the confidence that creative human enterprise and relationships are not meaningless and futile, but are integrated with, and a part of, the very power which is manifest in the creative processes of the universe. The "omnipotence of God" is a statement of faith which knows

that our noblest instincts of truth and duty and purity and love were given us by Him and that He will not play them false; to know that these things are not just a little dream but that the very universe is with us in them, to know that the stars in their course are fighting for us, because their maker is our God and we are His people; in short, to have the Eternal God as our Friend. Is there anything in all the world like that for giving strength and peace? Strength for all duties and all difficulties; peace amid all worries and all perplexities--that is what men and women have got from believing and trusting in God. History proves it. And we can prove it too.

¹Ibid., pp. 9-10

²Ibid., p. 11.

The existence of God is not formally proved by the experience of strength and peace, but this experience does provide an affirmative answer to the question, "Does faith in God's omnipotence matter?" Faith that creative human efforts are integrated with a greater creative power which governs the universe does yield a quality of life marked by confidence, courage and hope. The experience is provable, the experience affords us analogies by which we can rationally explicate our faith. The experience is summarily described in the language of faith as the conviction of God's omnipotence.

The Love of God:

The Love of God is the foundation upon which Christianity is built. "From the beginning Christianity was the doctrine of love."¹ Yet this fundamental doctrine is at the same time the one most easily reflected by human experience and the most difficult truth to apprehend because in its fulness it far outstrips all human analogies of love. The doctrine of the love of God addresses the question of the inadequacy of human love, a question raised vividly by a quick glance at any morning

¹"Love," I Corinthians 13:13 (217), 1921-41, p. 5.

newspaper. Yet the beginning of the answer is to be found within this same inadequate human context. The whole of preaching can be seen as the proclamation of God's love. Preaching describes the common human experience which says "We love" (however inadequately), and points to the meaning and foundation of this creative power in the world by proclaiming, "because He first loved us."

To say, "God is love", is to describe the creative power at work in the universe, particularly within the realm of human relationships; it is to describe the omnipresent omnipotence of God.

"What does the word "God" mean to those who as Christians believe in Him? Not a remote and solitary monad, whose existence we establish at the conclusion of a train of speculative argument, but the infinite love which is at the heart of the universe, the source and aim of our existence, the origin of all that we call our ideals, the one real link between ourselves and our fellows, the only reality worth living for, our Heavenly Father."

And he who speaks of God as "infinite love" is not speaking of something which is totally beyond the realm of human experience. The fact that we are finite creatures set down in a world among other finite creatures places an immediate responsibility upon us. We have a responsi-

¹"Does Belief in God Matter", p. 7.

bility to love those around us. An observation of any societal group shows that men have a freedom to chose to love or not to love, but the demand of any creative personal relationship is love. The universality of this experience is part of what is meant when we say, "God is love".

Because He is love He created us as free finite spirits, that we might live in fellowship with Him and with one another, (and these two things are inseparable). What we call the "moral law" is not a dead impersonal law at all; it is living and personal, it is God's love pressing upon us perpetually, persuading us to love our fellows. Whenever there springs in our hearts even a faint impulse of love to our fellow creatures, it is God's love that has kindled it. When we refuse His love and refuse to love our fellows and thus rebel against His blessed will, His love to us continues unabated, still pressing on us relentlessly, loving us no less though we are unresponsive, and calling us back. And that infinite love is the one power in the universe that cannot be defeated. It is undefatigable, invincible, it works its purpose out, it will be all in all. It is God Almighty.

The experience described by the assertion that God is omnipotent is further defined by the quality of His omnipotence, the quality of infinite love. It is not unimportant to say from our human experience "we love", because (as we shall see) all that the doctrine as preached has to say comes back to this statement with a renewed

¹ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

imperative. Baillie's emphasis is clearly upon the primary importance of God's love as it is manifest in human relationships. Man knows love even though at times it be only a "faint impulse"; it is upon this knowledge that the preaching of the love of God can build because faith says, "it is God's love that has kindled it."¹

In a sermon on the unlimited love which Jesus proclaimed, Baillie develops five stages or circles of love, each one limited until we come to the last. In pointing to the love of God as seen in Jesus the sermons begins by building on limited human love.

Love was not a new thing, or a new commandment. But mankind had always been drawing limits, limiting it simply to one's own friends, limiting it to a certain circumscribed circle, each man loving his own circle and leaving others out in the cold.²

And this same limited love was taken by Jesus who "deepened it, and widened its scope, and wiped out all limits for it."³ Beginning with the human experience of love in its most limited context, Baillie widens its scope in order that we may have a glimpse of the love of God which Jesus proclaimed.

¹ Ibid.

² "For if ye love them which love you . . .," Luke 6:23 (233), 1921-33, p. 1.

³ Ibid.

The first stage is love to one's family, That is the smallest circle, and that is where everyone begins. To love one's kith and kin, that is the starting point . . . Surely there are not many even of the most degraded of human beings who haven't got in them at least a spark of love for their own families. Even debased and savage tribes often show a tremendous deep and tender family love. Even degraded criminals have often a passionate love for their own children. Even in quarters where you might think there was nothing good or gracious or promising, you will often find the roots of family affection. And that is something. That is the beginning of something beautiful. It is the beginning of love.

The human, finite relationship found within the family where love is present provides a valid analogy which can point to the infinite love of God. A positive approach to life and love in this world is a key to constructive preaching on the love of God, indeed to all preaching. There is a danger of totally negating what we know of human love in the face of the love demonstrated by Jesus. Preaching must take the contemporary yet fragmentary experience of God's love seriously if it is to be true to its calling.

And love, still within the immediate context of human experience, can be widened further than family love.

The second stage is "Thou shalt love thy neighbour". That is when love begins really to look abroad and to expand. I have been speaking of family love as the beginning, but of course it is only the beginning. And really, if we haven't got beyond that, we have hardly begun. The man who has no regard but for his family--he has not got very far. . . . It almost reminds one of the animal in the jungle, full of tenderness for her own young, but a fierce enemy to all the world beside. And that is not enough. . . . We pass beyond the love of one's family, and we come to this. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour."

¹Ibid., p. 3.

And so the circle is widening. Men begin to carry into the world outside something of that goodwill which they have for their own kith and kin. And so there is a beginning of social life, with all that it means; co-operation and peace and justice and public spirit and sometimes a helping hand and all that is meant by being a good neighbour.

The experience of the cohesive and creative power of love within the family points beyond the family to a larger, yet still select community. From the demands of love within a limited social structure we are pushed on to a larger understanding of love. Here we begin to pass from the reflected experience of universal man to the experience reflected in the life of a particular man.

The third stage is reached when Jesus points out that your neighbour means everybody. . . . You remember how Jesus put it. A lawyer was arguing with him, and tried to evade his teaching by asking, "And who is my neighbour?" We have to love our neighbours. Yes, but that is a vague word, and we can easily draw the line where we please. For who is our neighbour? Well, Jesus answered the question by telling the story of the Good Samaritan, . . . it means anybody and everybody who needs your help, or to whom you can be of service.

And you see how that extends the range of our love and goodwill. We are so apt to go about the world closing up our hearts against people, in a cold hard suspicious business spirit, always on the defensive, always ready to be up in arms for our own rights, and setting our hands against other people. We are too apt to be always asking "What claim has this man on me?", "Am I my brother's keeper?", or "Who is my neighbour?" And that is the sort of thing that embitters human life and causes misunderstandings and divisions and heart-

¹ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

burnings; and even industrial strife; and even international war. If only we could learn to treat every man as our neighbour, and give up sparring and scoring, suspecting and imagining evil, and standing on our own dignity and on our own rights.

"If only we could . . . ". At this point we begin to glimpse a kind of love which is not readily reflected by universal human experience because men do not by nature offer love spontaneously. Love, within the context of human existence, is offered in response to love given by another. Love given which is not met by the response of love returned is frustrated and further demands to love are met by the honest admission of inability, "If only we could". Does the doctrine of the love of God provide an answer to this question raised by the inadequacy of human love?

Before jumping to a conclusion we must examine further the widening demands Jesus placed on love. To view all mankind as our neighbour is a big step beyond merely giving love to man in response to love received from him.

But we haven't yet anything like come to the end of the love Christ demanded. And the next stage is this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." We may be prepared to love our neighbours in the way of doing a good turn now and then. But we are

¹ Ibid., pp. 6-8.

asked to do something more than that. We are asked¹ to love our neighbours as much as we love ourselves.

This idea is not a uniquely Christian one. We hear of it in the Old Testament long before Jesus brought this demand to those who would follow him. The idea has its humanly rational foundation but Jesus sought to make the concept of community more than a mere matter of a rational recognition, but also a matter of love. To recognize that one is but a small and dependent part of a group is easily done by the intellect, but the implications of this awareness have to be borne out by active love if the awareness is to be creative. Baillie puts it:

For what am I? I am simply one man among others, no more to God than the others, no more important than all those around. And I have to learn to feel that, not simply as a matter of logic but as a matter of love; to love my fellow creatures in such a way that I don't think of myself first, but of the common good and the welfare of the great brotherhood around me; loving my neighbour as much as I love myself."

Is this marriage of reason and love an unrealistic impossibility? Even though this is a step beyond the sort of love which is a natural response, the expected give and take within a family or selected group, is it something totally strange to human experience? Baillie observes

¹Ibid., p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 10.

that this is not the case.

Perhaps that all sounds like mere talk. But after all there have been many men and women, in all ranks and grades of life who really learned to live unselfishly--utterly unselfishly--without any thoughts of personal gain or glory or success, but with a pure desire to be of service in this world, to help their fellows, to bear the burdens of the sad, to make the world better for the unfortunate; or it may be even simply to spread light and peace and love about them in private life, among their fellowmen in a humble sphere. Most of us certainly have a great deal of self in our whole outlook. But it is not impossible to be unselfish. Some have attained it. And in any case that is the ideal that Jesus has held up to us--not simply to love our family, not simply to love our neighbours, not even if we take our neighbour in the widest sense--but still higher, still more seemingly impossible, to love our neighbours as much as ourselves.

A positive examination of human experience is an essential part of preaching, for more demands to love in a high selfless way are inevitably met with the despairing reply, "If only we could." However if the demands are presented together with the fact that these demands have been met by men and women in this world, the demands become possibilities. Preaching, like the entire Gospel which is a "story with a plot", tells a story in the aorist indicative; it tells of that which has happened and that which has happened within the concrete realm of human experience. Human analogies of love fall short of the love of God,

¹Ibid., pp. 10-11.

but the love of God has been manifest in Christ and imperfectly in the lives of countless men and women; it is of these instances which have happened that we tell.

Having seen how neighbours, in the widest sense, have been loved with the same concern men have for themselves, the scope of love has still to be widened. What of self-negating love? What of loving those who by their life and hostile actions debase and negate our own life? What of loving our enemies?

That is the climax; that is what the circle of our love has finally to include; those who have wronged us, and slandered us, and persecuted us, those who hate us, those who have nothing but ill will toward us; we are to love them and seek their good with pure and guileless hearts. "Love your enemies", Jesus said.

Perhaps you think I've been straining this circle too far, asking too much of human nature; and that when we come to "Love your enemies", the circle is strained to the breaking point and we are far from common sense altogether.¹

Does this indeed pass beyond the realm of human possibility? We have seen that love which reflects human experience is love which is given in response to love. It is not simply spontaneous. Perhaps it is love offered in response to need as in the first four stages of Baillie's presentation, but it has here-to-fore always been love offered as a response and a response which expects a measure of love in return. But now at this

¹ Ibid., p. 11.

final stage the growing tension between the human capacity to love and the demands of Christ seems to come to the breaking point. Is this final kind of love impossible and therefore irrelevant to the human situation? Were it only a demand of Christ, the answer might be "Yes". The missing link is the human requirement to love in response and it is here that the love of God speaks directly to the question raised by the limited nature of human love. Concerning the final stage of loving your enemies,

Jesus didn't simply lay this law down; he gave an argument for it, he spoke of an incentive; and the great incentive he spoke of was the thought of the love of God. He said, "Love your enemies . . . that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven who makes the sun to shine on the evil and on the good; that ye may be the children of the highest, who is kind to the unthankful and the evil", [Matt. 5:44-45]. And when we think of that, of God who loves all men, even wicked men and unloveable men, and who loves us in all our unworthiness, then we feel moved to love even those of our fellows who least deserve it. Then we learn to love all men, even our enemies, because, while we were yet sinners, while we were yet His enemies, God first loved us.¹

The love of God which we begin to see in human love, when extended to its full scope and depth, is the very love to which we can respond when confronted with this last demand to love our enemies. The love of God

¹ Ibid., p.12.

answers the question of limited love which is a response by providing infinite love to which we can always respond, even love for those who do not return our love and who are downright hostile toward it.

Examples for this final stage of love are relatively few when we look upon the spectrum of human history. Here our preaching about that which has happened will be largely devoted to the life of Christ, in particular the love of God,

behind all the grace and love and kindness of Jesus, behind all his sacrifice and suffering, there lay the eternal love of God, . . . The love of God is the eternal source of all that Jesus was and did for us. And that is what Jesus leads up to and back to-- the love which moves the sun and all the stars, and which from all eternity is seeking us out and making all things work for our good.

Doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement, indeed all the doctrines which remain to be discussed will fill out the story; but all of Christian doctrine begins with and returns to the love of God. We have seen that this love is manifest in human relationships, it is not "wholly other". Human language and experiential analogies

¹"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . "
2 Cor. 13:14, (273), 1925-31, p. 9.

are used to point to the love of God. Words such as "father" are used to point to the relationship of love which enters our lives from without, but the love of God transcends the love of any earthly father with whom we may identify the term. When preaching about God as a loving Father it is well to make clear that we speak of a "God, who must be infinitely more loving than any earthly father."¹ But the approach which Baillie uses in describing the love of God is one which springs out of his understanding of love within the context of human experience.

It will be well to note the method by which this fundamental doctrine is developed in the sermons. Baillie begins by examining particular human experience where love is demonstrated. From the outset it is shown that love is a response. It is offered in response to love previously given. In a true sense the love that is in us is not our doing, it has been created from without. Yet in another sense it is our love for others. Here at the very core of human experience there is a paradox. The close parallel between this and the method used to des-

¹"If ye then being evil . . ." Matt. 7:11 (370), 1925-31, p. 6.

cribe the paradox of grace can be clearly seen.¹ Two points are to be noted: the paradox was not posited initially, it emerged from an examination of the human experience of love; and consequently the paradox is based on something that actually happens in experience, the two poles are not resolved but they do co-exist in one experience, viz. love.

From this point the circle of love is expanded until we arrive at the point where the discernable demonstration of prior love has all but vanished with the notable exception of the unlimited love demonstrated by Christ. There the prevenient love which elicits a response of love in Jesus becomes clearly an infinite love which knows no boundaries, i.e. the love of God. The love demonstrated by Jesus is most clearly the love of God. Thus it can be shown that the love which creates, and in fact is, the love with which we love is seen to be infinite love and that is the fundamental definition of the nature of God's activity. Faith, which has objective reference to the nature of love in human exper-

¹ A summary of theological method in which the human experience of the paradox of grace leads to an understanding of the Incarnation has been given; supra, pp. 75-83. The manner in which these themes are treated in the sermons will be discussed below in Chapters VI and VII.

ience, is then constrained to say, "We love because He first loved us." This statement of faith-experience addresses the human situation of limited love by challenging us to accept the prior presence of infinite love, thus enabling us to love even our enemies, because God first loved us.

Two more sermons will now be examined which further explicate this faith by describing the difference it makes and the real possibilities it opens up for creative relationships with our fellowman.

In the opening paragraphs of a sermon on 1 Corinthians 13 ("one of the greatest and profoundest chapters in all the Bible"¹), Baillie notes the necessity of seeing the hymn to love in its proper context in order to avoid the misunderstanding that love is being dealt with in an abstract sense rather than in a concrete sense, addressed to a practical, concrete situation in the Church at Corinth.

Really this wonderful chapter about love is a kind of digression in the middle of a close argument on a practical subject that was exercising the Corinthian Christians. And we can't understand it unless we remember that subject. . . .

Paul was discussing the subject of "spiritual gifts", as they were called. That means in modern language the various accomplishments which the

¹"Love", p. 1.

different Christians possessed and used in the service of the Church. . . . And among the Christians at Corinth there was apparently a little too much self assertion and rivalry in the use of these gifts. . . . And so as one member after another pushed himself forward in their meeting, there was sometimes a little confusion, a lack of order and decorum, a lack of courtesy and brotherliness.

After explaining the place and importance of spiritual gifts,

Paul suddenly turns round and tells them that all the spiritual gifts are worthless without love which is greater than all of them. . . . Paul, out of the middle of that tangled argument about spiritual gifts, makes a straight line for the one thing that really mattered,² most of all, the one really testing thing--love.

The centrality of the doctrine of love springs from the Biblical witness; from the beginning of Christian language about God, love has been central.

From the beginning Christianity was the doctrine of love. Jesus has taught men to love their neighbours and to love their enemies. And in the picture of the final judgement he made everything turn upon whether people had done for their fellows, "the little nameless unremembered acts of kindness and of love". We know that was the heart of Christianity. And it is all over the New Testament. When you turn to the Epistles of John, it seems to occupy almost the whole horizon. It is the test. He says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren . . . He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him".

¹ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

² Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[1 John 3:14, 4:16] That is John. Yes, and when you turn to Paul, it is perhaps more surprising to find him putting love in the first place.

Baillie goes on to describe, by direct exposition, love and the difference it can make in a specific situation.

"Love suffers long and is kind": that is, when we love our fellows we are not harsh and impatient and exacting, but forbearing and sympathetic. Then, "love envieth not"; which means that if the Christians really loved one another, they would never dream of being jealous of one another's spiritual gifts. Then, "love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up": that is, if Christians were really activated by a spirit of love, a desire to help, then with all their spiritual gifts they could never become conceited and self important and self assertive. Love would keep them self-forgetful and simple hearted. Then, "love doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own". If the Christians were moved by love, as they ought, there could be none of that unseemly behaviour which sometimes occurred in their meeting, when everyone was thinking of himself and seeking his own glory, until they became discourteous to one another. Then, "love is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth". That is, if we really loved one another we would not be so irritable, or so easily offended; we would not be so quick to see evil in our neighbours; we would not cherish grudges; we would never take pleasure in seeing others go wrong, but only in seeing them go right--if we really loved them. And then, to show how patient and hopeful love makes a man, how a man with real love in his heart never gives anybody up and never turns the cold shoulder; Paul says, "Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

What a wonderful beautiful simple picture of the difference love makes when it becomes the ruling disposition of our lives! Then all the estrange-

¹Ibid., pp. 5-6.

ments that arise between friend and friend would disappear. All the suspicions between class and class--they would melt away. All the misunderstandings between master and man, they would soon be settled then. The little things that bring strife and misery; the selfishness, the discourtesies, the backbitings, the gossipings, the uncharitableness--all that would be impossible if only we learned to love . . .

These are descriptions of the difference love can make in the immediate context of human relationships. It all comes back to that. Paul is not speaking of an attitude of devotion which is merely focused Godward, but of the ultimate criterion for human relationships.

Baillie notes, "It is not love to God he is here speaking of; it is something much simpler, it is just love to man; that simple disposition which in daily life makes us courteous and unselfish and charitable". Where this disposition is present, there is the love of God. But this disposition of love is always limited; it is always challenged and addressed by perfect love.

After making application of the possibilities of love in the local church and in the life of the individual, Baillie comes down to the final and infinite claims of love.

And then finally we come to the last part of the chapter, the final strain about the permanence of love, "Love never faileth". . . . "Whether there be prophecies, they shall be superseded; whether

¹ Ibid., pp. 6-8.

there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be superseded." That is very true indeed. Those spiritual gifts that they thought so much of--speaking in tongues and prophesying and so on--these things belonged only to their day and have long been forgotten. If we could peep into one of their Christian meetings many features of them would seem to us very queer and strange. Many of their thoughts and feelings and much of the knowledge these early Christians had--that is largely out of date, as we feel in the very reading of Paul's epistle. But when we come to a chapter like this we feel at once we are dealing with something absolutely modern. For we are dealing with love. And love never faileth; it is at the heart of Christianity still, just as it was then. And it will never be superseded, even in the most perfect state which we can conceive for ourselves in realms unknown. Love must still be there and still be supreme. There is nothing better. All our knowledge, Paul says, will then be as nothing, for we shall see face to face. We are still far from that . . .

We know that the love we practice is a finite love. There is a tension between what we practice and what we look toward as perfect, infinite love. We can talk about both these kinds of love and never ease the tension between them. The rational explication of observed love and the extension of this love to the pitch of infinity can never be reconciled by words. Only when we pass into the life of faith can we live in the confidence that the two are part of the same integrated whole, " . . . now we live in faith . . . " ² Faith and hope and love, these

¹ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

² Ibid., p. 12.

are all limited responses to infinite love, the love of God. Faith, in and of itself, can be an individual matter; it can be but a means to something higher. Hope too, can be an individual matter; it can be but a means to something higher. But love can never be an individual matter; it inevitably involves others; it is the fullest manifestation of the omnipresence and omnipotence of God in a world where men and women live together.

And so, with all the mysteries of religion, love takes its place at the very heart of it--at the very heart of the universe, yes, at the very heart of God Himself--the one key to all that is. For to crown Paul with John, you remember John tells us, "No man hath seen God at any time; but if we love one another, God dwells in us". "God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God." [1 John 4:12, 4:16].¹

It all comes back to the practical matter of loving one another; from the examination of love in human relationships, through the paradoxical awareness that "We love, because he first loved us," back to life lived by faith in hope a life of love which is a response to God's unconditional love.

The consequences of the line of theological thought drawn out in Baillie's sermons on the love of God comes to a climax in a sermon on two texts; John 1:18

¹Ibid.

and 1 John 4:12.¹

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Having seen how Baillie demonstrates that human love reflects the love of God, it is striking to note that human love, the practice of brotherly love, is the knowledge of God.

There are two perspectives from which we can view knowledge of God:

there is no direct vision of God; but there is the Gospel story for our illumination, and there are our fellow creatures to be loved and served; and that is where God is.²

These two poles of the manifestation of God's love are ever present for those who would be pushed out into the life of faith lived in love. But once again, it is not so much a mystical love toward God that is being emphasized.

¹"God in Christ and God in our Fellow Creatures," Out of Nazareth, pp. 40-46.

²Ibid., p. 41.

We might almost dare to put it: God does not want our love for Himself, He only wants it for other men and women who we can serve and help. Or rather, God wants us in that sense to find Him in our fellows, and by loving them to love Him.¹

In so far as we can speak of God and His love, both are to be found squarely within the context of human experience where love is practiced.

Concluding the sermon, Baillie draws the consequences of this emphasis sharply by offering a pastoral word:

My brother, it may be that you, in your perplexity, cannot yet see God in Christ, and so you are not satisfied. It is a good thing that you are not satisfied. But you can at least see enough of the light of Christ to follow, in a brave loyal unselfish life among your fellows.

Yes, in that sense you too can follow Christ. And the rest will come. He that followeth Christ, even in perplexity, shall not² walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

At rock bottom, in the face of all the difficulties of reconciling the love we know with the love we hope to know, there is always the experience of limited love; there is always that which we have seen and heard and in which we have participated. When from experience we can say, "We love", God is there. The task of preaching is but to reflect upon that experience and the inevitable question raised by limited love and point the way to

¹Ibid., pp. 44-45.

²Ibid., p.46.

faith which gives a new imperative, a wider scope, a deeper depth to human love because it knows, "We love, because He first loved us".

The Love of God and the Wrath of God:

Any talk of the wrath of God must follow the primary affirmation that God is love. Where there is love there is also judgement, but all the Christian can say about judgement must be said within the context of love. And it is not a doctrine which has arisen in vacuo; the doctrine of the wrath or judgement of God springs from Scripture and comes to life when reflected by human experience.

In a sermon on John 3:16 ff., Baillie sets forth this doctrine beginning first with the sort of questions which immediately come to mind when the word "judgement" is heard in the pulpit.

If God is a God of love, why all this talk about judgement? If God is really a Father, why picture Him as a Judge? Is God against men? Is He even against the men who have made shipwreck of their lives, the failures, the evildoers, the transgressors? We make allowances for them. We know the weakness of human nature, and the pressure of circumstance, and we won't condemn. Doesn't God know? And why should he condemn? Does he really reject some men? Isn't He infinite and eternal love towards all men? Why should Christianity speak of

judgement as part of the purpose of God? Why should a religion which claims to be the religion of love have a doctrine of Divine Judgement?¹

Following these questions, the text of John 3:16-21 is read; the required context for all statements about God's judgement is set.

God is pure light and love. That remains fundamental. Whatever Christianity has to say about judgement, it must always keep firm hold of that, and put it in the very centre--that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all; that God is love, infinite universal, eternal, unchangeable. Remember that this whole passage about judgement begins with the greatest gladdest text in all the Bible about the love of God.²

And as judgement is mentioned within the context of love in the Bible, this too is true in the human experience of love. Experience verifies the relationship of judgement to love set forth in Scripture.

Let me imagine a case. You have a pure and noble friend who loves you very deeply. You betray your friend behind his back, doing something of which he would never have believed you capable, something mean and cowardly and disloyal. Next time you meet him what will happen? Will he meet you with a smooth and smiling face, glossing the matter over, as if it were of no account at all, taking care to avoid any unpleasant scene? Not if he is an honest soul who loves you deeply. . . . He feels your shame and meanness too deeply for that--because he loves you. He must look straight into your eyes and have it out with you and seek to lift you out of such treachery,

¹"Judgement", John 3:16-21 (un), n.d., p. 2, (incomplete mss.).

²Ibid., p. 4.

however agonizingly painful it may be to him and to you. And you know that. And perhaps you are afraid. You can't face it. You can't face the scrutiny of his love. . . . So you avoid him. If he seeks you out, you seek to elude him. You cross over to the other side of the street when you see him coming. You keep out of his way. And as time goes on the very thought of meeting him becomes intolerable and you would go a long way to escape him. Yet you know all the time that he is living in the light, and you are condemning yourself to live in outer darkness.

The experience of judgement is less an eschatological event than it is an immediate circumstance. Where this love is rejected, there is judgement. The consequences of denying the love of God are part of an immediate human experience; judgement is the immediate consequence; it is the failure to face around and receive forgiveness. "The light had come to save them; but they fled from it into darkness. And that is judgement."² The judgement of God is something known and spoken about in the present tense.

The experience of the denial of love is the manifestation of the wrath of God. This is a further way of describing the way in which the doctrine of the love of God raises a question which it is prepared to answer. It is an immediate question and not a fearful glance into

¹ Ibid., pp. 5-7.

² Ibid., p.8.

the unknown future.

Within the context of the omnipresent, omnipotent love of God man sees that his own demonstration of love is an inadequate response. He sees

nothing inconsistent with the love of God, nothing for which he can blame God, but everything for which he can blame himself. He knows in the bottom of his heart that it is he that is fleeing from the light and love of God into outer darkness. And that is judgement.

The wrath of God or the doctrine of divine judgement is a description of a universal and immediate experience. Rather than inculcating fear and anxiety about the future disposition of one's soul, preaching on the wrath of God can better be an opportunity for describing a Biblical and human experience in the present tense, an experience which points directly to the answer of God's love.

The Love of God and the Suffering of God:

The doctrine of God's omnipotence and infinite love may tend to point to a conception of an utterly unchangeable God who is remote and removed from the harsher realities of human life. We are tempted to use analogies

¹Ibid.

of human love in a strangely inconsistent way. Baillie's preaching points out this inconsistency and by doing so reveals his discontent with the doctrine of God's impassability.

We ascribe to God the queerest hardest kind of motives or whims which we would never ascribe to good human parents.¹

To say that God's love is infinite and unchangeable is also to say that God suffers when His children suffer. To think that God is above all human suffering and impervious to pain would be to remove any understandable connection between His love and human love. When we look upon human suffering and then affirm the omnipotent power of God to fulfill His purpose in the world,

we must never say or think or believe that in any sense which would limit or obscure God's infinite love, God's sympathizing, suffering, self-sacrificing love. That is the fundamental thing. If it is ever in any sense God's will that we should suffer, then it is His will that he should suffer too. For he suffers when we do.²

Any deep experience of human love reveals that judgement and suffering are a part of it. If it is the love of God which is revealed (however partially) in human

¹ "On believing the best about God," Matt. 7:11 (370), 1925, p. 11.

² Ibid., pp. 11-12.

experience, faith is grateful to affirm that the highest love toward which it points is the love of a God who is not impassible, but a God who suffers. Experience and the Biblical witness corroborate this faith; experience points from the deepest form of human love to

far greater love than anything we have ever seen or can conceive upon earth between parents and their children,

the Biblical witness points to Jesus, who showed us infinite love,

not only by his words, but by his life, not only by his life, but² by his death, in which we believe God suffered too.

And from these sources, our apprehension of the love of God returns to us with a new imperative; if we love because of the love of God which is willing to suffer, a challenge is placed upon the quality of love which we are constrained to offer to our fellowmen, a love which is willing to suffer.

In all its doctrinal contexts, Baillie's preaching on the love of God comes back to the human situation. The love of God is revealed in the human experience of love; the love of God challenges the limitations and finitude of this same experience. Does belief in God

¹Ibid., p. 12.

²Ibid.

matter? Baillie has sought to proclaim an affirmative answer which is compelling in the immediate context of human experience.

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

It is now my task to compare and contrast the doctrine as it has emerged in Baillie's sermons with the doctrine as he presented it to his students in the classroom and as it appears in his formal theological writings. Does the doctrine preached differ from the doctrine taught?

The initial consideration with which Baillie deals in the lectures is the nature of our theological language about God. In so far as we can have a knowledge of God, what is the nature of this knowledge and how do we express it?

Under the heading, "The Otherness of God", Baillie teaches his students that the very nature of the subject matter necessitates an understanding of the epistemology of theology which defines knowledge of God as faith.¹ We talk about God using human language as analogies for

¹ Baillie makes reference to prior material dealing with the nature of faith covered in introductory lectures. Supra, Part I, Chapters II, III and IV.

that which lies beyond human categories. Faith is that knowledge which bridges the gap.

There is a kind of discontinuity, and there is a thing called faith that leaps the gulf. And when we begin to talk about what is beyond the gulf, about God and His works and ways, we can only do it analogically, using words and concepts that are really inadequate. All words and concepts drawn from ordinary experience, are inadequate, because of the otherness of God.

The language used to talk about God is analogical language and when this is worked out in the course of theological investigation, the very inadequacy of the words themselves is manifest in that the discontinuity forces us to realize that "all our theology ends in paradox."² At this point faith takes over, and trust becomes a characteristic of the knowledge of God. This is not a new insight, from the beginning of religious thought men have been driven from the paradox of what they can say about God to the knowledge of God characterized by trust.

In the Old Testament you find the most confident and intimate trust in God, the glad assurance that it is possible to know Him, that He reveals His secret. . . . In the New Testament, the glad confidence in God's revelation is plainer than ever. God has revealed Himself in Christ.³

¹"The Doctrine of God" (Book 6), pp. 20-21.

²Ibid., p. 21.

³Ibid.

Yet in both cases there is the firm awareness of the "transcendent mystery and otherness of God".¹

By using the word "otherness", Baillie is stating, not that God and His works and ways are removed from the realm of human experience, but that the full truth and magnitude of God can only be expressed in language which recognizes its limitation by accepting paradox, then moving on to faith. The remaining pages of his lectures on the "Otherness of God", are devoted to an historical survey of the use of analogy and the part played by paradox in the development of theological thought.

You find it very notably in Augustine . . . "Da quod jubes, et jube quod bis". That sounds sheer paradox and contradiction; that God should demand something of₂ us and at the same time supply it Himself . . .

We find the doctrine of analogical knowledge of God very plainly in St. Thomas Aquinas who teaches that in this world we cannot have direct vision of God. . . . On earth₃ we can only have knowledge of God by analogy . . .

You get it in Luther's doctrine that God is at the same time a deus absconditus and a deus revelatus . . .

It is an implicit recognition of the same truths that you get in the Calvinistic theology . . . on the one hand the eternal divine decrees, uncondi-

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 22.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

tional predestination, irresistible grace, faith as wholly the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit; and on the other hand, the existence of evil, man's ability to choose, his responsibility for his sin. . . .

Perhaps Kierkegaard's most fundamental idea is that of the "infinitely qualitative difference" between time and eternity, between God and man; which is another way of saying, "the otherness of God". . . . He believed in a "qualitative dialectic", which is perhaps better called paradox, and his theology may be called supremely the theology of paradox.²

Baron von Hugel was saying these things . . . In his case this was definitely a reaction and protest against a certain kind of modernism—against the modernism which was too much a common sense theology, forgetting the transcendence of God, fitting Him too easily into a logical world view, without any mysteries or discontinuities, and thus tending to too easily to smooth out all contradictions, even at the cost of explaining away the reality of evil. Against all this Baron von Hugel strongly emphasized the "otherness of God".³

Otto has emphasized the "otherness of God", and knowledge in terms of the "numinous" to such an extreme that the knowledge of God is strained to the breaking point. He represents a tendency to make God not just "other", but "wholly other" to the extent that God is somehow unrelated to ethical values.

As one reads Otto's book [The Idea of the Holy], one is repeatedly troubled by the feeling that in working out his own theory he is really endeavouring to restore to religion an element which it is the very

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 24.

³Ibid.

glory of religion to have gradually eliminated . . . It is not at all difficult to show that the idea of holiness, which was so prominent in the religion of Israel, contained an entirely non-ethical element which inspired in the worshipper a feeling of eerie awe. But surely one of the great lessons learned and taught by the prophets was that the holiness God really cared for was quite inseparable from moral goodness. . . . The Synoptic Gospels rather give one the impression that the very point of Jesus' teaching was, not indeed to banish mystery and godly fear (far from it!), but yet to free religion from the "numinous" element with its taboos and its false emphasis and to exalt faith and love instead. . . . There is surely a good deal in Otto's idea of the holy that we should indeed reject as belonging to those realms of taboo which religion has been gradually outgrowing as it became more ethical.

An example of a more balanced appreciation of the nature of our knowledge of God comes from the doctrine of the "non-objectifiability" of God as represented by Buber.

The idea is that there is a radical difference between the I-It relationship and the I-Thou relationship; and that it is only in an I-Thou relationship that there can be any knowledge of God. . . . How then can we have any theology at all? For if we are to have any theology, we must talk about God in the third person, He must become the object of our thought. Yes, of course, that is necessary and inevitable, if we are to have any theology at all. But the result is that the knowledge of God becomes dif-

¹ Baillie makes critical mention of Otto's "wholly" otherness of God in his lectures at this point (p. 24). However, a full statement of his discontent is found in Faith in God, pp. 206-218. I have quoted from p. 211.

fracted, broken up, polarized and becomes paradoxical. . . . What we have to recognize is that in theology we are transforming an existential knowledge of God into a conceptual subject-object knowledge, and the result is necessarily paradox, since no concepts can contain God.¹

At the far right of the spectrum of theological thought which has generally recognized the paradoxical nature of language about God, Baillie finds Karl Barth.

Barth carries to the extreme the idea that God is "wholly other" than man, and so his theology carries paradox also to the extreme. In my opinion Barth is exceedingly one sided, going too far with the idea of the "otherness" of God. He entirely rejects Aquinas's idea of knowledge. God is so "other" than man that no human analogy can tell us anything at all about God. God is absolutely unknowable. . . . There is absolute discontinuity between God and fallen man, and an absolute gulf between the revelation of God in Christ and all human knowledge. Thus the very idea of an apologetic is excluded for Barth. There is no way of connecting the revealed Word of God with human knowledge. All that can be said about God is utterly paradoxical. . . . Barth has gone too far in this direction and becomes so one sided as to forget sometimes the very paradox that should have kept him balanced. Note the danger of making God so remote so that we cannot trust Him with a simple faith,—the danger of the via negativa of the mystics, where one is afraid to say or think anything at all about God. How different from the simple trust we find in the Gospels!²

Concluding his historical survey of the place of paradox in theology Baillie quotes Bulgakov's definition

¹"The Doctrine of God" (book 6), p. 25.

²Ibid., pp. 26-27.

of antinomy as a true representation of what is meant when it is said that all theology must end in paradox.

"An antinomy simultaneously admits the truth of two contradictory, logically incompatible, but ontologically equally necessary assertions. An antinomy testifies to the existence of a mystery beyond which the human reason cannot penetrate. This mystery, nevertheless, is actualized and lived in religious experience. All fundamental dogmatic definitions are of this nature."¹

The key phrase in this quotation is that paradox must be "actualized and lived in religious experience." This is the criterion for paradox which is useful in preaching. The affirmation of the "otherness of God" and the inherently paradoxical nature of our language about Him must not be a retreating affirmation. Theology may end in paradoxical formulation but faith-experience goes beyond. In preaching the experiential tension between the two poles of paradox must be preserved with an eye toward going forward into the life of faith wherein is found true knowledge of God. Baillie's final word on the "Otherness of God" was a warning against the facile use of paradox.

There is also a danger in this idea of paradox in theology, the danger of getting into the habit of using it too freely and lightly so as to solve all

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27. The quotation is found in Sergius Bulgakov, *The Wisdom of God* (London: Williams and Norgate Ltd., 1937), p. 116, Note 1.

contradictions without due thought. It is very easy, when we land ourselves in contradiction in theological thinking, to say gaily: That is the inevitable paradox of religious thought. But that is dangerous, because it may cover up intellectual indolence and obscurantism. And after all the very essence of the doctrine of paradox properly understood is that there should be a continual tension between the opposites. They should be tugging against each other all the time. That tension is necessary to the health of religious belief and doctrine and theology. And not only because it is logically unsound to acquiesce in a sheer contradiction, but because each side of the paradox immediately runs into falsehood when, it is not controlled by the tension of the other.

In presenting to his students the nature of our knowledge about God, Baillie focused his attention upon the paradoxical nature of theology, which is language about God. As we have seen, all this language points beyond itself. The very nature of paradoxical language drives the thinker beyond words about God to faith in God. Herein true knowledge of God is found.

Two differences between the teaching about the knowledge of God and the preaching about it are to be noted. In the first place, the paradoxical nature of all we say about God was not discussed in the sermons, the two sides were simply presented and the implicit tension pointed beyond. The word "paradox" appeared only in one of the sermons we have considered, and there only

¹Ibid., p. 28.

briefly in passing where the paradox of morality was introduced as the basis of the question to which the doctrine of God was addressed.¹ In the sermons on the love of God, although the underlying framework involved the paradoxical experience of love, no explicit mention or philosophical analysis of paradox was made.

The tension between mystery and revelation was presented, not as an abstract and conceptual category of thought, but as this same tension is experienced in the knowledge of our natural environment and particularly personal relationships. Only after the familiarity of this paradoxical thought process was demonstrated, was the extension made into the realm of thought about God. The framework of paradox lay behind the sermons but the paradox was presented directly as it is found in human experience, not analyzed as a conceptual category.

In this connection it must also be noted that the historical development of paradoxical thought in theology was not presented in the sermons. Paradox was used simply as a framework for describing experience.

¹Supra, pp. 116-117

The second difference between teaching and preaching about the knowledge of God lies in the emphasis in the sermons upon descriptions of the experience of such knowledge which is found in the life of faith. Having illustrated the tension between mystery and revelation, the sermons push on to describe the knowledge of God as trust, obedience, wonder, fear of self-knowledge, joy, dependence, gratitude and the responsibility of rational faculties, and finally as faith. In short, the lectures on the knowledge of God sought to answer the question, "What is the nature of such knowledge", and the sermons sought to answer the questions, "What difference does such knowledge make in the life of the believer? Does belief in God matter?"

In the lectures on the being and attributes of God, Baillie notes the difficulties of rigid classification, and then discusses the classical themes. Baillie finds it singularly unilluminating, (except as a matter of historical interest), to attempt a discussion of the being of God, either in terms of essence or existence. The classical discussions of His attributes come a little closer to what we can know at all, however imperfectly, about God. But describing the via causalitatis, the via negativa and the via eminentia, then passing

on to the historical classification of God's attributes and the realist-nominalist controversy, Baillie draws the following conclusion:

Now that sketch of historical discussions has at least this use; that it makes us feel what a barren thing it would be to draw up neatly classified lists of divine attributes, fix precisely the meaning of each and then imagine that we had really given an account of what Christian faith means by God. No doubt it seems dangerous to say that any words or conceptions we use about God do not correspond to real distinctions in His nature, for that might lead us to the habit of doubting whether we can say anything true about God at all. That is the danger of the via negativa of the mystics and of all pantheism and even to some extent of Hegelian absolutism and even Schleiermacher's theology. That tends to kill the Christian attitude of simple childlike trust. But on the other hand it is good to be reminded (as we were reminded when we were speaking of the otherness of God) that God is beyond our comprehension, that any words and concepts we use about Him are feeble human attempts to know that which passeth knowledge, or to express the ineffable. And therefore it is futile to take the various words for the attributes of God as if they expressed perfectly clear and adequate logical concepts which could be arranged in a logical classification and which, taken thus in a symmetrical system, would give us a clear and adequate account of God. That would give us a very dreary and rationalistic kind of theology, and the reality would slip through our fingers. There is a real sense in which all our distinctions of the divine attributes are but blundering, (though necessary), attempts to analyze what cannot be analyzed, (or, as we were saying, to objectify what cannot be objectified); and thus there is a sense in which all the different attributes run into each other in the simplicity of the divine nature, that God who can only be known, at all in a direct personal I-and-Thou relationship.¹

¹"The Doctrine of God" (book 6), pp. 33-35.

With these severe qualifications of any attempt to speak of God in the third person, Baillie goes on to discuss a few of the words which have been traditionally used to describe the attributes of God. Two points which follow from the paragraph above must be mentioned in advance. Each of the descriptions which follows is wholly dependent on the other; none can be classified as an isolated truth about God. And the descriptions which follow are not speculative assertions about what God is, but, (as in the case of the sermons), descriptions of experiential phenomena which point beyond themselves to what God does. The purpose of the lectures on God's attributes is, "to try to see and show you what they mean for Christian faith."¹

The first attribute dealt with in the lectures is the eternity of God. This theme runs through the sermons on the omnipresence, omnipotence and love of God, but it did not appear in any as a theme which could be isolated as a sermon topic. How is the eternity of God presented in the lectures? What are the difficulties that made it an inappropriate theme to deal with specifically as a doctrine to be preached?

To say the God is eternal is to say, "The life

¹Ibid., p. 35.

of God is in a sense above time. It is not subject to the limitations of temporality."¹ But here we are immediately thrust into the philosophical controversy about the reality of time. The conceptualization of time in abstract categories such as its being an appearance and consequently a subjective phenomenon, or an illusion, have been useful within certain philosophical schemata, e.g. in the Platonic school, but these abstractions do not convey the Christian meaning of eternity.

What Christian faith means and has meant by the eternity of God is not that time is an illusion and that divine existence is timeless in an abstract Platonic or even Hegelian sense. All abstractions are timeless, a mathematical equation is timeless, it has no relation at all to time and it is perhaps in that sense that the Platonic forms are timeless or eternal. But it is fatal to the Christian faith to conceive of the eternity of God in that way. Perhaps the truth of the matter may be expressed by saying that God is not in time, but time is in God.

But even this last expression makes an abstraction of both "God" and "time" in a way that can only be handled conceptually unless care is taken to point out that this is but another way of saying that God is present in every moment of time in which men live.

¹ Ibid., p. 35.

² Ibid., p. 36.

Baillie presents the Christian meaning of the eternity of God by showing the relation of God to finite time.

On the one hand it is vital to Christian faith to think of God as having a real positive relation to time, to temporal existence. . . . The Christian Gospel is about a God Who does things in time, who comes into the lives of temporal creatures; and it includes statements about His great incursions into history--what He did in the Incarnation and the Cross. Thus the eternity of God does not mean timelessness.

But the presence of God in finite time is only half the story. Theology is unable to place temporal limits on God and is constrained to say:

He is not subject to time as a finite being is. He transcends time and successiveness. Thus though we are bound to use past, present and future tenses in speaking of God's activity, though we are bound to speak of Him as looking forward and backwards, with memory and foreknowledge and purpose, yet we need also to remind ourselves that these analogies from human experience are not adequate to divine life.²

The analogies relating to time which are drawn from the human experience of time are peculiarly inadequate in theology because, rather than being an extension of a human experience to the infinite degree (as in the case of the analogy of love), the analogies of time (past, present, future, foreknowledge and memory) speak of

¹Ibid., pp. 36-37.

²Ibid., p. 37.

something which is not in any way related to human concepts of past, present, future etc. when applied to the life of God, a life which can only be conceptually described as "a life which has the simultaneity of eternity."¹ This conceptualization fails to fulfill the criterion of reflecting human experience. For this reason the usefulness of the doctrine of God's eternity in preaching is called into question. The truth which preaching seeks to convey by speaking of the life of God as possessing the "simultaneity of eternity" is better subsumed under the theme His "omnipresence".

The theme of eternity does appear in the sermons, but it is treated in connection with the doctrines of immortality and the Kingdom of God. There it is less a matter of defining what God is, and more a matter of speaking of what He does and what His purpose for mankind is. This can be done on the basis of faith-experience. A full discussion of this theme will be undertaken in Chapter XII which deals with eschatology.

Closely related to the truth intended by the "eternity" of God is the truth intended by the idea of His "omniscience". The difficulties are similar too. In introducing the doctrine of God's omniscience, Baillie raises the difficulties of this concept.

"I am God and there is none else, I am God and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done."
(Isaiah 46:9-10) Now of course that seems to make nonsense if we think of it on the analogy of human knowledge

¹ Ibid., p. 38.

raised to an infinite degree. . . . Moreover the doctrine that God knows the future as well as the past seems to make nonsense of the belief in human free will. If God knows all that is going to happen in the future, then he must know what choices men are going to make at every point. . . . If God does know, then in what sense am I still free to choose?¹

Baillie defends the concept of omniscience on the grounds that it reflects what has been said about the eternity of God.

The life of God is not limited by temporality, by successiveness. It is characterized by the simultaneity of eternity in which past, present and future are not three but one. And thus God's knowledge of the future--of our future choices--is not precisely knowledge in advance. No doubt we are constrained to speak of it in that way, by human analogy, if we are to speak of it at all. But the past is not past to God, nor is the future future to God. It is all an eternal present, because God inhabits eternity.²

The omniscience of God was not found to be isolated as a doctrine in the sermons. The reason for this is that, in Baillie's system, the omniscience of God is conceived in terms of the eternity of God's knowledge. The same difficulty which negated the usefulness of the isolated doctrine of eternity in preaching, thus applies to the doctrine of God's omniscience.

But in spite of what I have said, in his lectures Baillie stresses the pastoral significance of the doctrine. How can this be reconciled with its lack of usefulness in preaching? Baillie told his students:

¹Ibid., pp. 38-39.

²Ibid., pp. 39-40.

It is of unspeakable comfort to the religious man to realize that God knows everything; knows me better than I know myself, knows my temptations, knows my sins (even that is a comfort), knows all my past, all my future. I may want to hide some things from God, and yet I cannot ultimately be content with that wish. In the end, if I know God at all, I must rejoice that He knows everything, knows the worst about me, knows my sins. If you have any doubt about the religious value and significance of the doctrine of God's omniscience, read Psalm 139. And as regards God's knowledge of the future, even if we cannot quite logically say what that means, how essential it is to Christian faith! It is the very essence of faith to give up worrying about the future, to rejoice that the future is hidden from us, to say, "One step is enough for me". But the whole basis of that attitude is the conviction that God knows the future. We can step forward into the darkness because, the darkness and the light are both alike to God.

The pastoral significance of this idea cannot be denied. But the question is whether the analogy of time oriented knowledge adequately conveys the truth intended, (the simultaneity of eternal knowledge), and if the concept of eternal knowledge reflects anything identifiable in human experience. The truth intended is part and parcel of the Christian faith, but the connection between finite time oriented knowledge and infinite eternal knowledge breaks down for the very reason Baillie mentions himself. "Now of course that seems to make nonsense if we

¹ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

think of it on the analogy of human knowledge raised to an infinite degree."¹ Therefore in preaching we must seek to convey the truth and comfort conceptualized under the heading of God's omniscience by using language which does not run into the difficulties encountered when dealing with the problems of finite time and infinite time. In Baillie's theological system, this precludes the isolated use of the theme of omniscience in preaching.

Another difficulty of using the analogy of omniscience is the abstract connotations attached to the word knowledge. The truth intended, indeed the comfort afforded by the doctrine of omniscience, is wholly dependent upon the presence of the Knower in the life of the believer; the power of His knowledge to make a difference in that life and the comfort intended by the doctrine is only realized in the experience of this power as love.

The truth intended and the pastoral significance of the doctrine of omniscience is more adequately conveyed using the language more directly associated with the doctrines of God's omnipresence, omnipotence and love. The truth of God's universal presence in power and

¹Ibid., p. 38.

His knowledge of our sins, experienced in the forgiving character of His love, ran through the sermons which were illustrative of these three themes.

Baillie introduces the next section of lectures dealing with omnipresence of God by reviewing the emergence of universalism in exilic and post-exilic Judaism. Following a summary of the message of the story of Jonah, he lectures:

One practical religious result of all this was the realization that to localize God at all is wrong. There is a kind of idolatry about it.¹

Passing on to the New Testament witness, Baillie makes reference to Paul's address at Athens. "'God . . . dwelleth not in temples made with hands,' [Acts 17:24]. He can't be localized."² Since God cannot be localized within any limited context, when we speak of God's "presence" we are not using a spatial metaphor. And further in John 4:21-24, ". . . God is Spirit . . ."; his presence is a spiritual presence. "So you see that the omnipresence of God really merges into another of the traditional attributes of God; His spirituality, His incorporeality."³ Why is it important to see that "presence" is not a spatial metaphor?

¹Ibid., p. 41

²Ibid., p. 42.

³Ibid.

People have sometimes been disposed to indulge in the theological fancy that this world may be regarded as the body of God. No doubt that has sometimes been said with good intention to indicate the truth that the world is God's world and is both an instrument of His working and a revelation of His power. But the statement that the world is God's body has always been condemned as Pantheism. It really goes with the pantheistic doctrine that God is the anima mundi, the soul of the world. What Christianity teaches is that God is the creator of the world, and that the world is not His body but His creation, His creature. The relationship is not between soul and body, but between Creator and creature. And to say that the world is God's body would be to limit God by localizing Him. God cannot be localized because God is everywhere present, is omnipresent.

Baillie then raises the questions of God's special presence; in worship, in the Church, in Christ, in the Sacraments. These questions are helpful to introduce at this point because

they help us to see that the divine omnipresence does not really mean anything spatial at all. . . . When we say God is omnipresent we mean that everything that happens anywhere in the universe happens in the presence of God; and that wherever any man is in the universe, he is in the hand of God, and God is immediately available if he really desires to turn to God. . . . That does not preclude us from speaking of God in more special ways. God is present with those who trust Him in a way in which He is not present with those who refuse Him. It is not a spatial difference, but a spiritual one. It is a spiritual union of God with His people, a thing which can only happen through faith. And if we say God is specially present when two or three are gathered in His name,

¹ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

or that there is a real divine presence in the Sacrament, again it is not strictly a spatial presence, but a¹ spiritual relationship to those who have faith.

When we speak of God's omnipresence we are describing a personal relationship, a universal relationship of God to His creation. Our appreciation of this relationship is enhanced by a variety of factors which can be summarily described as faith.

In a later addition to his lecture, Baillie gave an illuminating comment on the nature of the word "presence" and the way it is used in speaking of relationships, drawing on the work of Gabriel Marcel.

The preposition "with" indicates properly an "intersubjective" relationship, a relationship between persons, not mere juxtaposition in space. Thus it does not apply at all to a world of objects. A chair may be alongside a table, or beside it, but not really with the table. And there may be two persons together in a room who are not really with each other. The man sitting beside us may not be really present with us. Presence, in the truly personal and spiritual sense, is not spatial, but something more intimate. And that is supremely true of God's presence.²

This understanding of the word "presence" and the use of the preposition "with" when speaking of the relationship of God's presence with the universe is particularly use-

¹ Ibid., pp. 43-44.

² Ibid., p. 44. Cf. Theology of the Sacraments, pp. 98-99. Baillie's reference is in Gabriel Marcel, The Mystery of Being: I. Reflection and Mystery, (London: The Harvill Press Ltd., 1950), pp. 177, 205.

ful because it helps to vindicate the use of the theme of presence and omnipresence in preaching. Unburdened by spatial concepts, which when raised to the pitch of infinity pose problems of mental gymnastics that render the word itself meaningless, the definition of presence as relationship speaks from the context of human experience. True, all analogies which speak of God point beyond themselves, but the criterion for meaningfulness rests on the ability of the analogy itself to reflect human experience. The presence of a person with another person when raised to the pitch of an infinitely deep and encompassing and caring relationship is what we mean when we speak of the omnipresence of God.

The presentation of the doctrine in the lectures is essentially the same as that of the sermon with one exception. The theme of the universality of God's active presence is seen in both; the theme of incorporeality, of a God who cannot be localized, is seen in both; the theme of presence as relationship is seen in both. The theme which is absent in the lectures is the theme of the universal question which is raised by this doctrine as it emerges in the sermon. The absence of the question of universal guilt in the lectures eliminates the tension

between the inadequacy of man's finite response to God's presence and the infinite universality of God's presence. In preaching it is important to maintain the tension by illuminating the question, (universal guilt), and proclaiming the answer, (the omnipresent caring relationship of forgiveness), in order to force us beyond the words of the sermon into the life of faith. The necessity of correlating the answer of the Gospel with the questions of existence in preaching yielded a fuller presentation of the doctrine of omnipresence in the sermons than in the lectures.

The doctrine of God's omnipotence raises intellectual objections which range from the trivial to the profound. Baillie begins his lecture on this doctrine by clarifying the meaning of omnipotence in order to clear away some of the trivial objections which arise when omnipotence is over-simplified and misrepresented by the idea that it means, "God can do anything."¹ With this mistaken idea such questions as, "Can God change the past? . . . Can God make two and two equal five?", have arisen. The abstract assertion that God can do anything gives rise to the wrong questions, in fact, "in that abstract sense it is not true that God can do anything." To clear away

¹Ibid., p. 45.

the trivial objections which stem from this misunderstanding, Baillie finds it

profitable to look at the original Greek word from which our doctrine proceeds. The Latin of the Creed is credo in Deum patrem omnipotentem. But the Greek is πιστεύω εἰς Θεὸν πατέρα παντοκράτορα. The word we translate as almighty or omnipotent is παντοκράτωρ. That word παντοκράτωρ is quite common in the LXX version of the Old Testament, where κυριος παντοκράτωρ is the regular translation of the Hebrew phrase which we render in English as "Lord of Hosts". The word is found only nine times in the New Testament, (once in 2 Corinthians in an Old Testament quotation, and eight times in Revelation). The Latin omnipotens is really almost a mistranslation of it. (The Greek word corresponding to omnipotens would really be παντοδύναμος.) Παντοκράτωρ means not so much "able to do everything", as "controlling everything". In other words, God's power and rule are not limited by anything outside of Himself and His own nature and purposes. God absolutely rules the course of the world, He is in complete control, Παντοκράτωρ.

Now, although this explanation relieves us of the burden of thinking of omnipotence as an abstract unlimited and uncontrolled power to do anything, and, focuses our understanding on the idea of God's power to control the universe in accordance with his will and his creative purpose, we still have to contend with the more profound difficulty of attempting to reconcile omnipotence with man's free will and the problem of evil.

Baillie mentions several attempts to solve this problem from classical dualism which "set up a power or

¹ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

principle of evil in the nature of things, over against God, limiting His sway and power", to more recent ideas of a limited God such as those found in Bernard Shaw, Thomas Hardy, H. G. Wells and William James. Baillie finds these ideas unsatisfactory but draws his own presentation to a rather unconvincing close by stating:

Christian faith can never give up the divine omnipotence, can never rest in the idea of a finite God who is not absolutely in control of our destinies. A comrade God is not enough. We must have God Almighty. We must not limit God.

The unsatisfactory conclusion of Baillie's argument calls to mind, (if I may be pardoned a moment of flippancy), a rule for one-upmanship in theological debate: "If your argument is weak, start using Greek." However, the warning to be drawn for the use of language in preaching more than vindicates this moment of irreverence. Few members of any congregation are convinced by technical theological terms which are foreign to the frame of linguistic reference which they bring with them to the pews. What then can be said in order to communicate the truth intended by the "omnipotence" of God?

In a later addition to his lecture notes, Baillie

¹Ibid., p. 47. It must be noted that we have not heard Baillie's last word on the problem of evil and the problem of free will. These themes will be dealt with more fully in Chapters III and IV.

offers a few sentences which point the way to a more helpful exposition of the meaning of omnipotence.

Surely it is obvious that if God were not omnipotent we could not absolutely trust in Him. And really one might say that the doctrine of His omnipotence is a conceptual way of saying that God is to be trusted absolutely, we are absolutely safe in His hands in all circumstances.

The presentation of the doctrine of omnipotence in the sermons is clearly more satisfying and helpful than that in the lectures. Why? We gain a glimpse of the answer in the above quotation. Starting from the human need to trust we can begin to see the answer that God has provided for this need. This schema emerged in the doctrine as preached. The universal experience of human imperfection and the inability to cope creatively with all the situations and relationships of life can drive us to seek a power in which we can place our trust. We have a glimpse of what this power is like when we cast our eyes upon the powers present in personal relationships. Drawing upon this experience we can use words which describe it as analogies which point toward a creative, loving power which is omnipotent.²

The lecture began and ended by treating omnipotence as a conceptual way of describing the nature of God. It never got beyond a conceptual framework and con-

¹Ibid.

²Supra, pp. 151ff.

cluded with an unconvincing dogmatic assertion. The presentation in the sermons, aware as Baillie apparently was of the need to speak from the experience of people (in the congregation and the Bible), began from the questions raised by human existence and moved through the glimpses we have of an answer in human experience to a trusting and enabling "faith that creative human efforts are integrated with a greater creative power which governs the universe [which] does yield a quality of life marked by confidence, courage and hope."¹ Once again the method of theology for preaching is one in which the question raised by finitude is connected with the answer of the infinite, an answer described by analogy from experience.

We now pass on to a doctrine which is part and parcel of all that has been said and all that will be said, the doctrine of the love of God. Baillie's lecture is brief, yet supremely important for his entire system. Where Christology is the key-stone in the full arch of his theological system, the love of God is the foundation upon which the whole structure is built.

¹Supra, pp. 156-157. This is a summary statement of the theme which is presented in the sermons quoted on pp. 151-157.

If our whole course of dogmatics is going to be at all sound, it will at every point be working out the meaning of this assertion that God is love; that at the heart of the universe, governing all that happens, maintaining us in existence and seeking us out to redeem us, is the infinite, eternal love of God.

Toward the beginning of the lecture, the distinction between agape and eros is drawn, noting that the goal of Christian love is agape. "The New Testament never uses eros when speaking of Christian love, or of the love of God."² But the self-giving, spontaneous love of God is not something which is easily understood or believed because so much of experience seems to deny it. At best we only know in part, but this fragmentary human knowledge is the starting point.

"We have known and believed", says I John, "the love which God hath for us." It is only to a small extent that any of us have believed it. There is nothing more difficult to believe. It seems too good to be true, both because we are unworthy of it and because there are so many things which contradict it--all the evil and suffering in the world. It is not easy to believe it. It is so difficult that nothing but the Incarnation and the Cross could persuade us to believe in it in the Christian sense at all.

How can we talk about this kind of love which is so difficult to know and believe? By what method can we approach the subject? I am going to quote a lengthy

¹"The Love of God", (Book 6), p. 2.

²Ibid., p. 1.

³Ibid., pp. 2-3.

paragraph from this lecture which sets out Baillie's method, a method which (1) rejects the analytical contrasting of the differences between a speculation as to what the nature of God is and what we know about a corresponding attribute on the human level and (2) affirms the validity of proceeding from what we know in experience by using analogies which are meaningful in pointing us to God. The method emphasizes the relationship of God to man, not a separate "wholly otherness".

I do not think it is profitable to spend time discussing analytically what God's love is in comparison with what we know of love in human life. Theology in the past has sometimes, remembering its doctrine of divine impassibility, endeavoured to distinguish divine love from human by contending that in the former there cannot be any element of feeling or passion, since that is incompatible with the One who possesses all perfection and beatitude in Himself and needs no relationship to a creature to add to His beatitude. But we must not take that in a sense which would destroy the very meaning of love. God is indeed other than we (as we were seeing) and any quality in Him must be different from that which we call by the same name in ourselves. Yes, but it can only be different by being better and higher and richer, not by being weaker and poorer and colder. And surely the very strongest purest most unselfish love that we know or can conceive in human life is what we must use as a faint image of, the love of God which is so much greater and better.¹

The method by which we can talk about God and His love is one in which we proceed by extending analogies of

¹Ibid., p. 3.

human love to the pitch of perfection. Here the starting point and the end point are different, but it is essentially a difference of degree and there is a connecting tension. In the sermons, Baillie builds up the connecting tension gradually by posing ever enlarging circles or stages of love. In the lecture the tension is presented more succinctly, because the remainder of his system elaborates the same theme.

Proceeding directly from "what we must use as a faint image of the love of God" Baillie goes abruptly to the Godward dimension of love and the quality which distinguishes it from the starting point.

There is one thing which we may say about the love of God which distinguishes it from even the highest human love: The love of God is pure, spontaneous, self-giving; it is not called forth by any inherent worthiness in its object.

Baillie then goes on to briefly preview the way in which the self-giving, spontaneous and prevenient love of God will play a fundamental part in the working out of some of the doctrines to follow.

How does the doctrine in the lecture compare with the doctrine which emerges from the sermons? Here at the

¹Ibid., pp. 3-4.

foundation truth for both theology and preaching, the method of presentation is the same. Proceeding from the human experience of love a connection is made with the infinite and uniquely spontaneous love of God by means of extending human analogies until the two become perfectly one in the Incarnation. The danger of the lecture presentation is that the connecting tension between the two poles is not developed. It is difficult to see that there is a connecting relationship between the two. However, in the sermons this is clearly developed. This difference in presentation points to the importance of explicitly relating the love of God to human love, lest the use of concise theological language leaves the impression that the love of God is unconnected and therefore irrelevant to the human situation. Care must be exercised in using language which reflects human experience.

But there is one fundamental omission in the lectures which is essential to preaching and which emerges in the course of Baillie's sermons on the love of God. This theme might be called the answer to the questions, "What difference does it make? Does belief in the love of God matter?" The descriptions of the way in which belief in the love of God matters plays an important part

in the sermons. It is these descriptions¹ that make the doctrine come to light as a live imperative. The question which the preacher must seek to answer is not just, "What is it that we believe?", but, "Does it matter?" Preaching must itself pass beyond theological definitions and give an affirmative answer to the question by describing the difference the love of God has made in the lives of men and women. You will recall that for Baillie the very practice of brotherly love is the knowledge of God.² By describing what has happened, preaching can point the way to faith which gives a new imperative, a wider scope, a deeper depth to human experience because it knows, "We love, because He first loved us."³

Having laid the foundation of the love of God, the lectures move on to take up the problem of "The Love of God and the Wrath of God". How do we reconcile the co-existence of infinite love and wrath? To pose some of the theological problems at stake, Baillie introduces C. H. Dodd's treatment of the matter.

He tells us that the concept of the wrath of God

¹Supra, pp. 171-174

²Supra, p. 176

³Ibid.

"does not appear in the teaching of Jesus unless we press certain features of the parables in an illegitimate manner". [Romans, Collins Press, London 1959, p. 50]. He acknowledges that St. Paul retains the concept of the wrath of God, but argues interestingly that he means it in a kind of impersonal sense; not in the primitive anthropomorphic sense that God is angry with men, but in the sense that there is a law in this universe, as a moral universe, that sin brings its own retribution. . . . And it is to rescue men from this nemesis that the love of God comes in--this being the real nature of God, and being a personal attitude to sinners, as distinct from the impersonal process of law of retribution which is called "the Wrath".

Baillie finds this concept of the wrath of God unconvincing and misleading,

because it seems to suggest that the objective laws of this universe, the laws of retribution, (the Wrath), are something more ultimate than God, something which is there apart from God in the nature of things, in the moral order, and the love of God comes in from outside to rescue sinners from this system of retribution, this Wrath. But surely if there is a law that sin brings punishment, if there is an order of righteousness which reacts against sin, that must also be "of God". It cannot be either an evil power opposed to God (for it is the very expression of righteousness), nor an impersonal, neutral² power of just retribution, quite independent of God.

The question raised by Baillie with regard to Dodd's concept is less the matter of the "ultimacy" of Wrath vis à vis the Love of God than it is the concept

¹ "The Love of God and the Wrath of God" (Book 6), pp. 5-6. The quotation is from C. H. Dodd, Romans (London: Collins Press, 1959), p. 50.

² Ibid., p. 6.

of the wrath being an impersonal force outside the love of God. This not only compromises the omnipotence of love; it also raises the question as to whether the love of God is not in fact defeated by impersonal retribution when we look upon the consequence of evil in the world. Surely there are many instances which would indicate that the love of God has been defeated by an outside, impersonal wrath.

The difficulties of an impersonal conception, the difficulties of theological speculation divorced from personal experience, are further drawn out by a lengthy comparison of Dodd's view with that of Emil Brunner. Baillie spends considerable time explaining Brunner's idea of the wrath of God which is less an impersonal force outside of God but which, with the love and mercy of God, makes up an inherent dualism in the nature of God.

He speaks of God as One who "outside of Christ" is really angry, wrathful towards men; and insists that this dualism between the wrath of God and the mercy of love of God is essential to a true Christian faith and Christian theology. He would apparently regard this as an indissoluble dualism, an inevitable element of paradox or dialectic in our theology.

¹Ibid., p. 7. Cf. Emil Brunner, The Mediator (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934), n.b. pp. 518-520.

Notice that the kind of paradox posed by Brunner's view is not the kind of paradox we have traced in Baillie's sermons. In Brunner's dualism there is a discontinuity between the two poles. The paradox in this case is a conceptual juxtaposition of two contradictory ideas with no connecting tension which can be seen as a part of the human experience of love. The sort of paradox which is useful for preaching is one in which there is a connecting tension discernable in human experience, a tension which forces us beyond the paradoxical formulation of the doctrine. The mere conceptual positing of a paradox within the nature of God, (which remains a "wholly other" abstraction), has no connection with the questions raised within the concrete context of human existence. It is difficult to relate such theological speculation to the needs of a congregation.

Baillie appreciates the seriousness with which both Dodd and Brunner view the idea of the wrath of God. It is a truth which cannot be sentimentally glossed over. But the methods of positing wrath as either an external impersonal force or an inherently contradictory dualism in the nature of God do not provide an adequate answer to the problem. Baillie then proceeds to an elucidation of

the problem.

We can get light on this problem if we remember that love itself, in the truest and highest sense of the word, may be a very inexorable and terrifying thing to a man who is trying to walk in mean and crooked ways. Perhaps it is something of this sort that Brunner means when he says that to the unreconciled sinner the love of God becomes wrath.

Perhaps this is so. But notice the difference of approach. Baillie introduces his treatment of the wrath of God by describing the way in which the human experience of love can be an experience of judgement too. True love is inexorable.

And isn't that true of even pure genuine deep human love, not to speak of the love of God. Love is not a soft sentimental accommodating thing. It is inexorable.²

The lecture continues with a presentation which is almost identical with the illustration in the sermon of the human experience of love and judgement.³ The lecture draws to a close noting the way in which this experience is a limited experience of God's love, indeed it points us toward a fuller understanding of God's infinite inexorable love.

May not all that be to us a faint and feeble parable of the infinite inexorable love of God?

¹Ibid., p. 9.

²Ibid., pp. 9-10.

³Supra, p. 180-181.

God is such infinite goodness, He loves us so infinitely, that He must be inexorable too towards our sins. "The love which draws us nearer is hot with wrath to them." Love must necessarily be terrifying to all that is loveless, that is to all evil. When an evil loveless soul is confronted with infinite divine love, it either suffers the agonizing pain of being scorched by that fire of love until all its evil is burnt away, or it refuses that love in self-protection and thus dooms itself to yet a greater evil and punishment of the outer darkness of continual lovelessness. And all that happens just because God is love. So His wrath, in that sense, is not a limit to His love. It does not conflict with His love. It is the fire of His love in action when confronted with evil loveless souls.

In this comparison of the lecture with the sermon, it can be seen that the theological theme of the wrath of God (being an experience of the love of God from the perspective of the loveless human) is the same in both. Wrath is neither a limitation of love, nor in conflict with it. One doctrinal emphasis present in the sermons was, however, missing in the lecture. In the sermons Baillie took care to point out that the experience of wrath as judgement was less an eschatological phenomenon than it was an immediate experiential consequence of lovelessness or sin. This was implicit in the lecture but the need to counter the misdirected emphasis on fearing for the future state of one's soul present in some preaching doubtless prompted Baillie to make clear and explicit men-

¹"The Love of God and the Wrath of God", p. 11.

tion of the immediate character of judgement.

Baillie's choice of words in speaking about the wrath of God is important. "Wrath" connotes an emotional state closely allied to anger, an emotional state that negates love. In the sermons the word "judgement" was used. This word has less emotional connotations, and stresses the responsibility of the judged one for the judgement. There is less danger of conveying the idea that man is the victim of God's arbitrary or even inherent anger.

The most striking difference between the lecture and the sermons is the manner of presentation. In the lecture Baillie found it necessary to begin by raising some of the conceptual questions raised by theologians in their attempt to describe the wrath of God. This served as a backdrop for his own presentation which highlighted his method which starts from faith-experience. In the sermon this would have been both confusing and irrelevant. Confusing because few in the congregation would bring the required conceptual and linguistic frame of reference to the problem. Irrelevant because the positing of the conceptual question of an impersonal force or a speculation about the nature of God would not

reflect the experience of the people. Where conceptual abstraction may be useful in framing a theological question, they are useless in providing an answer to a question raised by human experience.

Lastly, the Love of God and the suffering of God: Here Baillie seeks to strike a balance between the classical doctrine of God's impassibility and the revolt against the doctrine in recent theological thought. Baillie finds it necessary to deny impassibility because of the human need for comfort which he has seen God answer within the experience of human suffering. At the beginning of his lecture he stresses that what is said about the doctrine "must affect not only our theology but our faith, our working belief."¹

Briefly offering a preliminary definition of the doctrine, he goes on to sympathetically and carefully trace its origins in the Early Fathers.

The impassibility of God means that God cannot suffer. He is incapable of suffering. The experience of suffering can never have any place in the life of God. He is eternally blessed, raised above suffering, enjoying beatitude, impassible. You may be inclined to ask where that conviction came from, and how it even came to be accepted as part of traditional orth-

¹"The Divine Impassibility" (Book 11), p. 1.

odoxy that God knows no suffering.¹

Going into the etymological origins of the doctrine he points out that, "in both Greek and Latin the words for suffering mean not only what we mean by suffering but also something of what we mean by emotion, passion, affection . . . There is no $\pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\omicron\varsigma$ in God. There is no passio in God."² Tracing the development of the doctrine through the Early Fathers it is interesting to note that they speak of it, "not so much by way of arguing for it, as rather of assuming it as a general truth."³ Baillie gives a documented summary of the doctrine in Ignatius, Tatian, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Gnosticism; in each case the impassibility of God remains unchallenged. The emergent note of interest is that suffering is relegated to Christ, and the Father becomes distinct from the Son by virtue of His impassibility. It was in this connection that the assumed, and hardly self-conscious, development of doctrine ran into difficulty. "It was in the Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the Third Century that this whole issue became

¹ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

² Ibid., p. 2.

³ Ibid., p. 3.

quite plain and acute."¹

Controversy raged back and forth. One swing of the pendulum carried the opponents of impassibility to the extent of the Patripassion heresy; that God Himself died on the Cross. Praxeas and later Sabellius defended this heresy, and it was against Praxeas that Tertullian wrote his famous treatise accusing him of crucifying the Father. The issue of the controversy left orthodoxy with a formulation reflecting considerable theological gymnastics.

It was not the Father but the Son who suffered; and it was not in His divine, but in His human nature that the Son suffered. That was the distinction that evolved. It seemed clear and sure that there could not be any suffering in the life of God Himself.²

Down the centuries and through the Scholastic theologians, the classical position remained intact for orthodoxy, although the problem was no longer an unconscious one. Not until recent times has there been a widespread revolt against the idea of God's impassibility. Baillie documents the writing of A. M. Fairbairn and notes the contribution of Canon Streeter in this connection. Before passing on to his own elucidation of the problem, he offers a final case for impassibility from

¹Ibid., p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 10.

the writings of Baron von Hugel.

Baron von Hugel contents himself in the end with the distinction between sympathy and suffering--compassio and passio. There is sympathy or compassio in God, and there is suffering or passio in Christ, and that, he says, is enough. It is curious that he accepts the very distinction on which Tertullian pours scorn in attacking Praxeas. But Baron von Hugel's main contention is that God would not be God, and would not even be of much use or comfort to us in our sorrows and sufferings, if He were not Himself pure joy, raised above all suffering.

In his typically irenic fashion, Baillie seeks a constructive reconciliation, (though he does not pretend to resolve the difficulty). He notes that the doctrine has remarkably little Biblical support.

The Old Testament is quite at home with the idea that God is grieved by the sins of His people, that He knows the emotions of sorrow and pity . . . There is no suggestion of impassibility in the proper sense. When we come to the New Testament it is much the same. We certainly get the impression that the New Testament writers thought of God as sharing in² the sacrifice of Calvary--"giving up His own Son".

The influence of Hellenistic thought is behind the assumptions of the Early Fathers in whom we first see the doctrine. The idea of impassibility is certainly consistent with Platonic and Aristotelean philosophies.

¹ Ibid., p. 12. The reference is to Baron Friedrich von Hugel, "Suffering and God," Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion: Second Series (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1926), pp. 165-213.

² Ibid., p. 13.

As for Tertullian, the most passionate opponent of Patripassianism, and the most outspoken defender of divine impassibility, let us remember that the philosophy which most influenced him was Stoicism,¹ with its exaltation of passionlessness as an ideal.

The Scholastic defenders of the doctrine were quite openly Aristotelian in their outlook. All these extra-Biblical influences do not discredit the doctrine for Baillie as he notes later in the lecture:

And if the Greek tradition--Plato and Aristotle and even the Stoics--made some contribution indirectly to the development of the doctrine of divine impassibility, surely we need not be ashamed of that, for God can use the Greeks as well as the Jews for His revelation. Thus we can see a deep reason for the emergence of the idea, and there must be a deep truth underlying it, a truth which is precious and vital to religion.

Baillie finds serious theological difficulties with the doctrine in connection with the Atonement. He finds it difficult to isolate God from the Cross, to "conceive of God's part in it as a more or less external and detached part, as if God were sitting aloof in heaven, merely appointing and then accepting the sacrifice on Calvary." Yet on the other hand he is quick to appreciate the truth that we cannot picture God as One who succumbs to the sin and suffering of the world: "God is not staggering under the weight of it . . . we could not be satisfied with a

¹Ibid., pp. 14-15.

²Ibid., p. 17.

mere struggling Comrade."¹

How can we strike a balance between these two opposing ideas? From the standpoint of theological consistency it seems to be an impossible task. But nevertheless Baillie is constrained to say:

I do believe that the modern movement away from the doctrine of God's absolute incapacity to suffer has been to some extent a sound and salutary one--it has helped to redress a balance that was one sided. . . . I do believe that we must find room in the Christian doctrine of God for some idea of God eternally bearing the sin and suffering of the world at infinite cost to Himself . . . And how can we express it in our human language except by describing it as a willing acceptance, on God's part, of suffering and sacrifice for our sakes? And can we regard that historic Incarnation and Atonement as isolated, or shall we not rather regard them as the supreme outcropping in history of an eternal reality; the love of God bearing the sin and suffering of the world.²

Because God is love there is suffering in the life of God, "yet somehow God is more than equal to all the suffering", and in Him we can place our trust and receive His comfort.³

In his effort to be theologically fair and balanced, Baillie has shown both sides of the technical argument so clearly that he is driven to say "I do believe . . . "

¹ Ibid., p. 16.

² Ibid., p. 19.

³ Ibid., p. 20.

as he draws to a close. Perhaps this is a theologically obscure way to end a lecture. Perhaps a fuller development of the highest kind of human love we know would have served to show that suffering is indeed a part of it. Perhaps, on the other hand, "I believe . . ." is the most profound way in which to end any attempt to rationally explicate a doctrine. In some respects the presentation in the sermons is simpler and more direct: Drawing on the experience of a parent's love and the Biblical witness to the life and death of Christ, Baillie is there constrained to affirm that the love of God is like that, the love of God is a love that is willing to suffer.¹

What can be said by way of comparison between the lecture and the sermons? The inappropriateness of including lengthy theological debates in sermons is again brought out. The reasons are the same as those mentioned earlier.² The theological outcome, that the love of God is a suffering love, that God suffers, is the same in both lecture and sermon. The use of analogies from human experience would have been helpful in the lecture.

The general conclusion to be drawn from the fore-

¹Supra. p. 184.

²Supra. pp. 194, 209, 222.

going examination of the doctrine of God in sermons and lectures underlines a basic criteria for presenting theological themes in preaching. The distinctive feature of the sermons and those portions of the lectures which parallel the sermons is that the terms of reference are drawn from the demonstration of God's activity in human experience. The criterion for preaching can be summed up as being an emphasis, not upon what God is, but upon what God does.

CHAPTER II

THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

The doctrine of creation is part of "the story with a plot". And part of the doctrine of creation tells of God's activity beyond the realm of historical experience; it tells of supra-historical happenings; its symbolic language is woven into myths. It is essential for theology and preaching to use these myths because the supra-historical realm of which they speak touches every moment of history. In speaking about the Christian message as a "story with a plot", Baillie writes:

The early chapters of the story (about Creation, Fall, etc.) go back beyond history altogether into a supra-historical realm of which we can only speak in symbols. And the final chapters of the story, lying in the future, belong also to another world of which we can only speak pictorially.

The general problem treated in this chapter (as well as the chapters which deal with the Fall and eschatology)

¹"What is Dead and What is Living in Christianity," Out of Nazareth, pp. 153-154.

is the problem of establishing a connection between the historical realm of human experience and the supra-historical. It is the general problem of speaking about the supra-historical in terms which reflect and address historical experience.

Within this larger context, this chapter also deals with a specific problem of theological methodology as it relates to preaching. The specific question is-- can a paradox which is not actualized and lived in faith-experience be useful for preaching? In the previous chapter it has been shown that at the center of the doctrine of God is the foundation of all Christian theology and preaching, viz. the love of God. It was shown that an examination of experience revealed that love is present in power in human relationships. Further examination revealed that this experience is paradoxically one in which we love, but we only love in relationship to others, we only love in response. In fact, love is not just our own action, it is also an action wrought in us from without. And in the last analysis, "We love, because He first loved us." This paradox points to God and the difference made through faith in Him. The paradox is actualized and lived in faith experience; it is a useful

paradox for preaching.

In the course of the following examination of the doctrine of creation in Baillie's sermons another "paradox" will be encountered. Baillie speaks of the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo as a "paradox", but it will be shown that it is not a paradoxical part of human experience. Can this "paradoxical" doctrine be admitted as a useful way to preach about the truth intended by the Christian doctrine of creation?

The Doctrine Preached

In a sermon entitled, "The Doctrine of Creation", Baillie seeks to answer two questions: What do we mean to say when we speak of the doctrine? and, "What difference does it make to our daily practice . . . ?"¹ Because the credal statement "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth", can be easily misunderstood in a scientific age which has only within the past hundred years weathered the storms of the science and religion controversies, the sermon begins with an explanation of what is meant and what is not meant by the

¹"The Doctrine of Creation", Revelation 4:11 (612), 1933, p. 3.

language of the doctrine.

Behind the words which are used to describe creation, both in the Genesis accounts and in the later doctrines of the church, lies the essential meaning embodied in the text of the sermon, "Thou hast created all things" (Rev. 4:11). But Baillie introduces the subject by explicitly pointing out what is not meant by the Biblical account:

If we were to take that as a literal and scientific account of the way in which things came into existence, then we should say that it all happened literally in six days--first, the light was created, then the sky, then the dry land, then the sun, moon and stars, then the birds and fishes, then land animals, and then man. Moreover we would picture the earth as a flat surface, with the sky as a dome over it, and the sun, moon and stars as lights set in that dome to light up the earth. . . . Yet nowadays every child is taught at school that the earth is one of the sun's planets . . . last century science began . . . to tell us that it took not just six days but countless ages for the inhabited world to come into being--first the starry universe and then the earth, then after long ages animal life upon earth, and then after further ages, mankind; and not by one great act of creation, but by a long slow evolution. . . . We have learnt that it is foolish to go to the Bible for scientific enlightenment, and that it doesn't matter at all to us Christians how God made the world. He can work just as well through long and slow evolution throughout the ages as through a sudden work in six days.

The language of Genesis is not scientific language. True,

¹Ibid., pp. 1-2.

it grew out of a particular cosmological view, but it speaks not of cosmology but of something else. Even the stories of the creation in the Bible do not correspond with one another. Baillie points out to his congregation: "Genesis has two separate accounts of creation in the first two chapters, and they don't agree in every detail, yet the Bible put them there, side by side, because it is not the literal details that matter."¹

Furthermore the literal idea that the creation was completed in a fixed period of time is inconsistent with the Christian's faith-experience of God's continual presence, power and love.

After all we never did believe as Christians that God finished His work of creation all at once, ages ago, and then stopped for ever and simply watches His universe run on. No we believe something far better than that. We believe that God is always creating. He created you and me, in this modern world. He is still at it.²

Creation, then, is a continual process in which the hand of God is at work.

Baillie sees God's creative activity as a work which follows a natural law. God's creative work is not a capricious affair which follows no pattern. God is not

¹Ibid., p. 2.

²Ibid., pp. 2-3.

limited by natural laws because these laws are themselves established by God for his own purposes. In speaking of continuous creation, he preaches:

It all happens, no doubt, according to natural laws, which biologists can trace. But they are God's natural laws. That is to say, they are descriptions of God's ways of working in the world.¹

Faith affirms that where science offers valid descriptions of the processes observed in the natural world, science is offering valid descriptions of the ways in which God is at work. Faith does not rest its case with any particular scientific theory; faith goes behind such statements and affirms that all creative processes are the work of God who is ever present in power and in love.

That is the essence of what we as Christians believe about creation: not anything in particular as to how things came into existence, (that is a matter for science), but that it is all of God. "In the beginning God". "Thou hast created all things." That is what matters.²

Before passing on it will be well to note that in presenting the meaning of the doctrine, Baillie has placed his emphasis, not upon statements having to do with the origin of matter or existence, but upon the continual character of creation, and the natural laws

¹Ibid., p. 3.

²Ibid.

through which God governs the creative processes in the world. The themes which were important to a presentation of the meaning of the doctrine were the historical manifestations of creation, not pre-historical accounts of cosmic or biological origins.

The affirmation that God is continually at work within the creative processes of the natural order affords the believer a focal point toward which an attitude of gratitude can be directed. When in the course of human experience a vast variety of dynamic creative good is encountered (e.g. the birth of a child), the human response need not be one of sterile indifference or vague sentimental euphoria. With faith focused on a creating and loving God, the response can be one of gratitude. The doctrine of creation, "gives us a sense of God in nature".¹ It is toward Him that a response in gratitude can be expressed.

Examples of faith which sees God behind all forces of creative good can be traced throughout the ages. The Psalms are full of a sense of gratitude to God for

¹Ibid., p. 4.

creation. And in the New Testament

you can find it notably in the words of our Lord Himself. "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow." [Mt. 6:28] They made Jesus think of God--of the wonderful beneficent creative power of God. You can find it in the word of St. Francis of Assisi, . . . "All creatures of our God and King; Lift up your voice and with us sing." [Revised Church Hymnary, No. 13] He calls on sun and moon, wind and clouds, dawn and evening, water and fire, earth and flowers and fruit, as well as all mankind to praise God for creating them. "Let all things their Creator bless, and worship Him in humbleness. O praise Him. Halleluiah." And perhaps in modern times more than ever, with our new appreciation of natural beauty, we can praise God, the Creator, and make it part of our Christianity.¹

The doctrine which teaches that God is creatively at work in nature affords a focal point for faith which expresses itself in gratitude. But nature does not afford direct evidence of God, nor can empirical observation of the natural order give proof that God is behind creative processes. Nature abstracted from God does not engender faith; it is God given faith that enables men to have an appreciation of the natural order and through which they see themselves as an integral part of creation. Baillie clarifies any misunderstanding which might see faith in God as a direct consequence of

¹ Ibid., pp. 4-5 .

an examination of the natural order.

I don't mean to say that nature can give us God, or that the beauty of the world can ever of itself bring faith to our hearts. But when we have God, when by Christian faith we have the assurance of God, then God gives us nature back again with a new meaning, because the God of grace is the God of nature too, and He made it all. And so if we are Christians, and if we have any eyes for the wonder of the world, we shall want to thank God the Creator for it.

The doctrine has the practical effect of illuminating faith to an appreciation of nature and natural events. The doctrine illuminates our response to life and beauty so that it becomes a response in gratitude, gratitude to God Who by faith is proclaimed the Creator.

To affirm that God created all things makes a difference in the attitude one has toward nature, particularly toward one's fellow man. If we say that God created man, certain ethical consequences follow. Baillie heads the point dealing with the difference the doctrine makes in Christian ethics with the statement, "It gives us a reverence for the body."² He then argues from the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo, pointing out how the doctrine arose.

Christianity teaches us not only that God made everything, but that he made it all out of nothing—that's what creation is and you remember how it

¹Ibid., p. 5.

²Ibid., p. 6.

comes into the Shorter Catechism. Now why did they put that in? What is the point of it? I'll tell you.

When Christianity was growing up in the world among Pagans, the Pagans believed that God did not create the material part of this universe. He only created the spiritual part and the matter was there already as a kind of raw material out of which God had to fashion things as best He could. They despised the material, as if it were a kind of evil godless stuff for which God didn't really care because He hadn't created it--He only created the soul. Now that idea sometimes crept into Christianity, and it was a great pity. For it meant that people came to despise the body, with very evil results. Sometimes it resulted in undue severity, asceticism to the point of self-torture. Sometimes it led to the very opposite: people said to themselves that the body didn't matter, it didn't belong to God, and they could do what they liked with it, and so loose living was the result. That all came of despising the body. And so Christianity set itself to stamp out that error by teaching that the body does belong to God. He made it, and He didn't make it out of some raw material which was there already, infected with evil--no, He made all things out of nothing. It is all His creation.

The idea of creatio ex nihilo is introduced in the sermon as a dogma of the Church which defined creation in a defense against the concept of creatio ex materia. A conceptual antithesis concerning the origins of the world was drawn between the two and the consequences of the latter forced the Church to take a stand

¹Ibid., pp. 6-7.

for the former. The idea of creation out of nothing did not arise out of an examination of human experience, it was a pre-historical conception which was introduced from without to counter the belief that matter was evil and not of God. The doctrine of creatio ex nihilo is a speculative assertion about pre-historical origins which is used to address human experience (as we shall presently see) but it does not reflect the human experience of God's creative work in the world. It must be noted that Baillie's emphasis in the sermon up to this point has been upon the experience of continuous creativity through the natural order which faith views as the dynamic creative activity of God. A question is immediately raised by the contradiction between the kind of naturally ordered creation we know through experience and the statement that it all began differently, i.e. creation out of nothing.

Baillie makes a passing apology for the theoretical language which he has used then goes on to show the way this doctrine addresses human experience.

Now that may seem rather a theoretical point. But it is really very practical--it is the very foundation of Christian morality, because it means that we have to reverence our bodies as God's creation. The body is not evil in itself . . . it is not hopelessly tainted with sin and even the instincts and appetites are not evil in themselves. . . . Nay, the body is God's, its instincts are His--all that is part of human nature, and it is He that hath made us and not we ourselves. All

that is part of His perfect plan for us. What we have to do is not to treat the body either with contempt or with hopelessness, but to consecrate it to God, that all its energies and instincts may be caught up and sanctified and used in the service of what is pure and good.

That means we must reverence both our bodies and those of our fellow creatures. We must learn to think of every human body as God's creation and God's temple. . . . It is half the secret of Christian morality--that every man should think of every woman's body in that reverent way, and vice versa. And all that springs from the Christian doctrine of creation which teaches us to reverence the body because it was created by God.

The experience that a respectful and reverent attitude toward the whole person tends toward creative and constructive life and relationships is summarized in the language of faith by saying, "God created all things." The realization and affirmation of this truth makes a most practical difference. The difficulty in the sermon arises when Baillie introduces the concept of creatio ex nihilo which confuses the issue by contradicting human experiences of creation in the world, and contradicting the sermon's prior emphasis upon the natural order of God's creative activity.

Baillie's closing point on the difference the doctrine makes is; "It gives us a sense of security in

¹Ibid., pp. 7-8.

this great universe."¹

Sometimes, in our dark and skeptical moods we feel as if the great universe were alien or hostile to us--going on its ruthless indifferent way according to hard natural laws, a universe of material forces that have no regard for our ideals and that will very readily crush our hopes and plans. . . . That is how we sometimes feel. But these are our dull and skeptical moments. When our eyes are opened with Christian faith then we know that the universe is God's. Our Heavenly Father made it all. Or, to state it in a different way, the God we trust in is not some little God, a struggling little comrade god (such as H. G. Wells gives us), a limited god fighting against an adverse environment that is beyond his control. No our God is the Creator of all things. "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth." What strength and courage that gives us!

The experience of courage and strength in the face of adverse circumstances is one which has countless examples. The language of faith which describes this experience by saying, "Our help is in the name of the Lord Who made heaven and earth", conveys a trust which is the same as that expressed by the faith statements, "God is omnipotent". The meaning in both cases is that faith affirms that God is in control of His creation. Baillie illustrates this kind of trust as it is reflected by the account of Jesus calming the storm.

When Jesus once was caught in a storm in a little fishing-boat on the Lake of Galilee, and his disciples got into a panic, though they were fishermen and had spent half their lives in boats

¹ Ibid., p. 8.

² Ibid., pp. 8-9.

on that lake, why was Jesus not afraid? Because he knew that the whole situation belonged to God. The sea and the wind and the waves and the hills were all God's--He had made them. . . . That is the secret of courage and security. You never know just what is going to happen to you amid the mighty forces of this universe. But if through Jesus Christ you believe in God, and really commit your way to Him, you are in your Heavenly Father's universe; and, sink or swim, you are in His care and keeping.

The doctrine of creation is the language of faith which reflects a definite attitude toward existence. It reflects an attitude which sees the creative forces in the world as things for which to be thankful; with faith focused on a creating and loving God, the dominant attitude toward life will be one of gratitude. The doctrine which teaches that God created all things, seeks to convey the truth that ethical criteria are to be judged by an attitude of reverence for the whole person. The doctrine is another way of describing the courage and strength experienced by men and women who know that God is continually active and in control of His creation. These are the practical consequences of the doctrine presented by Baillie when he preached on the doctrine of creation. How do the meaning and the practical consequences of the doctrine presented in the sermon compare

¹Ibid., pp. 9-10.

with the presentation in the lectures?

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

As it is the pre-historical idea of creatio ex nihilo which presents problems in the sermon, attention will first be focused on Baillie defense of the concept in the lectures. It is one thing to say, "God created all things", but with the addition of, "out of nothing", problems are raised because the language used no longer reflects human experience. No longer can valid analogies be drawn from experience which point toward the truth intended by the doctrine. Yet, since the early development of Christian doctrine, ex nihilo has been a distinctive feature of the Christian teaching on creation.

Baillie begins with a survey of the Biblical foundations of the doctrine. He notes that ex nihilo is not an explicit part of the Biblical witness.

It cannot be said that this point appears quite explicitly in any of the Biblical passages about creation. Let us recall what the Biblical passages are. The classical passages of course are at the beginning of Genesis. All critics agree that Chapter 2 is earlier than Chapter 1. Chapter 2 is from the Javist source (J) and is more primitive, and perhaps even the more beautiful. It does not speak of the creation of the whole material world--the heavens and the earth--but of the creation of

vegetable life and of man. And it seems to presuppose the existence of matter--of the dust of the ground. The account in Chapter 1 gives an account of creation from the very beginning, including even the creation of light, and spaces it out over six days. It is doubtful if it presupposes the existence of matter before creation, [but in] Genesis 1:2, "tohu wabohu", [translatable as] "waste and void", seems to mean rather chaos than "non-being" or "nothing". At various other points in scripture, especially from that prophetic era onwards, the doctrine of creation appears incidentally, and notably in Deutero-Isaiah, where it takes a very sublime form. To the great Hebrew prophets and psalmists it came to mean a very great deal religiously, that God had made all things (Isaiah 40:26, 28; Psalms 8:3; 95:5, 6; 104). This continues through the New Testament. It appears as a constant background to the sayings of our Lord, and is closely connected with his teaching about absolute trust in God's power and love. It runs through the teaching of St. Paul, to whom God is the source and goal of all existence. "Of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things" (Romans 11:36). "For us, there is one God the Father, of whom are all things and we unto Him" (I Corinthians 8:6). In Revelation 4:11 we find: "Worthy art thou our Lord and our God, to receive the honour and the glory and the power; for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they are, and were created."

In all this there is a very exalted doctrine of creation. But there is no explicit statement of creation ex nihilo. The earliest known appearance of a hint of that conception is in 2 Maccabees 7:28: ⁶⁵ οὐκ ἔντων ἐποίησεν αὐτὰ ὁ Θεός . "God made them out of things that are not." But that is not quite the same. The Vulgate actually translated that into Latin as ex nihilo fecit illa Deus, which is a definite statement of making out of nothing. But the translation really goes somewhat beyond the sense of the original Greek. Doubtless it was from that phrase in the Vulgate translation of the Greek Maccabees, that the expression passed into Christian theology.

¹"The Doctrine of Creation" (Book 6), pp. 1-3.

The affirmation that God created and creates all things is part and parcel of the manner in which the Biblical writers sought to convey a great religious truth. For them the additional assertion about pre-historical origins (ex nihilo) was unnecessary. Is this additional assertion necessary for the preacher today? Is it useful to say that the doctrine of creation means creation out of nothing in order to communicate a relevant message which will encourage an attitude of gratitude toward God for His creation, a creative respect for one's self and one's fellow man as a whole person, an enabling trust in God which sees Him in control of creation?

In the sermon Baillie took care to point out that the idea of ex nihilo arose in the early encounter of Christianity with the Pagan world. How is its presence in Christian theology defended in the lectures?

A prevalent belief among the ancients was that the world had been manufactured out of raw material. God had, as it were, found this material which existed apart from Himself, and had formed it into the natural order which we call the world. This view led to the practice of regarding all things material as being inherently godless and therefore not to be respected or regarded with reverence.

That dualistic idea of the independent existence and godlessness of matter, existing as a raw material over against God, is tremendously important for the understanding of religious thought in the ancient world. . . . You can see it in definite conflict with Christianity in the Manicheanism which was so potent in the time of St. Augustine, [also in the] earlier Gnosticism. Now it was in the conflict against such ideas that Christianity was led to define its own idea of creation. In so doing it repudiated the idea of the eternity of matter and formulated the idea of creatio ex nihilo.¹

It is well that Christian theologians were wary of a belief that was based on speculations concerning the pre-historical existence of matter, but did they not offer an equally speculative idea by introducing the concept of ex nihilo? Baillie has offered a reason for the emergence of the idea, a reason which is justified on the grounds that it was a necessary conceptual defense, but does this make the idea a useful one for preaching?

Baillie defends the importance of ex nihilo, as opposed to the idea that God used some sort of raw material, on several grounds. He shows that the alternative concept (ex materia) compromises God as the One in whom we can place complete trust. If ex nihilo is rejected one alternative is

¹Ibid., p. 5.

the sharply dualistic view, which conceives of God as merely fashioning things out of a godless raw material existing over against Him. That Parsee or Manichean way of conceiving the matter reduces God to less than God. It has often attracted people, because for one thing it seems to offer an easy solution of the problem of evil. But it is not the Christian view. (N.B. For Christian thought the Devil is not an ultimate principle of evil . . . but a created being gone wrong.) In refusing to take [this view] the Christian doctrine of creation is really maintaining that God is a God whom we can absolutely trust. . . . He is the source of all that is, in full control, of His universe, God of nature and God of grace.¹

The dualistic view which conceives of God as merely fashioning things out of a godless raw material existing over against Him is inadequate for another reason. It does not lend itself to a proper view of the body and respect for the whole person.

Christianity teaches us that matter, as well as spirit, is God's own creation--the body as well as the soul--and so it gives us a sound reverence for the body. Some of the perversions of Christian ethics are due to the idea that there is something inherently godless and evil about the body and its instincts and appetites. That is what has always led to the extremes of ultra-asceticism and monasticism, as well as sometimes to the opposite extreme of licentiousness. The idea that there is something evil about the body and the instincts connected with it, and especially that there is something essentially unclean about the whole sexual relationship--these are not Christian ideas, but ideas derived from the Greco-oriental view of matter and the body.²

¹Ibid., pp. 19-20.

²Ibid., pp. 21-22.

Baillie continues by giving a review of the battles the Church has fought over the issue of identifying the body with original sin (which identity is not a Christian idea). He then goes on to discuss the danger of treating the body, particularly its sexual instincts, as something to be repressed or used with complete license. The doctrine of creation is seen as a constructive approach to sex ethics because with a positive view toward the body as God's creation, the importance of honoring its instincts is brought to the fore.

God created man, soul and body, and God created man, male and female. And in so doing God was not hampered by a base raw material already existing, which had evil engrained into it. No God created all things out of nothing, and all very good. And when we sin, we can't blame the instincts that are part of human nature. . . . All the instincts and appetites can by God's grace be controlled and used and consecrated and poured into the service of what is good.

As in the sermon where he deals with the importance of the doctrine for Christian ethics, Baillie concludes his argument with an appeal to the idea of creatio ex nihilo.

The concept is also viewed as a valid defense against dualism in the realm of Christology.

On a dualistic Gnostical view . . . you can't have a real Incarnation because the material, the bodily, is regarded as base and godless, so that the high eternal God could not come and dwell in the flesh.

¹Ibid., pp. 23-24.

The Gnostics could not even believe that the High God made the world, for He could not touch so base a thing as matter; so they conceived of a lesser god, the Demiurge, making the world, and of course he is just the artificer working upon a given raw material of matter. Still less could he think of the High God becoming incarnate in matter, and so they ran into all kinds of Docetic ways of explaining away the Incarnation. But Christianity adopted a view of creation which makes the Incarnation possible. God made all things out of nothing, and so matter, the body, is His own creation, and so He can become incarnate in it.

Lastly, ex nihilo is presented as a defense against a dualistic concept as a necessary foundation for the understanding of the Christian doctrine of immortality.

There is a great difference between the Greek idea of the survival and immortality of the soul and the Christian idea of eternal life through resurrection. Now of course we do not believe that these bodies of flesh and blood, which die and are burned and decay, will literally rise up again out of the graves where they are laid (as at least popular Christian imagination used to picture it). For as St. Paul said, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God", [I Corinthians 15:20]. But we do believe that the words in the Creed about the resurrection of the body stand for something real. They mean that the life beyond is not a mere shadow of life as we know it, but an infinitely richer fuller life of the whole personality. The Greek view is bound up with the whole idea that matter is not part of God's creation, and therefore the body is a base kind of prison-house in which the spirit is held captive and is set free by death, to go forth and live its own purely spiritual life as a disembodied spirit. . . . Christianity has always from the beginning taught

¹ Ibid., p. 24.

that the body does matter. God made it. It is part of God's plan for us. Its death is in a sense a tragedy. Death is an enemy. But Christ has overcome the enemy. Therefore his people will rise from death to a fuller life—a life in which, while these bodies of flesh and blood will be left behind, we shall yet have something corresponding to them—what Paul calls a "spiritual body", though we can't really say what that means. . . . This whole doctrine of resurrection and immortality is bound up with the Christian doctrine that God made, all things, visible and invisible, out of nothing.¹

These last two ways in which the doctrine is used as a defense are not paralleled in the sermon, but it is well to see that the reason behind Baillie's defense of ex nihilo is a reason dictated by the necessity to counter a misleading concept. There is still the question as to whether the use of one conceptual speculation (ex nihilo) to counter another (Greek dualism) is a valid or meaningful way to communicate the truth intended by the doctrine of creation. Where a pre-historical speculation may be of use in a conceptual argument and where it may be of interest in the history of the development of thought, is it useful or constructive to introduce such ideas when preaching the message intended by the affirmation that "Thou hast created all things" (Revelation 4:11)?

¹Ibid., pp. 24-25.

With this question in mind, we shall pass on to examine a further reason for the emergence of the idea of creatio ex nihilo, and Baillie's explanation of the doctrine as a defense in the face of another misleading concept, viz. the idea of creative origins as an emanation from God.

The idea that the world is generated by God out of His own substance, that the world was an emanation of His own Being, presents theological problems from the relationship of creature to Creator to the question of evil. To counter this misleading concept Christianity advanced the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo. The idea of emanation appears frequently in the history of thought.

This idea appears in one form or another wherever you get pantheistic religion or philosophy, and indeed to some extent in modern absolute idealism. Of course it means that the world is part of God, there is no "otherness", and all the pantheistic consequences follow. The creation is as necessary to God as God is to creation, There is no independence for the creature at all, the problem of evil becomes insoluble, so that evil comes to be explained away as illusion. And so on. Christianity would have none of that. If it would not agree to say that God made the world out of an eternal raw material, neither would it agree to say that God made the world out of His own substance--because that would be emanation, or generation--and it would get the relation all wrong between God and His creatures. Nay, it was not emanation, but creation, and creation out¹ of nothing. That came to be the Christian doctrine.

¹Ibid., p. 6.

Baillie points out the inadequacy of this pantheistic view in that it negates our knowledge of God as one in whom we place absolute trust. It is impossible to realize a relationship in which either trust or gratitude are expressed if Creator and creature are viewed as one and the same. The pantheistic idea

practically identifies God with the world, or makes God the anima mundi, forgetting the transcendent otherness of God, and the reality of evil, and making impossible a personal relationship between God and His creatures.

Baillie defends the doctrine (in the interests of preserving a viable description of the experience of absolute trust) by pointing out that God "is other than the world, . . . [yet He is] in full control of the universe". Faith can affirm that it lives in trusting dependence upon such a God. However, in this context, Baillie makes no appeal to the argument that God created his creation out of nothing.²

As regards the danger of a pantheistic view to ethics, Baillie writes:

If the world were simply an emanation from God's own substance, then it would of itself be virtually divine, we should be landed in some kind of pantheism, and evil tends to be explained away as an illusion,

¹Ibid., p. 19.

²Ibid., p. 20.

for what is divine cannot be evil. That line of thought is fatal to a true ethic. And Christianity in its doctrine of creation, maintains the reality of evil.¹

In this context too, Baillie defends the importance of the Christian doctrine of creation without recourse to the concept of creatio ex nihilo.

Regarding the danger of pantheism to the doctrine of the Incarnation Baillie writes: "On the pantheistic view you can't have a real incarnation, just because everything is divine."² It is true that the idea of creatio ex nihilo emerged in part as a counter to the pantheistic elements of neo-Platonism, but Baillie makes no direct allusion to a necessity for ex nihilo as a meaningful replacement.

In the sermon the idea of creatio ex nihilo did not appear in the first section which dealt with the meaning of the doctrine. Its only appearance was in one of the three points in the second section which addresses the doctrine to practical experience. But there it was not addressed directly to experience but was introduced as a way to counter the dualistic concept which views the body as being unworthy of reverence and respect. It

¹Ibid., p. 21.

²Ibid., p. 24.

has been shown that the introduction of creatio ex nihilo at that point in the sermon confused the issue by contradicting the emphasis of the first part of the sermon as well as contradicting the way creation is understood within the realm of human experience. It has also been shown the respect and appreciation for the whole person (with its ethical consequences) is adequately reflected and addressed by the statement of faith-experience which knows that God created all things and is still active in all creative human relationships. In the sermon, the idea of creatio ex nihilo was both confusing and superfluous.

But the problem must be examined in greater detail. Baillie defends the Church's teaching on the grounds that creatio ex nihilo is a necessary defense against dualism and pantheism. These two conceptions were speculations about pre-historical origins, the acceptance of which led to destructive experiential consequences. The Church countered with another speculation (creatio ex nihilo) the acceptance of which led to constructive consequences. But the Christian message is not one which argues from pre-historical speculations to experience. It argues from faith in God; it argues from

the faith-experience of what God has done and is doing in human history. To say that God created and continues to create all things is not fundamentally a speculation about pre-history. It is a supra-historical statement because God's creative work cannot be localized at one point in time, it touches every moment of time. It is a supra-historical statement which is directly related to historical experience. We speak of this activity of God because it is something which we have seen and heard and know within the realm of historical faith-experience.

The concept of creatio ex nihilo is justified as a speculative argument used to counter other such arguments. It has its rightful place within the context of philosophical speculation and the study of the development of conceptual thought. Its value to experience is limited to the subjective response it may call forth from a person who chooses to interpret his conduct and existence in the light of the concept. It has no value in affording an objective description of the way God acts. There is nothing in it which objectively reflects, and consequently which objectively addresses, human experience. Therefore it is not a useful way to tell the "story with a plot"; it is not a useful way to preach Christian doctrine. (The same must be said about the

ideas of pre-historic creation contained in the dualistic concept of "Godless raw material" and God, as well as the emanation theory.)

The reasons for not admitting the concept of creatio ex nihilo as a way to preach Christian doctrine are further illuminated by an examination of the nature of the statement "creatio ex nihilo" itself. Is it rightfully considered a paradox as Baillie claims, in the light of Baillie's own definition of a paradox which requires that it be lived and actualized by faith-experience? Baillie writes about the "wholly paradoxical doctrine of creatio ex nihilo" and says that "it does not seem to be the kind of position that could ever be reached by a process of inference from the phenomena, or that it can even be stated without paradox."¹ But is the doctrine truly paradoxical?

Professor J. H. Hick criticizes Baillie's claim that creatio ex nihilo is a paradoxical statement, but the reasons he offers are misleading and miss the point. Hick writes:

This does not appear to be a true instance of paradox in the sense in which Baillie has defined the term, namely as a "self-contradictory statement" [God Was In Christ] (p.110). . . . That God

¹God Was In Christ, p. 111.

created all things ex nihilo is not a self contradictory-statement; it does not contain within itself logically incompatible components. It is "paradoxical" only in the sense that it is empirically unverifiable and therefore de fide.¹

The first point to note is that Baillie never defines paradox as something which is empirically unverifiable but which is affirmed by faith alone. Faith and experience are never abstracted from one another, "faith and experience are one". A paradox must be lived and actualized by faith-experience. (I will come back to this point in a moment.)

Hick states that creatio ex nihilo is not a self contradictory statement. This is the point where he is misleading. What do the words of the statement actually mean? The verb 'to create' is generally understood to mean "To bring into being, to cause to exist." Within the realm of human experience the word is used to describe the production of "a work of thought or imagination, especially . . . a work of art."² The creative activity of an artist is dependent upon experience, motivation, training, aesthetic sensitivity etc. The activity is

¹J. H. Hick, "The Christology of D. M. Baillie," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Volume Eleven (1958), p. 4, note 1.

²Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 195.

never understood as a totally isolated activity. A work of art, the creation, is the result of the skilled use of oils on a canvas. No-one infers that it came into existence out of nothing. The verb 'to create' and the noun 'creation' both presuppose the prior existence of experience and materials. Therefore, the statement creatio ex nihilo is self-contradictory in so far as it reflects any sort of human experience. Hick is right in sensing that Baillie has wrongly defined creatio ex nihilo as a paradox, but his reasons are wrong. For one thing the statement is self-contradictory, but Baillie is not satisfied to call a statement paradoxical merely because it is self-contradictory. His full sentence (quoted in part by Hick) reads:

For since paradox is a self-contradictory statement, we simply do not know what it means or what we mean by it unless it has that direct connection with the faith which it attempts to express.¹

Baillie's italics lead into his fundamental criterion for paradox. This is where the real difficulty lies. Creatio ex nihilo is a self-contradictory statement, the problem with calling it a paradox lies in the inadequacy of the statement to convey what is meant in "connection with the faith which it attempts to express."² Baillie's

¹God Was In Christ, p. 110.

²Ibid.

criterion for a meaningful paradox is that it be lived and actualized in faith-experience. For this reason he has wrongly defined creatio ex nihilo as a paradox. In the realm of preaching which must reflect and address human experience, a statement which is simply self-contradictory and which is not lived and actualized in faith-experience is not a useful statement for the communication of Christian doctrine. The concept of creatio ex nihilo cannot be admitted as a legitimate theological theme in preaching.

We can now pass on to a comparison of the remaining themes in the doctrine of creation. A dominant note in the lectures is the same as that sounded in the sermon, viz. that when we speak of creation we are speaking about God's continuous creative activity.

Creation is not simply an act of God which took place long ago at the beginning, after which all goes on according to the laws God ordained for his creation. Creation goes on all the time. Since all creatures depend absolutely for their continued existence from moment to moment on their Creator, God's preservation of the world is really a continuous creation.

Perhaps this does not answer our question as to whether there was a moment in time when it all began--when God first created anything. But at least it saves us from the idea of God long ago making a universe and then ceasing to create, ceasing all creative activity. (It is true that this is not what became the orthodox idea.) And yet there is a great deal to be said for this idea of continuous creation through all the ages and all

the time. And is it really very novel and off the track of Christian belief? Really have not most Christians believed that God's creative activity is a present activity; not merely an act in the distant past, but a thing that goes on in every age? When a simple Catechism asks a child; "Who made you?", it gives the answer: "God". If that means anything it means that God is continually creating persons. . . . There does not seem to be any valid Christian objection to the idea of continuous creation. And indeed the Christ of the Fourth Gospel seems at one point definitely to assert such an idea, as against the traditional idea that God's creative work happened and ceased long ago. Speaking of the Sabbath, supposed to be a rest after the conclusion of God's creative work, Christ says: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work", (John 5: 17). So the idea of continuous creation seems quite sound.

Faith in God's continual creative activity is reflected in ongoing experiences from conception and birth to new developments in human relations, the arts and the sciences. To faith which sees in all these the hand of God, the doctrine is immediately relevant as a description of Christian trust and gratitude; it also conveys the imperative of ethical responsibility toward the whole of creation. The sermon made use of continuous creation in illuminating the faith-experience of trust and gratitude. The same language could well have been used in the point dealing with ethics. In illuminating the ethical responsibility to respect the whole person, it

¹"The Doctrine of Creation" (book 6), pp. 11-12.

is far more useful and constructive for faith to see the creative will of God behind the answer to the question "Who made you?", than to try and convince a person that his ancestors were made out of nothing!

Baillie continues his lecture by presenting further views of the relationship of creation to time and the difficulties involved, e.g. Origen's views on "serial creation" and "eternal creation". Here again the discussion of the history of theological concepts is appropriate in the classroom; the absence of these themes in the sermon reflect their inappropriateness in preaching. In these instances, and particularly in the case of the discussion of Augustine's teaching "that the world was created cum tempore, non in tempore." (De Civitate Dei, Book XI, Chapter 6, and Book XII, Chapter 25),¹ the problem for preaching is the same as that discussed in relation to the "eternity of God". Valid analogies which can be drawn from experience, are drawn from experience which is temporal experience. No meaningful analogy can be extended which does not initially arise out of such a finite time experience. In his preaching Baillie rested his case with a doctrine of

¹Ibid., p. 13.

creation which stated that God's activity was (at least) temporally continuous. And concluding his lecture on the relationship of time to creation, he writes:

But have we any answer then to the question whether creation had a beginning at a point in time, before which there was no created being? Or, to make it simpler, since we deny the eternity of matter, was there a time when no material universe in any sense existed? I'm inclined to think that to that question we must simply answer: We don't know, and further, as Christians or as theologians we don't need to know.

This is a characteristically honest admission which seriously qualifies the necessity of his defense of creatio ex nihilo as it relates to experience, and throws the whole question into its proper perspective. Baillie continues by asking his students:

Are we committed to the thesis that at a certain point of time the whole created universe came into being, and that before that nothing existed but God Himself? What I am suggesting is that in that form the question does not really concern Christian faith. It is not a faith question, but a speculative question, and perhaps an unanswerable one.

The most positive contribution to an understanding of creation is presented by Baillie in the lectures as an answer to the question, Why does God create? Here Baillie makes explicit use of a human analogy and

¹ Ibid., p. 14.

² Ibid., p. 15.

brings to the surface what is perhaps the most important and constructive message to be conveyed by the doctrine, viz. the ultimate goal of one's own creation and the creation of the universe is determined by the love of God.

It is God's very nature to be a Creator, because God is love, and love longs to share and bless. That is an old and persistent and true idea in Christian theology, that it is the nature of God as love that led Him to create the world. Creation is an expression of God's nature, because it is an activity of love. Creation is a necessity of His love.

Let me ask you to think of this question: Is it legitimate to take human creative activity, in the sense of artistic creation, as an analogy of the creative activity of God? . . . The artist creates a poem, a symphony, a picture, with a view to the embodiment or expression of some ideal value. Thus artistic creation works through ideals, values, ends, to be called into existence. It is concerned not simply with efficient causes but with final causes. It is really the final cause--the end, the ideal, the value to be expressed--that calls the work of art into existence. Now see how that would apply to the creation of the world. . . . After science has told us all about the process, we want to ask: "But what is the meaning and purpose of it all? You have told us the How; but we want to know about the Why. . . . Isn't there a meaning running through it all, a reason, a value, a purpose?" . . . After science has finished its story of the efficient causes working through the process of evolution, religion comes in and goes behind all that story to tell of the meaning of it all, the purpose the final cause; and that is the doctrine of God's creative work, . . . and at the same time it uses human artistic creation as an analogy of God's creation.

"Love", a word which reflects a human experience is

¹ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

coupled with "creative work", a phenomenon which is also a part of experience, and together they are used in the form of an analogy of human creative activity to explain the motivation and purpose of God's creative work. The analogy is of course inadequate to describe the fullness of God's creative love, but extended to the pitch of an infinitely loving and creative God, a connection is made which presents a viable challenge to both human love and human creativity. Furthermore, a connection is preserved between what is experienced and what faith is constrained to proclaim.

The preacher could well use the analogy of the creative artist to illuminate in faith-experience the realization that the ultimate purpose of life and the whole created world is determined by the infinite love of God. In so doing a challenge and an encouragement would be offered to the man of faith to express his faith by a life lived in absolute trust and gratitude, a life of responsible ethical actions toward all creatures. The strains of this theme run through Baillie's sermon where he deals with trust, gratitude and a deep appreciation of the material world and the whole person. The illuminating analogy of the creative artist was missing from all the sermons; it would have been a use-

ful way of communicating the truth intended by the Christian doctrine of creation.

The doctrine of creation tells the story of God's continual purposeful and lovingly creative activity. The manner in which this activity is carried out among men is further described in the next chapter of the "story with a plot", "The Doctrine of Providence".

CHAPTER III

THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE

The doctrine of providence receives prominent emphasis in Baillie's preaching and writing. The concluding chapter of his first book, Faith in God, is largely a treatment of the paradoxical nature of this doctrine.¹ It receives special mention in his essay on the Incarnation and atonement, God Was In Christ.² The theme appears time and again in his preaching, many sermons being devoted exclusively to its exposition. The doctrine is a prime example of a doctrine which reflects and addresses paradoxical experience. Baillie writes:

The course of my life may be profoundly affected by some injury which has befallen me through the deliberate evil volition of a fellow man, who seeks to do me harm and is thereby directly against God's will. Yet as a Christian I also believe that the thing has come to me from God, who is all-good and all-loving, and who makes all things work together

¹Faith in God, Chapter VIII, pp. 267-308.

²God Was In Christ, pp. 111-113.

for good to those who love Him. . . . However paradoxical this doctrine may be when we try to think it out theologically, the mystery that lies behind it is grasped by countless unsophisticated Christian men and women in the actual life of faith.

The most compelling reason for Baillie's emphasis on this doctrine, particularly in the sermons, is that it is addressed to the problem of suffering. Through the message of the doctrine of providence Baillie points the way to a purposeful response to pain, loneliness and sickness.

The following examination of the doctrine in the sermons will demonstrate the importance of structuring the presentation in accordance with the theological method for preaching which starts with an examination of genuine experience; the preacher must begin with statements which accurately reflect the specific experience to be addressed. In the case of the doctrine of providence this means that the paradox of human suffering must first be presented, not as a statement of faith with no reference to experience, not as self-contradictory theological abstractions, but as it is lived and actualized by faith-experience. Where Baillie failed to do this, the response suggested by the sermon is not the response intended by the doctrine. Where the sermons

¹Ibid., p. 112.

dealt with providence as a paradox firmly reflecting and addressing experience, the response to suffering comes close to that found in the life of Jesus Christ, the Christian criterion for faith-experience. The task for the preacher is to take the Church's teaching about God's providential care and then to examine human experience to see where and how God has so worked. It is with statements about this human experience that the sermon must begin in order to identify the message with the person who suffers. Only in this way is the danger of misleading counsel avoided. Only in this way does the message of the doctrine emerge as useful paradox and not mere contradiction.

One further point is vividly illustrated by the doctrine of providence in the sermons. The enabling and constructive understanding of God's persistently loving care is not realized in speculative generalizations about His work in the world and questions about His part in the suffering of those far removed from immediate experience. The truth of the doctrine emerges as one which is only within the context of the personal experience of suffering.

The Doctrine Preached

To demonstrate the importance of grounding the

doctrine as preached in experience, three different presentations of the doctrine will be examined. The three presentations reflect the three ways in which Baillie dealt with the doctrine throughout his preaching, viz. (1) an apologetic for a summary faith statement, e.g. "All things work together for good . . . ," (2) a juxtaposition of two contradictory theological generalizations in an attempt to explain the paradoxical nature of the doctrine, and (3) an initial identification with the human experience of suffering and a subsequent illumination of that experience. Following an exposition of a sermon illustrative of each of the three patterns, conclusions will be drawn as to the kind of response to suffering suggested by the sermon, e.g. passive submission, resistance, acceptance etc. It will be shown that the pastoral counsel suggested to the sufferer is contingent upon the theological method used in each sermon, viz. dogmatic apologetic, theological generalization about the nature of God's work in the world, or an identification with specific experience.

An Apologetic for a Summary Faith Statement:

The first pattern is illustrated by a sermon where Baillie chooses Romans 8:28 as the text: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love

God, to them that are called according to His purpose," (AV).¹ The purpose of the sermon is to explain what is meant by "good" and "them that love God." The sermon is an apologetic for a statement which contradicts much of experience, especially painful experience. The sermon begins:

It seems a bold thing to try to speak of a text like this, a text which makes such a tremendous claim and which is so difficult to believe. It is easy to say it, and to imagine we believe it--at least when the course of life is running smooth. But how can those whose lives are full of trouble believe it?²

It is important to note that Baillie asserts that a statement about God's beneficent providence is easier to believe when "life is running smooth", than when "lives are full of trouble". Here he is saying that providence

¹ Much of the difficulty of this sermon rests on the misleading translation of the text in the AV, the translation used by Baillie. As it stands, the view expressed is one of evolutionary optimism, and is inconsistent with Pauline thought. Both the RSV and C. H. Dodd's translation in the NEB correct this (on the basis of alternative manuscripts) and make "God" or "He" the subject of the verb, not "all things". A fuller treatment of the problem and its implications may be found in: Matthew Black, "The Interpretation of Romans viii 28", Neotestamentica et Patristica, Eine Freundesgabe, Herrn Professor Dr. Oscar Cullman Zu Seinem 60. Geburtsag Ueberricht (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), pp. 166-172.

² "We know that all things work together for good . . . ," Romans 8:28 (115) 1916-1930, p. 1.

makes more sense when suffering is not an experiential reality for the person addressed. And when our lives are chequered with pain and mishap the assertion that "all things are being made to work together for good, . . . seems to be just a blind unreasonable dogma, a superstition, a foolish dream."¹ After several illustrations of the apparent meaninglessness of the doctrine in the face of hard experience he concludes: "It looks as if no one were on our side but ourselves."²

But this is not the message proclaimed by St. Paul; this is not the conclusion of faith. Faith proclaims a God who is ever present with infinite power and love. The doctrine of providence speaks of an omnipotent God who is in control of all creation. The question the sermon sets out to answer is: "Where is the trace of such a ruling providence in this suffering chaotic world?"³, or "Is there any evidence of it for a man whose eyes are open?"⁴ The sermon undertakes to show that there is a trace of evidence in experience which reflects the truth of the text.

The first thing is that word "good". "All things work together for good." For what kind of

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 3.

³ Ibid., p. 1.

⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

good? Is it simply for material good? Is it tranquility, prosperity and happiness? Is that the great purpose God has for man? No, that is not Paul's use of the word, that is not what he says. Look at the next verse where he goes on to explain. "For those whom he did foreknow he also did pre-destinate, to be conformed to the image of His Son." To be made like Christ, that is Paul's idea of the end for which God makes all things work together to them that love him. It is not mere happiness. It is moral and spiritual good. It is character. The purpose of all that comes to us is not simply to make us happy (it doesn't always do that) but to make us good.

Following this explanation of the distinction between happiness and goodness, and the definition of Paul's usage as "moral and spiritual good", the sermon presents illustrations of the emergence of "good" out of suffering in human experience.

Here is a man who has a good deal of suffering and ill-health in his life; and he is somehow kinder and braver and more patient than the people around him; and we know that it is through his hardships he has become like that. Here is a woman whose life has been chequered with sorrow beyond the common lot; and through it all she has become more spiritual, more tender, with a new strength and grace in her soul, and a new light of religion in her eyes, such as we do not see in those whose lives have been free from trouble. Yes, we know that human character can win from sorrow and suffering certain treasures which can hardly be won in any other way. . . . In the end we know that without any of these changes and troubles life would hardly be life at all, and we could never become the patient men and women God would have us be. . . .

¹ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

Friends, that is a great fact of human experience, a great indubitable principle which even pessimists cannot deny. And surely it indicates that there is a meaning and purpose inherent in the scheme of things after all, if only we go deep enough. Often it seems a chaos, without any sign of a providence making all things work for any good. Ah, but remember what kind of good; remember the high end in view, an end so high that it can only be attained through the discipline of suffering and sorrow--the attainment of the Christian character, "to be conformed to the image of His Son."¹

The valid, though not universal, experience of the growth of moral goodness in the face of pain and sorrow is used to justify the truth of the text. Partial experience is here used to justify the absolute and final claim of faith that, "All things work together for good." Fuller experience of suffering which includes bitterness and anger has yet to be mentioned.

The second point in the sermon explains what is meant by, "to them that love God". Here Baillie states that providence is not an impersonal, general force at work. It is personally and specially related to each individual. This special and personally directed providence is contingent upon the spirit and attitude of the person concerned. It is directed toward, and effective in, the lives of "them that love God".

¹Ibid., pp. 7-8.

And that brings the doctrine nearer to the facts of our experience, and reveals something of its meaning. I have been saying that even the troubles of life may do good to the soul. But how do they do good? They do not always have that effect. They don't do good to everyone. They don't turn to good in any magical way. We know that men may pass through the discipline of sorrow and pain and be no better at the end of it. We know that men may even be made worse instead of better by it. We have seen men embittered and hardened by the troubles of life. And perhaps we have sometimes found ourselves becoming more sullen and selfish and fretful and irreligious, instead of better and purer, when cares and trials press upon us. They do not work for our good--as if we were not called according to God's purpose. And why? Not because God does not love us, but because we do not love God. For it all depends on that. His purpose depends on the wills of men. His discipline depends upon how we receive it. And it is those who accept the troubles of life in a spirit of loyalty, love and trust, who are sure to find good in them; because, you see, that very spirit of love and trust in their hearts can change all evil to good. That is a plain fact of experience; and it shows us how God's purpose works. It is faith and love and loyalty that can put a new complexion on all that comes, and transmute loss into gain and hardship into blessing, and use all the bitter things of life for the perfecting of the Christian character. And so in joy and sorrow, success and failure, health and sickness, all things are turned into good for those who love God.

Thus the summary faith statement is justified. When providence does not cause all things to work together for good, it is because the persons involved do not love God. The sermon suggests that if one is to reap the benefits

¹Ibid., pp. 9-10.

of God's providential care and become morally strengthened through suffering he must love God. The conclusion to be drawn from this presentation is a difficult one to accept, because love is never genuinely expressed under coercion or threat of pain. If I must love God, I cannot. I cannot make myself love God; the Church teaches this and experience knows it. Love is a response, not a duty. Authentic love is not realized as a response in fear; the threat of evil or pain does not prompt a person to love.

The valid point which is made is that the experience of suffering is often paradoxically one which yields moral and spiritual good. But there are two implications which color this germ of experiential truth reflected by the doctrine. The first is that somehow moral and spiritual goodness are divorced from the physical well being of the sufferer, it is as if "all things worked together" with no concern for the good of the whole person. Furthermore, the response suggested by the sermon is consequently a response inspite of suffering. It is as if Jesus has called men to "ignore your cross and follow me," instead of saying "take up your cross . . ." The appropriate response on the basis of this sermon is one of submissive resignation. In his concluding sentences Baillie preaches:

Let us learn to love not our own way but His way, not our own choice, but His choice. Let us yield ourselves gladly to the great purpose He has for us, to make us perfect through suffering.

There is truth in this conclusion, but the practical implications for the sufferer indicate that Christian teaching on the matter calls for an attitude of passive defeatism in the face of adversity.

This method of presentation runs into difficulty because the sermon begins at the end; it tries to justify a summary faith statement without examining the experience which cries out for an answer to the problem of pain. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that the words of the faith statement have been accepted uncritically, when in point of fact the words are quite inconsistent with human experience, and also the experience of Paul and his thought. Paul could see God's hand at work through the thorn in his flesh, but he surely never thought that his malady in and of itself was a thing that worked for good.² No, the problem of suffering and the Christian answer voiced by the doctrine of providence is not as simple as that. The method of simply offering an apologetic defense for Scripture and

¹ Ibid., p. 11.

² Supra, p. 272, note 1.

its authority runs into difficulty on two accounts:

- (1) The sermon ends in an attempt to coerce the human response into conformity with a Biblical statement—a statement, which as it was translated, simply contradicts experience, (as Baillie himself sensed at the beginning¹).
- (2) The response called forth in the sufferer is merely one of submissive resignation.

The Juxtaposition of Two Contradictory Theological Generalizations:

In the second pattern under examination, Baillie uses a different method to approach the question of suffering and the answer afforded by the doctrine of providence. The theme and the title of the sermon which illustrates this pattern is contained in Dante's phrase, "His will is our peace," (Paradise III). Baillie begins by giving a sketch of Dante's life and writing, emphasizing the experience of hell Dante knew and of which he wrote. With Dante's experience as a background, Baillie seeks to show "that the secret of peace is to accept whatever comes to us as a part of what Paul called,

¹Supra, p. 272.

Let us learn to love not our own way but His way, not our own choice, but His choice. Let us yield ourselves gladly to the great purpose He has for us, to make us perfect through suffering.

There is truth in this conclusion, but the practical implications for the sufferer indicate that Christian teaching on the matter calls for an attitude of passive defeatism in the face of adversity.

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¹Supra, p. 272.

'God's holy and perfect and acceptable will' [sic]."¹
 But in this sermon Baillie is more cautious; two very different views are put forward to illustrate the complexity of the matter, viz. the view common to the Church in past generations which taught resignation and acquiescence in the face of suffering which was conceived simply as a part of God's will for mankind, and the newer view which teaches that suffering and pain are to be resisted and fought as things which are contrary to His will.

In Dante's time, and indeed throughout most of the history of Christendom, the older view predominated. When we hear Dante say, "His will is our peace",

this very sentiment may seem to savour much more of the religion of the middle ages than of the modern world. For this seems to be a sentiment of resignation and acquiescence. And in a sense it may be said that that is a medieval quality. It belongs to the age when men were apt to acquiesce too much, to become passive in their religion, perhaps to lapse into a sort of mysticism and quietism; not fighting against the evils of the world, but accepting them, giving up the world as a hopeless place soon to pass away, and finding peace for themselves in the thought that God's counsel standeth forever, and that everything happens according to His will."²

¹"His will is our Peace," Romans 12:2 (396), 1926, p. 5.

²Ibid., p. 6.

By way of contrast

the Christianity of the modern world, and especially of our own time, seems to be a much more challenging thing. It doesn't resign itself, but exerts itself, to take the Kingdom of God by storm. It doesn't acquiesce in the evils and pains and woes of the world, or pretend that these things are good. It pronounces them bad, it won't believe that God wants them, it claims the best. It doesn't think of God's will as a static finished thing from all eternity, but as an active thing cooperating with us in fighting against the evils of the world, because the world is not perfect. Therefore perhaps our modern Christianity does not think so much of the peace that comes of accepting God's will, as of power and purpose and persistence and perseverance as we cooperate with God's will to make things better for our own souls and bodies and for all humanity. That is the tendency of Christianity today.

These two views suggest two different responses to suffering; the old view, a response of resignation, the new view, a resistance intent upon banishing human suffering and healing lives broken by tragedy. Baillie sees these as "two sides of the truth, both of which are equally essential."²

On the side of resistance he preaches:

Of course it is true that many things happen which are contrary to the will of God; things which would never happen if our wills were at one with God's will; things which are due to the sinful wills of men, disobeying God and defying His will (all the wars, all the crimes, all the needless suffering of

¹Ibid., pp. 6-7.

²Ibid., p. 8.

the poor, all the miseries of the slums). I do not know if all the evils of the world are due to that. I do not know whether it is true that there would be no suffering or sorrow in the world if there was no sin. I don't suppose anybody knows that. But certainly there is plenty of evil that is due to our own faulty wills, and that is against God's will for mankind. . . . Man's will is always free to choose, and that is the one thing in the world that can oppose God's will.

Suffering that is the consequence of man's free will exercised in opposition to God's will, is rightfully resisted. All suffering may not be a consequence of sin, but in so far as it is, it is to be fought. Baillie credits the modern trend with

laying hold of the truth that somehow God can't simply wish His children to suffer, that he must yearn to keep them against their suffering, that suffering is an enemy of God and man, and therefore a thing to be fought against by faith and by science until it is more and more banished from the world. And so with all other temporal evils. We say they are not the will of God. We don't acquiesce in them, and it is not peace but war against these foes of God and man--a war in which God Himself is fighting with us. That is one side of the truth.²

But the other side of the truth is presented as being more important; it is from this other side of the truth (that suggests resignation to suffering as the will of God) that Baillie draws his pastoral conclusions.

In a sense it must sometimes be true that our sufferings and troubles are to be accepted as the will of God. I don't think that we can ever, as

¹ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

² Ibid., pp. 9-10.

Christian men and women, get away from that. Suffering may be an evil, which we have to fight against and banish from the world. And yet, do what we will, suffering will sometimes come. And when it comes to a man, comes to stay, and to cripple his life, in spite of all remedies: What then? It is not enough to tell him that God hates suffering and that God is sorry for him. It is far better if you can tell him that so long as it is there, and can't be removed, somehow it is part of God's holy and perfect and acceptable will. There is peace in that thought.

An example of the counsel needed in time of bereavement is introduced to emphasize the necessity of preserving this side of the truth.

War is against God's will. Yet if a mother loses her son in the war, it is not enough to tell her that the whole thing was against the will of God, and God is sorry for her. No, she wants to believe that, in some sense, this was God's holy and perfect and acceptable will for her and for her son. Not a distant God who sent it on her, but an infinitely near and loving God who suffers most of all in each sorrow, and yet somehow it is His will; and that thought brings peace.²

Baillie's pastoral emphasis rests on the side of acceptance of suffering as God's will. True, the other side has been mentioned, but the idea of resisting suffering is cast in the form of a general and conceptual argument on the nature of God and His will for mankind. But the example of the mother who lost her son is used

¹Ibid., p. 10.

²Ibid., p. 11.

to support the older view. No empathetic appreciation is given to the experiential reality of bewilderment and bitterness which are part of the human experience of suffering.

The posing of two contradictory views is confusing. No attempt is made to present a connection between the two views; no mention is made of the probability that both responses are part of the legitimate human reaction to suffering. Toward the end of the sermon the difficulty is realized: "Now I've put the two sides of the truth," Baillie preaches, "both equally vital, and I can't reconcile them, and I don't think anyone can."¹ As far as immediate experience is concerned, only the alternative between resignation and resistance is suggested with the clear implication that the former is the appropriate Christian response. Identification with the personal experience of the sufferer is lost.

Only in the concluding paragraphs is the example of Christ's response to his impending crucifixion brought in. Here both sides are present.

Jesus himself saw the dreadful evil, and he shrank from it and prayed very strenuously that it might be averted. "Nevertheless," he said, "not my will, but

¹Ibid., p. 11.

Thine be done." And so he found the peace of God's holy and perfect will.

This is an example of the meeting of both sides in human experience. It is a valid paradigm of the usual response to suffering--first shrinking from it, hating the prospect or the actuality, and then finding the strength to carry on in the face of it. The two sides of the truth are a part of concrete experience. Identification with the people in the congregation could have been made from the start if the negative reaction to suffering had been given its rightful place (perhaps by way of sympathetic illustration) at the beginning of the sermon. The conclusion of the sermon presents both responses as valid. But, by this time the person in the pew who knows suffering has either been coerced into passive submission or he has rejected the sermon as being false to what he knows is his own response to suffering.

By juxtaposing two contradictory views concerning the relationship of providence to suffering, Baillie has presented a conceptual framework which embraces both sides of the appropriate Christian response. But, with the exception of a concluding mention of Jesus' Gethsemane experience, no emphasis was placed on the

¹Ibid., p. 12.

legitimate concurrence of these two responses. It is this very concurrence that affords the basis upon which the doctrine of providence can address and illuminate the human experience of suffering. The introductory reference to Dante's life and his affirmation, "His will is our peace", fails to point out the concurrence of aversion and constructive acceptance of suffering. The main portion of the sermon isolates one from the other in a way which does not reflect experience. The sermon leaves the sufferer on the horns of a dilemma; either resist and fight against human suffering, or submissively resign oneself to suffering. A truer emphasis would have been that Jesus' Gethsamane experience reflects contemporary experience, i.e. the concurrence of both aversion and acceptance.

A third presentation of the doctrine uses a different theological method; not the justification of the authority of a faith statement, not a conceptual analysis which abstracts different facets of the problem, but an initial identification with the experience of suffering and a subsequent illumination of that experience.

An Initial Identification with Experience:

The third pattern is one in which the paradox of

suffering is brought to light in terms of concrete experience. In some sermons Baillie uses the life of St. Paul as an example where personal suffering is both resisted and accepted, and where out of the immediate experience of pain Paul is able to come to the liberating conclusion of faith that sees life and all its possibilities falling within the providence of a loving God.¹ But in every sermon in which the third pattern is used, the life of Jesus is the final criterion by which all responses to suffering are measured and challenged. The sermon which best illustrates this pattern is one in which the specific experience of Jesus is examined throughout, "How Jesus dealt with Human Ills: 2. With Suffering".²

The sermon begins with an emphasis upon the reality and evilness of suffering. In the life of Jesus we find that

He never made light of it. . . . You will never find in his life or his words any trace of that tendency you sometimes come across, to make out pain to be a trifle,

¹For a published example see "The Glory of the Cross," To Whom Shall We Go?, pp. 80-86.

²"How Jesus . . . ," Mark 1:32 (404), 1926.

a mere bodily ache, and therefore of no account to the souls, a thing to be accepted resignedly, or even perhaps a good thing to be cherished. To Jesus it was a great evil, working havoc in human life. He didn't take it lightly.

The first point of the sermon describes the immediate human reaction to suffering, a reaction which opposes and resists all that is painful and harmful. An initial identification with a negative response to suffering is important, because without it the person addressed knows that the genuine experience of suffering is not being taken seriously. He knows that he is not hearing anything about real pain or loneliness. But to hear that Jesus never made light of suffering opens up the possibility that what is to follow may well be relevant to the experience of the hearer. When ever Jesus encountered suffering, "he didn't take it lightly", no, he took it with the utmost seriousness.

From this point Baillie proceeds to the constructive and positive way in which faith illuminates the experience of suffering. The second point of the sermon is: "Jesus always seems to speak of suffering and disease as a thing that can be conquered by faith."²

¹Ibid., pp. 2-3.

²Ibid., p. 5.

The emphasis in His life was never upon the idea that one should become resigned to suffering. Jesus stressed that people in suffering

shouldn't accept it in a helpless and miserable spirit, as if they couldn't help matters. That would be just a lack of faith, and Jesus used to reproach people for it, as if they ought to be able by faith to deal with disease as he dealt with it.¹

There is a vital connection between the faith of one who suffers and the manner in which he copes with suffering. Baillie describes this faith which makes a difference, a description which underlies his concern to show that faith cannot be viewed as a "religious" concept divorced from the realm of temporal experience.

I believe there is something here which we have not sufficiently learned--the power of the spirit of faith over all evils, even the evils of the body. There is nothing very strange about that, for even apart from religion altogether science is finding out wonderfully in our time how much the mind can affect the body for good or ill, and how much a sick man's recovery depends on the faith that is in him; yes, and how much an ordinary man's physical and nervous health depends on whether he has the calm confident brave² spirit which is so like what Jesus meant by faith.

The destructive effects of suffering can not only be mitigated, but even overcome by a courageous attitude and positive outlook toward the opportunities and responsibilities of living. This phenomenon which is true to

¹Ibid., p. 7.

²Ibid., pp. 8-9.

experience is a manifestation of faith in God. It was this down to earth experience that Jesus called faith. The course of events in a life where faith is concurrent with suffering demonstrates what is meant by the doctrine of providence.

And this demonstration of the importance of faith to suffering, this manifestation of God's healing providence which opposes suffering, is not a phenomenon limited to the distant Palestinian past.

God can do for us, amid our suffering, what he could do for men long ago, surely. And if we had more faith in God, a more eager, persistent, courageous indefatigable faith, and applied it to the hard facts of life, might we not be healthier men and women, with saner, calmer, more resolute minds, and therefore sounder bodies? Surely, surely, if we are Christians at all, and if the Gospels are of any use to us, we can learn that much for our own lives, from Christ's treatment of human suffering and pain.

The examination of faith-experience illuminated by Christ's response to pain precludes the possibility of viewing physical or mental suffering and faith in God as things which are unimportant to each other.

Up to this point in the sermon Baillie has been dealing with Jesus' response to suffering in others, and on this foundation of Jesus' practical realism and

¹Ibid., p. 9.

liberating identification of faith with the health of the whole person, he passes on to his final point, the paradoxical response to suffering in Jesus when suffering became his own intimate experience in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross.

When in the end the awful sufferings of death came near to himself, he said something more. He saw the great evil and horror of it, and he shrank from it, and prayed that he might be spared that bitter cup.¹

Jesus' first response to pain and death was aversion and resistance. There was nothing glorious about the prospect of being crucified. But yet, concurrent with this negative response to suffering there arose another response, "he said also, 'Not my will, but thine be done'."²

When confronted by the immediate personal experience of suffering a strength welled up within the heart of Jesus which enabled him to face the greatest responsibility of His love, the willingness to die for those whom He loved. That courageous, selfless love was the greatest example of faith.

That was the greatest faith of all, greater than the faith that heals suffering--this faith which can even, when it is necessary, accept suffering as part of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. And by this great act of faith, the Hebrews tells us, Jesus was made perfect through suffering himself,

¹Ibid., p. 10.

²Ibid.

and became the author of salvation to others.¹

This is the final challenge to the human response to suffering.

You see, this is what it comes to in the end. Suffering is a bad thing that we ought to fight against with faith and courage: but through its very badness it can somehow become a good thing, and a means of grace to our souls. That sounds like a contradiction, and so it is--one of those deep contradictions which are part of our Christian faith. It is a contradiction but you must keep hold of both sides of it, you must not let either side go, or you lose the truth. You must never begin to make light of bodily suffering, and disease, or give up fighting against it, or to talk about it sentimentally as if it were a beautiful thing. No it is a bad thing, an ugly thing, a thing we shall fight against, might and main, to drive it from the world, if we are Christians. And yet when it comes upon you, and won't go away, and your life seems crippled and spoiled by it, then remember that God is over all, and life can never be spoiled for those who trust him, and that He can take all things, even suffering and disease, and through their very bitterness, badness, can make them work together for good to them that love him.

That is the height of Christian faith. That is the kind of faith that gives us the victory--that works for the redemption of both soul and body and works through us also for the redemption of the world.

The conclusion of faith in this sermon is not unlike the conclusions in the first two examined above, yet the pattern of presentation is quite different. So too are the responses to suffering suggested by each. In

¹Ibid., p. 11.

²Ibid., pp. 11-12.

the last pattern, room has been made for the legitimacy of the response of resistance and opposition to suffering (be it in others or oneself) has been included. The sermon began by describing Jesus as a man among men who held a healthy aversion to suffering and a serious concern for it. In the Garden of Gethsemane, too, he had a realistic dread of his impending crucifixion. The attitudes and teachings of Jesus show him to be a man who knows suffering and who genuinely addresses other men who suffer. Basing the sermon upon the full scope of Jesus' response to suffering, Baillie made it clear that Jesus and the teachings of Christianity are not just interested in mere moral and spiritual goodness, but also in the good health of the whole person. It was this initial identification with concrete and true experience that grounded the subsequent paradox. Baillie speaks of the paradox as "contradiction" in the sermon, perhaps because "paradox" was too technical a term for his congregation, but the emergent truth was more than mere contradiction because the responses of aversion and acceptance were concurrent in the life experience of Jesus. Words alone cannot contain the liberating faith which knows that suffering can be concurrently resisted and accepted; words can but end in paradox. But the faith

which looks deeply into experience can open possibilities of a creative response to suffering, a creative response which is challenged by the life and death of Jesus.

The comparison of the three sermons has shown that the difficulty of the first was the prescriptive method used in presenting the doctrine. The result was a coercive (and impossible) demand for love which failed to do justice to providence as an act of God in the lives of men. The difficulty of the second sermon was the method of abstracting generalizations from experience and positing two opposing views with no clear indication that the two views are concurrent and in tension with each other in the faith-experience of anyone who suffers. In neither case was identification made with aversion and resistance as a legitimate response to personal suffering. The third sermon was less prescriptive or abstract and more descriptive. The corrective present in the third pattern was the seriousness with which the actual experience of suffering was viewed. The sermon was intent upon describing experience, experience in the light of the criterion of all Christian experience, the life and death of Jesus Christ.

The conclusions to be drawn from the comparative examination of the three methods of approach used in sermons on the doctrine of providence are:

(1) Even though the three sermons deal with the same theological theme and arrive at the same conclusion, (viz. faith in God enables men to find creative possibilities in and through suffering) the different methods of presentation suggest different responses. The first presentation, resting on the uncritical presupposition that the Biblical text possesses direct authority for experience, presented a coercive prescription for conduct in the face of suffering, viz. "submit passively to all pain and suffering because it is the will of God." The second presentation abstracted theological generalizations from the history of Christian thought on suffering and offered the congregation the ambiguous choice of viewing suffering as either that which was within the will of God or that which was opposed to the will of God; the response deemed appropriate by the sermon was either resistance, or (somehow more Christianly) resignation, not both. The third presentation describes the actual experience of suffering and was able to lend support to both resistant aversion to suffering and the hope-filled, trusting acceptance of suffering; both responses fall within the movement of faith. The initial identification with the immediate human reaction to pain enabled the preacher to illuminate the experience of suffering and

draw the paradoxical conclusions of faith in a manner which was neither coercive nonsense, nor ambiguous abstraction, but both relevant and challenging to genuine experience. The response suggested was a creative opposition to pain and suffering and a liberating trust in God to work through all things, even suffering.

(2) The theological method which lay beneath the sermon which communicated the truth intended by the doctrine was the one in which the doctrine was examined, not as an authoritative rule for faith and practice, not as a theological summary of general truth, but as a reflection of creative human experience using as its criterion the human experience of Jesus Christ. Paradox was used and one sided oversimplification was avoided. But more importantly, paradox was used, not as the end point of theological discussion, but as a true expression of experience; it was not just a self-contradiction but was also lived and actualized in faith-experience.

(3) In the first sermon examined, Baillie says that the doctrine of providence is more easily understood when "life is running smooth".¹ Upon the closer examination of experience in the last sermon, the emergent truth is

¹Supra. p. 272.

that the doctrine only makes sense when suffering is an immediate personal experience. Consequently the preaching of the doctrine is in danger of being ineffectual when it is either a prescriptive suggestion offered from outside the experience, or a generalized speculation abstracted from experience. The preaching of the doctrine comes alive when it is a reflection upon the actual personal experience of suffering. The pre-requisites for preaching on providence are a profound identification with the sufferings of Jesus, an identification best learned through suffering itself.¹

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

Baillie's lectures on the doctrine of providence are directed at the practical importance of coming to grips with this teaching of the Church. The lectures begin by stating this emphasis and illustrating its importance. To his students he stressed the necessity of

¹The theme of providence and its acutely personal paradoxical truth appeared frequently in Baillie's war dated sermons. It was the message he preached on the opening of term on October 8, 1939, when many university careers seems clouded and made senseless by the outbreak of war. It was in this context that Baillie preached; "even the worst times can be redeemed when by faith and love men set them in the context of that great divine purpose." "Redeeming the Time," Ephesians 5:16 (714), 1939, p.6.

making the doctrine real. For you, who are going to be ministers, you will soon come up against it. For example in discussing some sad event which has happened in the community--a young and happy mother of a large family of children, suddenly cut off, though she seems badly needed, while another person, old infirm, constantly suffering and longing for release, lives on. You will find people saying: "It is mysterious. Why is it so ordained? It is hard to understand."

Still more when people have tragedy coming close to themselves. . . . What are you going to answer? What do we really believe about providence?¹

Much of the theological language in which the doctrine is cast is singularly irrelevant to the practical issues. Baillie reveals his dissatisfaction with much of the traditional terminology when he notes that the Scholastics

distinguished five kinds of providentia: universalis, generalis, particularis, specialis, specialissima. These distinctions may have their uses; but when they are used to answer questions such as I have suggested, one suspects that they merely evade the issues by verbal ingenuity.²

The traditional twofold distinction between special and general providence has limited usefulness, but care must be taken. Where the Westminster Confession says that God's providential care does "in general, reach to all creatures; so, after a special manner, it taketh care of

¹"The Doctrine of Providence" (Book 8), pp. 1-2.

²Ibid., p. 3.

the Church" (WCF V,7), Baillie points out the misleading conclusions that can easily be drawn. Whatever is said about the nature of providence it cannot be viewed as a belief in the favoritism of God for the Church, or a limitation of God's love toward any of his creatures. The justification for the distinction rests in the knowledge that God's providential care is only seen as such in the experience of men where they have met tragedy and suffering "in the spirit of loyalty, love and trust" which characterizes Christian faith. In that sense providence may be spoken of as special in the lives of those who have faith, and general in the broader context. But even here Baillie finds very limited usefulness for the distinction.¹

Baillie prefers to think of all providence as special in that it is always related uniquely to individual experience. He told his students:

I'd rather say that all providence is special providence. God doesn't really treat mankind in the mass, or work by rule of thumb with large numbers. . . . What from the human side, looks like universal law must be all individual to God, who is perfectly free and who always acts in accordance with his nature, which is boundless love to each individual man and woman. In that sense we must believe that

¹Ibid., pp. 12-13.

all His providence is individual or special providence.

The special or personal character of God's dealings and the necessity of individual experience to understand the meaning of providence mean that academic distinctions between different ways of defining the scope of providence are superfluous and irrelevant to the real problem. The theme of the personal or special character of providence is present in the sermons. There are no discussions about "special" and "general" distinctions. Thus in both the lectures and the sermons Baillie's emphasis upon special and personally directed providence is consistent.

The lectures deal next with an exposition of two views about suffering, along the same lines as the two views presented in the second sermon examined above.² The traditional view holds that everything happens according to the will of God. In this view,

even the wrong acts of sinful men, with all their consequences may be "permitted" if not "ordained", as part of God's perfect plan for the world.³

This way of attempting a reconciliation between the presence of evil and an omnipotent God is misleading and

¹ Ibid., pp. 3, 14.

² Supra, p. 279ff. Baillie's fullest development of this theme is in Faith in God, pp. 267-284.

³ Faith in God, p. 268.

leads to a morally paralyzing conclusion. If God permits evil, why fight it? Baillie makes no positive use of this distinction in the lectures; it is totally absent from his preaching. This is another example of a speculative assertion about the nature of God's will, well attested in the traditional language of the church (e.g. The Westminster Confession of Faith V, 4), but better abandoned in preaching.

Where the older view ends in suggesting a response of resignation to all suffering and disaster, the newer view holds that these things are against God's will. "Resignation is wrong--rebellion is right." Baillie posits the two views in the lectures in order to raise the problem of the doctrine of providence in bold relief. The difficulty is to "believe in God's infinite power and in His perfect love." The problem is a practical one. If God's omnipotent sovereignty is given up--"we are giving up a great consolation which we surely need amid troubles". Yet it is difficult to speak of a sovereign God who is also perfect love in the face of evil and suffering.¹ The two views are presented in order to sharpen the question for the students; the remainder of the lecture undertakes to present an answer. The

¹"The Doctrine of Providence," pp. 4-6.

method of abstracting two poles of a problem may well have its place in a lecture room, but the results of this method in the pulpit lead to confusing and ambiguous conclusions. The problem of coping with life in the face of suffering is not to be abstracted from experience when one is in pain; preaching which seeks to speak to the human situation concerning divine providence cannot abstract the problem either.

In an attempt to answer the question raised by the two views which state, on the one hand that suffering is part of God's plan, and on the other that suffering is against His will, Baillie's lecture follows a seven point argument which is the same as that set out in Faith in God.¹

1. Starting from a glimpse of the truth offered by an examination of experience it can, in some instances, be said that "suffering does become the occasion of great spiritual gain when faced in a Christian way."²

2. But it is essential to the realization of this paradoxical experience to recognize evil as evil. "The paradox of suffering is that just because it is in

¹Faith in God, pp. 284-95.

²Ibid., p. 285.

itself an evil, and only so long as it is felt to be itself an evil, it can be turned to a greater spiritual good."¹

3. To see that evil which is genuinely evil, to see that suffering which is contrary to the wishes of a loving Father, can be turned to a higher good compels us to affirm that

this whole order, with its element of suffering as a part of the very material of the moral and spiritual life,² belongs somehow to the Will and Purpose of God.

4. But it must be quickly added that this affirmation cannot take the form of a generalization about suffering. God's will in this matter is infinitely personal and related specifically to individual persons with due regard for their capacity to grow where faith is present. Any one-sided generalization about suffering and the will of God is bound to end in unwarranted conclusions.³

5. And from the perspective of the individual who is suffering, the very faith that he is in the hands of God lends support to his growth in spiritual goodness as well as physical wholeness. The

¹Ibid. ²Ibid., p. 288. ³Ibid., pp. 288-89.

imaginative conviction that God is all the time doing him good with "never-failing skill", [is] an indispensable element in the true fides salvificia, which is effectual for the healing of the body as well as for the saving of the soul.

6. When a person is the victim of his own or another's wrong doing, when suffering is a consequence of sin, how can he view suffering as a part of God's plan? In this case the importance of the personal character of providence is essential. God's providential care can still be real for a person who knows that God is not bound by any retributive legal system, a person who can accept suffering (which is the consequence of sin) with faith in "God's unfailing care over the individual".²

7. It all seems paradoxical. For how can those fortunes which befall us as a direct result of human sin be regarded by faith as in any way sent by God? And yet unless we can in some sense believe that, there can't be any belief in providence at all, since the whole course of our lives from day to day is directly dependent on the moral choices of other people, some of whom are in direct opposition to God's will. If we give that up, we are left with a limited comrade-god, and all the strength and comfort of a real doctrine of providence goes by the board.

Thus we do seem to be left with a paradox, and we can't get away from it.³

¹ Ibid., p. 290.

² Ibid., 292.

³ "The Doctrine of Providence," p. 11.

Baillie does not leave the paradox dangling in mid-air. Unresolved paradox is not the final reality for faith. Paradox drives us beyond theological formulation into the life of faith. As paradoxical as words may be, they reflect a real experience. The lecture concludes with two points:

The paradox is quite familiar in our actual experience, because we know that evil things can turn to good. . . . natural evil turns to spiritual good when people accept it in a spirit of faith and love and so something finer is produced than could (so far as we can see) be produced in a world where there was no¹ pain. That is a familiar paradox of experience.

And finally, the vividly perfect example of this paradox is there for all men to see in the experience of Christ at His crucifixion.

That is where the paradox of our faith in providence comes to its climax; and that "crucial" instance has made it easier ever since to believe in the loving purpose of God. Nothing could have been worse than the crucifixion; and yet nothing in the whole history of mankind has been such an untold source of good.²

The comforting and enabling apprehension of the paradox of providence rests, in the last analysis, on experience--personal experience illuminated and challenged by Christ's experience.

However paradoxical this doctrine may be when we try to think it out theologically, the mystery that lies behind it is grasped by countless unsophisti-

¹Ibid., pp. 11-12.

²Ibid., p. 13.

cated Christian men and women in the actual life of faith. Here again the paradox arises out of actual religious experience, and indeed Christian experience. . . . The crucifixion of Christ was the supreme instance, driving men to think out afresh the whole problem of divine rule in the world; and the result was the highly paradoxical Christian doctrine of providence.

A brief summary of this argument will demonstrate the way in which the methods used in this presentation and the third sermon are parallel. First, an examination of the experience of suffering reveals that evil though it be, good can paradoxically emerge from it. How can this happen? The first response to be seen in this paradoxical experience is that the evil of suffering is taken seriously and there is consequently an aversion to suffering. But concurrently there is the response which views suffering within the context of God's good purpose and there is consequently an acceptance of suffering. Both responses are legitimate expression of faith-experience and are ways in which God works in men toward the end of healing of both body and spirit. (The affirmation that both responses are legitimate is the message with which the doctrine of providence addresses human experience; it is through both responses that God works.) This is a paradox, but it is a paradox which is

¹God Was in Christ, pp. 112-113.

lived and actualized in faith-experience. It is most vividly demonstrated in the faith-experience of Jesus Christ.

This is essentially the flow of the argument in both the lectures and the third sermon. A comparison of this presentation with the presentation in the first sermon will bring to light a dangerous implication which must be avoided in preaching. There is in both presentations the implication that the "spiritual" can be abstracted from the "natural"; the implication that the two are not inseparably connected in genuine experience. In the first sermon this led to the suggestion that one should passively submit to suffering (in the "natural" realm) and be somehow satisfied with an abstract "goodness" (in the spiritual realm). In the lectures the partially valid statement (though misleading in its oversimplicity) that "natural evil turn to spiritual good"¹ was inadequately balanced by the complementary truth that spiritual well being can never be abstracted from the well being of the whole person. (Even though a person is permanently disabled by disease, he can still by faith exercise the fundamental responsibility of humanity which is to live and act in love toward God and fellowman.

¹"The Doctrine of Providence," p. 12.

This inevitably involves the whole person in relation to his environment which includes both God and fellowman and is both "natural" and "spiritual".) This inadequacy in the lectures is partially mitigated by implication under point (5) where faith is said to be "effectual for the healing of the body as well as the saving of the soul." However, this one-sided emphasis in both the first sermon and the lectures can lead to the dangerous and false conclusion that the appropriate Christian response to suffering is simply submissive resignation, (as if Jesus had said "sit on your cross" instead of saying as He did, "take up your cross and follow me"). This one-sided emphasis can lead to the dangerous and false conclusion that aversion to suffering is something illegitimate and something for which one should feel guilty. The truth of the matter is that aversion is one of the ways God works in men to enable them to rise above the debilitating effects of pain, loneliness and sickness.

In conclusion it can be said that the lectures added no substantial insight to the presentation in the sermons. On the other hand, the initial examination and description of genuine suffering in the third sermon, with its consistent emphasis on the fact that both aversion and acceptance are concurrently (be they paradoxically)

legitimate responses, afforded the clearest presentation of the message intended by the doctrine of providence.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

The preceding chapters have told of the way God acts among men. His love is demonstrated by His continually creative work in the world and His providential care for His creatures. Attention must now be focused on the nature of the men among whom He works. What is there in man which demonstrates that God is active in him? What has happened in man that requires the continual and persistent work of God's love in him?

The traditional expression of the doctrine is summed up by Baillie in the following sentence:

Man was created in the image and likeness of God, and his original state was one of perfection and likeness to God: but man fell from that state, and is now a fallen creature.

He goes on to point out that "these modes of expression are based upon the stories we find in the first and third chapters of Genesis." Traditional Christianity has not maintained the doctrine merely because of these stories, "but at least these stories have determined

the language and form of the doctrine."¹ Yet there is no record of any sermon preached by Baillie on a text from these passages.

It has been noted above that Baillie views the chapters of the "story with a plot" which tell of creation and the Fall as being in the "supra-historical realm of which we can only speak in symbols."² These "stories in Genesis," Baillie writes, "are mythical."³ This chapter will demonstrate the way in which Baillie preaches on the doctrine of man without using the Genesis myths; his presentation of supra-historical realities is in terms which directly reflect and address historical experience. The particular point illustrated and discussed in this chapter is the importance of distinguishing myth from history, both of which are legitimate ways of presenting Christian doctrine in preaching.

The Doctrine Preached

What does it mean to say that God created man

¹"The Doctrine of Man," (dossier) p. 2.

²Supra, p. 231.

³"The Doctrine of Man," p. 7.

in His own image? For Baillie it means that there is in all men an element of the Divine. Time and again, in varying contexts, such phrases as, "there is some spark of the Divine in every one of us", keep re-appearing.¹

In a sermon on Jonah this universal characteristic in man is brought to light. "In the most ignorant, the most degraded, there is a spark of the Divine which can be kindled into flame. Even a heathen place like Nineveh has a conscience and can repent."² Conscience which draws men out of themselves, is an example of the presence of the Divine image. Jonah was invested with such a conscience even though he was angry and disappointed (as a prototype of exclusivistic Israel) in the consequences of his mission to Nineveh. The Ninevites, too, were invested with a conscience which turned them from themselves to God in repentance.

Baillie is quite explicit about defining the moral consciousness as the presence of God in man.

Every noble impulse we feel within us, urging us to choose what is right even when it is hard, urging us to choose something better and higher than material prosperity--that is God working in us and drawing us

¹E.g., "The Peace of Godlessness or the Peace of God," Out of Nazareth, p. 89.

²"The Book of Jonah, III," Jonah 3:1 (183), 1923, p. 5.

to Himself. Every time our hearts go out in pity and help to a fellow creature or to humanity around us—that is God, moving us to find¹ Him in our fellow creatures and to love Him in them.

The presence of God in man, the image of God in man, is attested to by the presence of a moral consciousness that draws men out of themselves into fellowship with one another. "Whenever there springs in our hearts even a faint impulse of love to our fellow creatures, it is God's love that has kindled it."² The universal presence of moral consciousness informed by the experiential demands to live in love with fellowman is indicative of the image of God in man.

Baillie makes use of this irreducible aspect of human nature when he addresses himself to the problem of basic religious doubt. In a sermon based on the life of F. W. Robertson of Brighton, Baillie offers pastoral support to the man who doubts the relevance of religion to his every day pursuits. When all else fails, there remains in man the basic conviction: "It must be right to do right".³ Following a biographical sketch of

¹"A Man's Life," Out of Nazareth, pp. 134-35.

²"Does Belief in God Matter?," p. 7. Also Supra, p. 159.

³"If any man will do his will. . . ," John 7: 17 (399), 1926, p. 1. See also: F. W. Robertson, "Obedience the Organ of Spiritual Knowledge", Sermons on Religion and Life (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1906) pp. 127-142.

Robertson's pilgrimage through doubt, Baillie continues:

Robertson's discovery really amounted to this: that faith or believing in God, is not a matter of accepting doctrines at second hand on the authority of other people, or even a sacred book. And again, it is not a thing you can bring about just by the effort of your will: you can't force yourself to believe in God if you don't feel any assurance in your heart: and again, it is not a matter of logical proof, so that clever and learned people would have a better chance than simple ignorant people. No, faith in God is a thing that depends just on sincerity and honesty and purity of heart. Its coming depends on whether we are true to conscience or not. If we are faithful to the light we have, then more light comes.¹

When doubt assails, there is always a bedrock conviction within the heart of man; there is a given assurance which is part of the created nature of man.

One thing at least you cannot doubt: "It must be right to do right". My friend, hold on to that, not only with your mind but with your heart and with your life. Don't wait for anything. Do what's right today, tomorrow, in the little situations that continually arise. Trample evil under foot. Be brave, be unselfish, be pure, be kind. Think of others, go out of your way to help them, live like a hero. That must be right. If there is any God, that must be of God. There is no doubt about that. It is not much of a religion,² but it is something to go on with.

And for those who are not troubled by intellectual doubts but who are burdened with doubt about the practical demands of daily life, Baillie concludes the sermon with the following sentences:

¹Ibid., p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 11.

You may not be a questioner, as Robertson was. But you do sometimes lose your practical hold upon the realities of your religion. You lose your vision, your assurance, your sense of God that brings joy and strength and peace. And though you try to get it back, you have to go on for days without it, and it is hard. Yes, but remember this: In light or darkness, it is always right to do right, to keep a pure mind, and a brave will, and a heart of love to our fellow creatures that seeks to help them day by day. And God is never far from us when we live like that. His light is nearer than we think. "No man has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God dwells in us," [I John 4:12]. "He that loves his brother dwells in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him," [I John 2:10].

Thus, the doctrine of man's creation in God's image is used as a way of offering pastoral assurance to the man who doubts his inherent ability to cope with the basic demands of daily life.

Three points of the doctrine have thus far emerged in the sermons. (1) An examination of human nature reveals that within man there is a basic moral consciousness that draws him out of himself toward fellowship with his fellowman. This may also be called a basic social consciousness conditioned by the reciprocal demands of life together. This is a "given" of the created order of man in society. It is a basic minimum,

¹Ibid., p. 12.

universally present in man, which manifests his creation in the image of God. (2) As this basic conscience is universally present, the image of God is in some measure preserved in man. (3) As moral consciousness is part of the image of God in man, morality is therefore inseparable from religion, which is one's attitude and conduct toward God. (It is to be noted that Baillie is not arguing from morality to religion. The two cannot be abstracted from each other; neither has a place of logical priority.)

The image of God in man is, however, obscured by another ever present aspect of human nature. Within every man there is the desire to deny the demands of the moral consciousness and to live in alienation from fellowmen and from God. In a sermon preached at the University Chapel in St. Andrews, Baillie describes this universal phenomenon as a selfish form of individualism.

Of course the word "individualism" has so many different senses, and we must not be confused. But think for a moment of this selfish individualism of which I am speaking, and you will recognize it, though it isn't very respectable. Its motto is: 'My life is my own, and I can do what I like with it. It's a good thing to have, and I'm not going to let the claims of other people spoil it for me. I have a right to my own way, my own self-realization, and I'm going to have it.' Doesn't that spirit, conscious or unconscious, creep into many lives, especially young lives?

.....
A lad gets such a keen sense of his own importance

that other claims fade out: he must cut a figure himself, have his own success, his own pleasure. Or a girl begins to carve out her own life, shakes off encumbering responsibilities, develops sort of a heartlessness to those who might have a claim upon her. Lad or lass, it isn't an unfamiliar picture, is it? But it isn't a beautiful picture. That kind of individualism is just selfishness. And is there anything uglier than that, in a young life? Is there anything uglier than the particular brand of ingratitude and selfishness that you sometimes see in young people? Unless perhaps it be the pedestrian middle-aged selfishness to which it usually leads as the years pass. That is what it leads to, and that is perhaps even uglier still: men and women living among their fellows with no thought but their own security and prosperity, without sympathy or compassion or imagination or any sense of social responsibility. Surely that is the unloveliest kind of middle life for anybody. And then middle life too passes; "and age comes on, uncheered by¹ faith and hope"--the saddest thing in the world.

As true as the element of selfish individualism is to human experience, it is not the kind of life intended by God for man. "It is based on a lie. Your life with all its riches, does not belong to yourself. . . . 'Ye are not your own'."²

The arguments Baillie brings to bear to show that the human tendency toward self assertive individualism is based on a false view of oneself and the world,

¹ "Bought with a Price," To Whom Shall We Go?, pp. 46-47. For the same sermon before it was re-written for a university congregation, see "Ye are not your own", I Cor. 6:19, 20 (200), 1920-1927.

² Ibid., pp. 47-48.

deal first with the debt of dependence each man owes to those around him:

. . . the price your parents have paid for the blessings you possess. . . . the price that is being paid for your comforts by the grimy toil of millions of labouring people. . . .

Here we are on this quiet Sunday morning worshipping God in this beloved Chapel, in peace and freedom. . . . Our minds begin to travel back through the centuries, over the lands, Scotland and England, France and Germany, Geneva and Rome, and further back, Greece and Egypt and Palestine, each with a great multitude which no man can number of Christian men and women who paid the price for the blessings we possess: . . . and then at the beginning, Jesus Christ our Lord, moving on . . . with his face steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem, and finally, on a spring morning, giving up His life by crucifixion. . . . you are not your own, you are bought with a price.

The realization of the falseness of the innate desire to live in selfish isolation from the demands of the social order in which God has us placed can lead to the acceptance of the challenge, "Therefore glorify God".

But to glorify God, in the historic sense of that noble phrase means to live one's life for God's glory; and that includes everything most worth living for--the love of God and man.

In short, the realization of the mistakenness of the tendency toward selfish individualism leads to the possibil-

¹ Ibid., pp. 49-50.

² Ibid., p. 50.

ity of seeing life as God intends men to live it.

He has created us as free, finite spirits, that we might live in fellowship with Him and with one another (and these two things are inseparable).¹

The possibility of seeing life as God intends it to be does not, in and of itself, mean that man has the ability to live such a life. What does it mean to say that man is created free, free to choose a course of action consistent with the dictates of his moral consciousness?

The situation of man in which selfish individualism denies the demands of the image of God is the same situation which raises the basic human question with which we began our examination of doctrinal themes in Baillie's preaching, viz. the question raised by the paradox of morality.² In the present context this paradox becomes relevant to the understanding of man's freedom, not only to choose, but also to act. Man's moral actions are not wholly determined by the image of God; man does perform evil acts. His actions are not wholly determined by his selfish individualism either; man does perform good acts. But when his acts are good they reflect the image of God. It is only when morality

¹ "Does Belief in God Matter?," p. 7. Also supra, p. 158.

² Supra, pp. 114-120.

is conceived in isolation from this image (a delusion perpetrated by selfish individualism) that man leads himself into the situation where he cannot do good. A self-contained morality is frustrated by the paradox of moralism. But the true nature of man includes his creation in the image of God which is preserved. Therefore, in spite of all the other human pressures to the contrary, man is free to act upon his choice of good. In one sermon Baillie preached that there does exist the influence of

heredity and environment and social pressure and all that; but any individual man is always free to turn from evil to good, and if he desires to do so God will help him, God will put a new spirit in him. God is always waiting to do it.

Thus man's actions are not determined, his freedom is genuine. Yet his freedom is not sheer indeterminism, because it is only realized in his dependent relationship upon God. This in turn is realized in "fellowship with Him and with one another (and these two things are inseparable)."²

Four more points of the doctrine of man have emerged from the sermons. (1) The image of God in man

¹"The Prophets of Israel: (8) Ezekiel," Ezekiel 1:3 (333), 1923, 1926, p.12.

²"Does Belief in God Matter?," p. 7. Also supra, pp. 159, 319. A further discussion of this will appear in Chapter VI, "The Doctrine of Grace," infra., pp.405-407

is obscured by an innate phenomenon which may be described as selfish individualism. (2) This innate tendency plays false to the needs and demands of man and the society in which he lives. (3) The realization of the falseness of this tendency opens up the possibility of seeing life as God intended men to live it. (4) As man is constituted in dependent relationship to God and his fellowmen, he is free and able to act upon this vision.

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

Toward the beginning of Baillie's lecture on the doctrine of man he gives a summary statement of the traditional expression of the doctrine. Following this, as we have seen, he notes that the language of the doctrine has, to a large extent, been determined by the Genesis stories about the creation and fall.¹ Baillie avoided the use of these Biblical myths in all his preaching on the doctrine. In doing so he has avoided at least two points of difficulty and confusion which have often been associated with the Genesis stories. In the sermons it was not implied that the Fall was an historically datable event. Also, there were no spec-

¹Supra, p. 311.

ulative assertions about the origins of evil. Baillie does not view either of these assertions as truths intended by the doctrine.

Christian doctrine has always said that "we live in a fallen world, that man is a fallen creature." Does this mean that the fall is to be viewed as a temporal event in history? One answer which has been given to this question (which attempts to rationalize the temporal implications of the Genesis account) equates the Fall with man's attainment of moral consciousness, the knowledge of good and evil. Here, however, it might be said that "the Fall was really a rise, though it felt like a Fall because it brought the sense of imperfection." And it is reasonable to extend this happening in time to a theoretical point in the growing awareness of any child. But these are two different things, and the problems of locating the Fall at a point in time, be it cosmic or individual, become only further aggravated.¹

An attempt to explain the Fall in a purely non-temporal way is found in the Hegelian idea that "man's very existence as a morally self-conscious being involves

¹ "The Doctrine of Man," pp.13-15.

moral imperfection, sin being a necessary phase of the soul's evolution." Here finitude is being equated with sinfulness.

The Fall means no more than that we are finite, self-conscious individuals and therefore necessarily imperfect in our finite individuality. Sin is reduced to finitude. But that view . . . is not compatible with the Christian outlook, and indeed makes nonsense of the whole moral and spiritual life.

This view is hardly a view of the Fall at all, as there is no place for the creative intentions of God; man is merely created morally imperfect with no reason to be otherwise.¹

Another explanation of a "pre-mundane Fall" or a "pre-natal Fall" where in either cosmic or individual terms the Fall is something which has infected all creation, and consequently each man born into it, prior to human history. This view preserves many of the traditionally important points of the doctrine, e.g. temporality (although outside human history) is preserved, and each man becomes infected and is therefore responsible for his fallen nature. But Baillie is discontented with this view because "it wanders into the paths of unverifiable speculation with which Christian theology, as such, has nothing to do."²

¹Ibid., p. 15.

²Ibid., pp. 15-16.

A fourth way of speaking about the Fall is that in which Baillie finds himself indebted to Barth, Brunner¹ et. al. This is the way where the Fall is spoken of as neither an historical nor non-historical event, neither as temporal nor non-temporal, but as that which is "super-historical". Various words have been used to describe this, and Baillie is indebted to Professor E. P. Dickie's discussion of the matter.²

The problem is that

we cannot do without the conception of the Fall, and yet we cannot speak of the Fall as simply a temporal historical event in the ordinary sense, nor dare we think of it as purely non-temporal in the Hegelian sense. Therefore we must think of it as a Christian-mythological way of saying something which cannot be expressed either in purely historical or in purely conceptual terms. We must think of the Fall as a real event, but as a "super-historical" event. . . . The "Fall" is a symbolical expression for a supra-mundane fact which we cannot quite imagine or describe but which we require as a symbolical or regulative conception.

¹Baillie takes issue with Brunner on the point where Brunner limits the Fall to mankind. Baillie finds it necessary to maintain the fallen nature of all creation. Donald M. Baillie, Review of The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, by Emil Brunner, Theology Today, X, 3 (October, 1953), 418-420.

²Revelation and Response, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1938), n.b. Professor Dickie's discussion of Urgeschichte, pp. 160 ff.

The doctrine does not refer to a point in past history but when properly understood, "would symbolize a present truth, that something has gone wrong with man and his world". Also "the Christian doctrine of the Fall is not to be taken as an attempt to answer the question of the origin of evil."¹

Thus it can be seen that Baillie's avoidance of speculation about the temporal nature of the Fall in the sermons is consistent with his teaching that the doctrine itself has nothing to do with such speculations; so, too, with speculations concerning the origin of evil. Neither of these matters has a place in his preaching. Now that the ground has been cleared, we can proceed to compare his positive view of the doctrine, which he preached as a "present truth, that something has gone wrong with man and his world",² with what he taught about man created in God's image, yet fallen.

The lecture on the imago dei presents a survey of the various interpretations which have been associated with the concept in Patristic literature and down through the Reformation. Through all the controversies and distinctions, man's rational faculties, carrying with

¹"The Doctrine of Man," pp. 16-19.

²Ibid.

them a moral consciousness, have remained a theme in the definition of the imago dei, so, too, has the idea of original intended righteousness.¹ It is important to understand Baillie's interpretation. Mere morality, or the meral consciousness in vacuo, is not the image of God simpliciter. The moral consciousness is a witness to the image of God in man because it is characterized by an other-directedness and a corporate sense. Baillie's best statement of his understanding of man as created in the image of God appears in God Was in Christ, at the beginning of his discussion of the Church.

The "sacred story" begins with God's eternal purpose for man, as faith perceives it. His eternal purpose was that mankind should be "one body", with the unity of a perfect organism: a higher kind of organism, indeed than any we know (so that the word 'organism' is inadequate if not misleading), a free and harmonious fellowship of persons united in the love of God. In such a perfect community each individual would have the fullest and highest freedom--without which there can be no true fellowship. But they would not be "individualistic" in spirit: if they were their personalities would be starved and cramped, since the true life of personalities is in close fellowship. Moreover, fellowship with God and fellowship with men cannot be separated in human life--can hardly even be distinguished. Thus the true life of mankind is found in the corporate enjoyment of God, a life of complete community with God and man. That is true human nature, created in the image of God.²

¹ Ibid., pp. 2-5.

² God Was In Christ, p. 203.

With the understanding of the imago dei as that which is partially reflected in man by a moral consciousness which draws man out of himself to others and to God (these two things cannot be separated), it is possible to see the way in which the imago dei has been obscured by the Fall, which is an ever contemporary and supra-historical reality.

The Genesis story, as has been shown, is not an account of an historical event. Neither can it be said that the whole idea of man as a fallen creature is a result of the story. The very opposite is the case. "The Genesis story itself is rather a result of a deep seated conviction that man was a fallen being."¹ The fact that the story is a myth does not negate the reality of experience behind the myth. The reality is described in the sermons as a kind of selfish individualism. In God Was in Christ, Baillie speaks of the way in which the imago dei is obscured in these words:

But something has gone wrong. The organism has somehow failed to function as one body. It has come to be divided into countless little bits of life, each person trying to be a quite independent cell,

¹ "The Doctrine of Man," p. 7.

a self-sufficient atom, dancing on a pattern of its own, instead of joining in the great communal game of universal love. Each person makes himself the centre of his universe, caring little for the fellowship of the whole, but seeing things from his selfish point of view; becoming his own God, and worshipping himself. That is the universal aberration symbolized in the 'myth' of the Fall of Man.

Thus in both the sermons and the formal writings, Baillie described the Fall in non-mythological terms, terms which directly reflect individual and corporate human experience.

Yet this condition of man does not totally obscure the image of God in which he was created. Man is not "totally depraved". Baillie explains the way in which the idea of man's "total depravity" has evolved in theological thought. The consequences of this line of thought have included the idea of man's utter alienation from God, with the clear implication that there are men and women who exist in such a state. Baillie questions this:

It is undoubtedly true that apart from God no man can do or think any good thing at all. But is any man absolutely "apart from God"? Are heathen men who have never heard of Christ absolutely "apart from God"?

Therefore, while we must indeed get away from the sentimentally optimistic view of human nature,

¹God Was In Christ, pp. 203-204.

I cannot think that the phrase "total depravity" fairly represents the truth.

When it is remembered that fellowship with God cannot be separated from fellowship with man, Baillie's representation of the truth can be seen to be a verifiable truth of corporate experience.

Surely the truth of the matter is that no man is absolutely without the influence of God, and that indeed without it man would not be man at all. I'm inclined to think one mistake which has misled theology in these matters is the mistake of thinking of man as an independent being, who, once he was created and endowed with human nature, continues to exist as a quite separate and independent being with a nature of his own. . . . But really human nature is not an independent thing at all. It is constituted in its relation to God.²

Thus, although man's "fallen nature" is a true and accurate description of his condition, it is not a totally depraved nature. The image of God in which he is created is in some measure preserved. It is preserved in the moral consciousness which is characterized by an awareness of the demands of man's social existence and his inherent dependence on others.

Underlying Baillie's doctrine of man is his understanding of man as both infected by selfishness yet also constituted in relationship to God, a relationship

¹"The Doctrine of Man," p. 21.

²Ibid., p. 23.

which makes man an ethical being. There is no such thing as an ethic autonomous or independent from this relationship. Morality and religion are inseparable. Neither can claim causal priority over the other. One does not come to faith by way of an autonomous ethical consciousness; one does not become a moral man simply by way of religious knowledge. Morality, the free choice of good, involves the consciousness of a demand and the claims of a particular situation. This free choice is inextricably a part of what is rightfully called religion. Christianity has best articulated this relationship, dependent as it is upon the criterion of the Incarnation. The key to Baillie's understanding of morality is bound up with the paradox of the Incarnation where within the nexus of human experience, a divine element is always present. It is from the divine encounter with human experience that a moral consciousness arises. And morality is not a consequence of the encounter; it is the very essence of it.

Kant effectively demolished the idea that ethical action demanded the sanction of theology. But in setting the two in isolation from each other, he postulated that ethics were autonomous from any religious categories. From the time of Kant through the first thirty years of

this century a system of priority dominated philosophical and theological thought about ethics. Theologians generally agreed that if one thought out the implications of moral values, one inevitably came to a religious conclusion. Indeed the work of men like

James Ward, Pringle-Pattison, W. R. Sorley and A. E. Taylor . . . seems to be the final phase of the movement inaugurated by Immanuel Kant when he took the immediate certainty of our moral convictions as the starting point from which, by implication or postulation, we pass to religious belief.¹ First moral conviction; then religious belief.

In recent years a reaction to this view has arisen among religious apologists. The tables have been turned and more people are ready to affirm that moral conviction depends on religious belief. Apologists are quick to claim that the morality of the faithless is parasitic; it depends for its life upon the very religious tradition which it denies. The ethical criteria of any society must have as its basis a prior or underlying religious conviction; the actions of the Nazis in Germany must be founded upon a religious faith in the supremacy of race, the program of a Communist state is justified by a Marxist ideology. These newer religions have filled the

¹ "Beyond Morality," (dossier), p.10.

vacuum created by the rejection of Christianity because no action can be deemed ethical without an underlying religious belief. But here too morality has been separated from religion and a system of priorities is set up: "Moral principles have no basis unless we first establish the religious doctrines."¹

Baillie finds both these views inadequate, especially when they are thrown into bold relief as two divergent tendencies pitted against each other. If on the one hand morality is placed first, then belief in God becomes merely "something inferred from our moral convictions". On the other hand, if belief is said to come first, "we are left with the question as to what the belief is based on." Baillie hastens to add that belief can certainly not be based on the traditional proofs as these have never recovered from Kant's criticism and never can. Belief in God is based on revelation, but revelation must not be misconstrued as a wholly other external authority from which moral laws can be subsequently deduced.²

Revelation must rather be conceived as a divine claim and offer which invades man's life in the context of his daily intercourse with his fellows, in the realm of personal relationships, ethical practice, daily duty, more practical than theoretical.³

¹Ibid., p. 17.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 18.

Thus, from the start, the moral consciousness of man is intimately a part of his religious belief for "both together constitute the apprehension of a divine realm which invades our human life with a claim and offer combined."¹ The claims and demands which arise in all human relationships and the ability to meet them are a part of what is meant when we speak of the grace of God invading our human situation. And this grace is not limited to a community which verbally claims it in the language of the Christian faith. Baillie writes:

I believe that the grace of God is continually touching every man, and it is this touch, this divine claim, that gives the man his germinal consciousness of moral obligation, even though he does not know it. But it is important that he should know it,² for then the claim becomes also an offer of help.

The intimate interrelationship of moral consciousness and religious belief is not a new idea. In the past hundred years much has been written which clarifies thought on the matter. Baillie notes that Kierkegaard has been among those who have pointed out the personal and subjective element in our apprehension of religious truth. The apprehension of truth demands a commitment to truth, We come upon truth of God as He encounters us

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 54.

in personal relationships. Baillie writes that Buber has helped us here. He has taught that God can only be known in so far as He addresses us and we respond to Him. We cannot believe in God in the third person. This direct personal encounter is the essence of Christian faith. But it is not merely an individualistic or mystical relationship. "All real life is meeting, encountering, and it is in the encounter with our fellows that we encounter God."¹ It is in such an encounter that moral demands are made upon us by our fellows. Here again we see that "true religion and true morality become one in what can only be described as the encounter with God in human life."²

Thus man is both an ethical being and a religious being by virtue of the demands which come upon him through his relationships with other men; it is God who so addresses man in his human context.

It is through the whole situation of our lives that this idea [of God] becomes realized for each of us; through all the claims and challenges of our personal relationships with other people. It is really God that is claiming and challenging us. This is how the religious and the ethical, faith and morals, are inextricably bound up together, and³ even, when properly understood, indistinguishable.

¹Ibid., p. 30.

²Ibid., p. 31.

³Ibid., p. 34.

So much for the examination of the nature of man; man created in the image of God, an image which is preserved, though obscured by man's "fall", man who is inseparably a religious and morally conscious being. The connection between man's nature and the freedom of his will, in Baillie's thought, must await discussion under the doctrine of grace. For it is only in the light of grace that the Christian can view freedom as genuine.

The central problem for preaching on the doctrine of man has been shown to be the communication of the truth intended by the mythological Genesis accounts of creation and the Fall. The difficulties of describing man's participation in a world gone wrong (yet simultaneously experiencing the possibility of participating in life as it should be) center on the use of the Biblical myths of the Fall. These myths lend themselves to the misconceived implication that the Fall is an historically definable event, either at one time in the distant past or even at a particular time in the life of an individual. However, Baillie's abandonment of the Genesis myths in this connection cannot be understood as a dismissal on his part of the legitimacy of mythological language in communicating religious truth.

Baillie has a positive appreciation for Bultmann's work toward clarifying the meaning of the Gospel in the interests of communicating the living truth to modern man.¹ His work has raised vital questions for preaching. However, Baillie is quite emphatic in saying that Christianity cannot "dispense entirely with myth", nor are myths "incapable of being made intelligible to modern man."² It will be well to see what Baillie means when he says that "Christianity can quite soundly speak of the myth of Creation and the myth of the Fall."³

By "myth" Baillie understands Bultmann to mean "any story in which the divine is represented in terms of the human" and that such myths must be interpreted existentially as merely "an understanding of our own human existence."⁴ Baillie clearly agrees with the first part of the definition. And in a sense, this part of the definition can apply to all of theology which is a "story with a plot." It is the human and experiential frame of reference that provides man with all his language

¹God Was In Christ, p. 227. ²Ibid., p. 216.

³Ibid., p. 215. ⁴Ibid., pp. 214-15.

about God and his relationship to God. But the second part of the definition is unacceptable. What man says about God, be it myth in the strict sense of an anthropomorphic legend, or more broadly, as theology in general, is more than a mere statement about human existence divorced from the experience of the divine element within existence. Divine activity cannot legitimately be abstracted from human experience.

But myth is not history, and much of what is said by the theologian deals with history in the concrete sense of the term. Where mythological language speaks of supra-historical experiences, experience which cannot be limited to time and place, history speaks of events which are definable in terms of time and place. But this is not to say that an historical event does not transcend its time and place in the experience of man, e.g. the Incarnation. And it is not to say that mythological accounts do not speak about experiences which are a part of man's historical existence. It is here that Baillie sees Barth's polemic against Bultmann missing the point altogether. To Barth, Baillie writes,

the idea of a Christian mythology savours of the error of regarding Christianity as a set of eternal truths which have no relation to historical happenings, an essence of truth to which the question of the factual truth of the story is quite

irrelevant.¹

It is easy to see why Barth will not admit the element of myth into the Christian story, but his idea of myth is not what either Bultmann or Baillie (in their different ways) mean by it. "A Christian myth," Baillie writes,

is a symbolical way of stating something which is neither history nor timeless reality, and which therefore cannot be stated either in purely historical or in purely conceptual terms. I believe it to be true, in a sense, that such myth can be understood only in our "existential" relation to God . . . but this seems to be different from saying with Bultmann that myth must be interpreted existentially as an understanding of our own [merely] human existence.²

Myth, by such a definition, is clearly admissable, indeed indispensable for theology and preaching.

The problem arises (as has been shown in the case of the creation and the Fall) when Christianity is reluctant to accept myth as myth and the consequent confusion of viewing myth as history. It is this reluctance and consequent confusion which doubtless prompted Baillie to avoid the use of the Genesis myths when preaching on the doctrine of man. Criticism can, however, be leveled at Baillie for not having educated his congregations on the mythological character of the Genesis narratives with regard to the Fall.

¹Ibid., p. 215.

²Ibid., p. 216.

To further demonstrate that Baillie is not adverse to the use of mythological language, I shall conclude this chapter with his own mythological description of creation and the Fall, a myth which would be most appropriate for preaching because it is clearly a myth.

I would tell a tale of God calling His human children to form a great circle for the playing of His game. In that circle we ought all to be standing, linked together with lovingly joined hands, facing towards the Light in the centre, which is God ('the Love that moves the sun and the other stars'); seeing our fellow creatures all round the circle in the light of that central Love, which shines on them and beautifies their faces; and joining with them in the dance of God's great game, the rhythm of love universal. But instead of that, we have, each one, turned our backs upon God and the circle of our fellows, and faced the other way, so that we can see neither the Light at the centre nor the faces on the circumference. And indeed in that position it is difficult even to join hands with our fellows! Therefore instead of playing God's game we play, each one, our own selfish little game, like the perverse children Jesus saw in the market place, who would not join in the dance with their companions. Each one of us wishes to be the centre, and there is blind confusion, and not even any true knowledge of God or our neighbours. That is what is wrong with mankind. Of course a man is not really happy in that attitude and situation, since he was created for community with God and man. Moreover the light of God is still shining from the true centre upon his back, though not on his face.

. . .

We shall take leave of Baillie's myth describing

¹ Ibid., p. 205.

man with the light of God shining on his back, and pass on to an examination of the way man can be addressed with the good news that the Light is shining, and that he can turn around and join in the game. We turn now to the what a preacher can say about sin, viz. the gospel of forgiveness.

CHAPTER V

THE DOCTRINES OF SIN AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Two inseparable yet opposing facets of a man's life have emerged from the examination of the doctrine of man; his experience of life gone wrong and his experience of life as it should be. The former is described and addressed by the doctrines of sin and the forgiveness of sins; the latter by the doctrine of Grace which is the subject of the next chapter.

In the lectures, Baillie treats the doctrine of sin and the forgiveness of sins under two separate headings. In the present discussion it is important to treat these doctrines under one because; (1) these two themes are never found apart from each other in the sermons, the doctrine of sin is not preached without reference to the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, and (2) it will be demonstrated that sin is a religious word which can only be properly used within a context where the possibility of forgiveness exists.

It may be argued that the present chapter should follow the chapters on the Incarnation and atonement.

It is true that the full expression of the doctrine of forgiveness is only seen in the light of these other two. But as we are following Baillie's own order of systematic presentation it is well to see his rationale. At the end of the lecture on forgiveness he writes:

The Gospel of the forgiveness of sins was in the world (though not in its Christian fullness) long before even the doctrine of the atonement, for the Old Testament is full of it. And still more, the Gospel story is full of it, long before the Crucifixion and the doctrine of the atonement in the full Christian sense. So it seemed worth while, before going on to a full Christian treatment of the incarnation and the atonement, to try to see what the forgiveness of sins really means as a matter of human experience.

Baillie's ordering of his lectures is not without significance. His view of the historical priority of the forgiveness of sins to the life and work of Jesus Christ is thoroughly consistent with the doctrine of God, omnipotent, omnipresent and loving; it is also consistent with the doctrine of man's creation in the image of God, an image in some measure preserved, an image through which forgiveness is realized by the power of grace. The universality of these phenomena, in the Christian view presented by Baillie, is a forewarning

¹"The Doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins" (Book 9), p. 25.

that it will be necessary to look deeper than any interpretation of Christology which implies an historical limitation of the universal love of God by the Incarnation in Jesus Christ. Also consistent with Baillie's underlying faith that the Christian message is "good news" is his treatment of sin in preaching as that which can only be properly understood within the context where forgiveness is possible.

The Doctrines as Preached

The problem which confronts the preacher when he speaks of sin and forgiveness is openly set forth in the sermons. It is the problem of demonstrating the reality of sin and the liberating realization of forgiveness in human experience. The modern man does not readily see the truth or the relevance of these words to his own life. Baillie begins a sermon, using I John 1:8-9¹ as his text, by observing:

A century and a half ago a great German philosopher said: 'I have no time for penitence'. Half a century ago a distinguished British scientist said:

¹"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," (AV).

'The higher man of today is not troubling about his sins'. And much more recently an American sociologist spoke of the sense of sin as 'a psychopathic aspect of adolescent mentality'. There you have a crescendo of sentiments, all in one strain, running through a hundred and fifty years of the modern world, and it seems to suggest that the whole of traditional Christian teaching about sin and repentance and forgiveness has been becoming more and more unacceptable and unintelligible to the modern mind. Moreover, the 'modern mind' means not simply our contemporaries, but ourselves, Christians as well as non-Christians. And therefore it is very likely that those sentiments which I have quoted awaken a sympathetic echo in many of our minds--an echo which conflicts with the sound of the familiar words of my text about sin and forgiveness.

The problem for the preacher is first to show that the lack of concern for sin is a denial of reality and to demonstrate that the reality of experience is accurately reflected by the doctrine of sin.

Part of the reason for the aura of unreality that surrounds the word "sin" is the manner in which the Church has often talked about it.

Religious people have sometimes used it in such a large general abstract way, as if sin were some mysterious diffused kind of force or infection that goes about the world and gets hold of men and women. They have talked about sin in that hazy way, without looking at the thing practically for themselves. And so other people, young people growing up and hearing all that, have sometimes been left cold, and the word sin and some of the words that go with it, become unreal altogether.²

¹ "Sin and Forgiveness," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 117.

² "How Jesus dealt with Sin," Mark 2:5 (405) 1926-27, p. 1.

When the word is understood as merely some sort of "diffused force or infection" it becomes meaningless because a person cannot feel responsible for his involvement in it. One is seldom constrained to seek personal forgiveness for having contracted a virus infection or having inherited a congenital defect. This way of speaking about sin leads to misunderstanding or irrelevance.

When Baillie preached on "How Jesus dealt with Sin", he declared his own purpose:

I should like to make you feel the reality and the sanity of it all, and that when he spoke of sin and sinners and repentance [and] forgiveness he was talking of real things and things that really mattered, and that still matter very much indeed to you and me. Sin is a word that stands for something real.

With this task in view, how does Baillie undertake to preach about sin as an experiential reality in which each one of us is responsibly involved? How does he set the stage for a liberating understanding of the gospel of forgiveness?

A summary definition of sin is offered in one sermon where he preaches:

The word "sin" is an unreal word to many people. But the thing itself is quite simple and everybody

¹Ibid., p. 2.

is acquainted with it. Sin is just self-centredness; putting oneself in the centre, making oneself¹ the centre of one's universe, as we all tend to do.

To see oneself as the center of the universe is a common way to look at the world, but it is also a prima facie denial of objective reality. In no objective sense can it be said that "I" am the center of the universe.

Furthermore, it has destructive consequences. When self-concern dominates the spirit of man to the exclusion of the legitimate demands of others, life breaks down. In the sermon quoted above, preached in 1947, Baillie goes on to say:

And if that is the spirit that is in our hearts, it will break out in all sorts of ways, until human life becomes a bear-garden, as it has in recent years.²

The universality of the human tendency toward self-centeredness and its destructive consequences is unquestionably a fact of experience. (As has been shown in the last chapter). No one would deny that self-centeredness is a fact of life but many do find it unreal to call self-centeredness a sin for which they are accountable, for which they are responsible.

¹"Climate, Invention and Providence", Deut. 8:3 (un) 1947, p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 9.

In another sermon Baillie further illustrates the nature of sin by noting the tendency to think about it in the third person. Sin is often only recognized as something in which man in general or other people in particular are involved. After developing the story in 2 Samuel which is climaxed by Nathan telling David, "Thou art the man", Baillie goes on to speak of ways in which true self-knowledge is obscured by self-centeredness:

We often pass over sins and defects in ourselves which we would condemn in others. . . . We also like to make an exception of our own case, and to call our sins by other names. When we are weak in purpose or will, we explain it by saying we have tender sensitive natures, though we would call it simply weakness in anyone else. When we are hard and proud, we call it strength and purpose, though we would hate it in anyone else. . . . Self-pity, self-flattery, self-worship: these are the great enemies of self-knowledge; and so we pass over defects, in ourselves which we would hate in our neighbours.¹

Thus sin not only fosters a denial of reality around us, it can also engender a false image of who we are.

There are many ways in which the self-centered denial of reality perpetuates itself in society. Men often use even religion as a falsifying defence of themselves against the demands of love. Frequently Jesus

¹"Thou art the man," 2 Sam. 12:7 (76), 1915-34, pp. 6-7.

exposed the way in which religion was used as a support for a selfish lack of love. It was often men of high reputation who were thus exposed.

The Pharisees were earnest, serious-minded men, according to their own standards. But somehow, when Jesus appeared among them, their goodness began to look very superficial and unreal. And Jesus told them so. They were very particular about the conventionalities of religion, but that was only covering up their lack of real faith and courage and mercy and love and truth. And, worst of all, when that began to be shown up, they turned like a pack of wolves on Jesus, and had a good deal to do with sending him to the cross. They must save their own reputations at all costs--that was what they instinctively thought of: not truth, and right, but the safety of their own reputations.

The society in which men live, even its religious institutions, contribute to the perpetuation of self-centeredness and a rejection of the demands of love. In a society where each individual or group seeks to assert itself against the other, the self is jealously defended.

The examination of the way in which Baillie demonstrates that sin is an experiential reality in which all men are involved has revealed the following three points of the doctrine: (1) Sin is not a "diffused force or infection" in the world, an inherited fate for which men can claim no responsibility. (2) Sin is essentially a

¹"The Sifting of Men," Out of Nazareth, p. 109.

self-centeredness which denies the reality of the world in which men live with other men. It also inhibits true self-knowledge. (3) Sin is a characteristic of the society whose institutions are used by men to perpetuate and support self-interest to the detriment of others. Yet even all these evidences of a world gone wrong can be misunderstood as mere moral failures with no religious significance, and consequently no hope. Where this mistaken view is held, the word "sin" does not apply; in such a situation it is meaningless. The problem remains for the preacher to demonstrate that the word "sin", is a religious word which does properly apply to the human situation.

The modern man may be convinced of the reality of evil and his personal responsibility in the matter, but he is often reluctant to identify himself with the religious word "sin". He will say:

'No one can atone for my wrong doing except myself, and I can only atone for it by leaving it behind, making any possible reparation to anyone I have injured, and then going on to better things. Therefore I will not waste any time "crying over spilt milk". I will not brood over past failure. I will not cultivate a sense of sin. I am not concerned about forgiveness for the past, but about doing better in the future. I have no time for penitence.'

¹"Sin and Forgiveness," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 118.

Baillie finds that this view "betrays a profound ignorance of human nature, and even of modern psychology." He finds it to be "extraordinarily naive and unrealistic" to think that man can simply forget moral failures and go on to better things simply by virtue of his own will divorced from any external considerations or help.¹

The paradox of moralism paralyzes any such efforts to do good.

But Baillie does not simply equate the awareness of responsibility for evil with a "sense of sin" in modern man. "Are we to conclude after all," he asks, "that every serious minded modern man has a deep sense of sin? No, indeed. I don't believe he has."² What the serious minded man does have, however, is a sense that things have gone wrong in his life for which there are no apparent remedies. Baillie calls this state of affairs a "moral-failure complex." He preaches:

Now it seems to me that a great many serious minded people today are suffering from what I may call a moral inferiority complex or perhaps a 'moral-failure' complex. They have an uneasy sense of something being wrong in their lives. They do not confess their sins to God or man, not even to themselves. They do not consciously accuse themselves, for they have a protective pride which is part of the whole situation. Their companions might never guess

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 119.

that they were not satisfied with themselves, but might think the reverse; for, as the psychologists tell us, the inferiority complex easily passes over into the superiority complex, which is but the other side of the same unwholesome state of mind. . . . It is not what Christians call a 'sense of sin', but something far less wholesome, a kind of secular substitute. Perhaps this is the pathological 'guilt complex' which psychologists treat as a malady. And it could become a malady. So it is not the genuine sense of sin that is 'psychopathic', but this secular substitute, which develops in an age of unbelief under the surface of a secular complacency; the 'moral-failure complex'.

Baillie continues by speaking of the way in which psychiatrists can helpfully deal with many complexes by bringing their hidden origins in the past life of the patient to the surface of his consciousness. But that method can do little to heal the moral-failure complex because the root of the problem is more profound. It will be recalled that moral failure is not a self-contained matter in Baillie's thought. It involves turning one's back on the love of fellowman and of God. Thus psychiatry cannot heal the complex brought on by a sense of genuine moral failure. Morality is bankrupt without religion. "A secular morality, without any God, has no

¹Ibid. It must be noted that Baillie makes loose use of psychological terminology. A guilt complex is pathological when the cause of the complex does not warrant guilt feelings. What Baillie is referring to is healthy guilt or guilt which has an objectively realistic cause.

way of dealing with its failures, because the moralist can never forgive himself."¹

With the realization of the futility of attempting to rise above one's moral failures by oneself comes the possibility of seeing morality in its proper perspective as that which is inseparable from religion. "Then the consciousness of moral failure becomes something different. It becomes a sense of sin against God, a sense of having betrayed the love of God." At first glance this seems to make the situation worse than ever. "But it also makes it better than ever, with quite a new possibility, because of the divine forgiveness."² It is only when moral failure is understood to be a violation of the love of God and life as He intended it to be that moral failure can properly be called by its true name, sin. Sin can only be properly spoken of within the religious context where there exists the possibility of forgiveness.

Toward the end of the sermon Baillie points out that what he has just described is the daily experience of the man of faith;

¹"Sin and Forgiveness," pp. 120-21.

²Ibid., p. 121.

Now that gives you what is part of the very pattern of the Christian life. And thus in the true life of the Christian there is no room for the morbid guilt complex, with its paralyzing effect. It no longer gets the chance to develop. Not because the man never sins, has left sin entirely behind. No, indeed. And not because he is never troubled about his sins; not because he has no sense of sin. But because he is continually, every day, using the liberating secret, humbly confessing his sins, accepting forgiveness and the grace of a new beginning, and so, as life goes on, more and more 'dying to sin' and 'living to God'. That is the health of the human soul.¹

The doctrine preached has been a description of experience, but it is an experience in which the liberating power of forgiveness has been realized. Therefore experience which is misinformed (i.e. the experience of the secular moralist) is also addressed. It is addressed by the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins which is good news.

Forgiveness is experienced as a continual process of repentance and confession. These words describe what happens in the daily life of the Christian.

In the fullness of the life of faith, repentance is a conscious matter. It is evidenced by the conscious experience of sorrow. But there are different kinds of sorrow which must be distinguished in order to understand

¹Ibid., p. 122.

the positive function of sorrow in repentance. When moral failure is seen within its proper context as sin, sorrow is the resultant response. But repentance is not realized by the kind of sorrow which is a "mere shallow emotion". This kind of sorrow "may mean just that the sin has brought evil consequences, and we are sorry for the consequences, not for the sin itself." The test which proves the inadequacy of this kind of sorrow is: "Does our sorrow make us give up the sin with all our hearts?" And as this kind of sorrow is largely self pity for the suffering caused by the consequences of sin, it proves itself an inadequate response which does not lead to repentance for the sin itself.¹

Another kind of sorrow which, though it goes deep into the heart of man, is not a part of repentance is "the bitter hopeless kind". That kind of sorrow does not do us any good, it has no positive function. "It is only paralyzing us. It is keeping us to the past."²

"The real value of sorrow is something different--

¹"A Crisis in the Corinthian Church," 2 Cor. 7:8,9 (165), 1924-32, pp. 7-8.

²Ibid., p. 9.

it is to break us away from the past and send us forth to a nobler future." This kind of sorrow is not a shallow emotion, "it goes deep and wounds us but it does not paralyze us." On the one hand it involves a sharp and purifying sorrow for ones responsibility for sin, not just the consequences. And on the other hand it is "united with Christian faith and hope." It is not only sorrow for the past, it is also a resolve and hope for the future.¹

This description of the response to sin which is called repentance, is a description of something that can only take place in the light of the forgiveness of sins. It is a response made possible by the conscious knowledge that forgiveness means a clear break with the past and the freedom to make a new start. "For whatever else God's forgiveness means, it means this: that we can take hope in the midst of our shame and make a new start."² Thus, the experience of sorrow can have a positive function; it can mark a clean break with past moral failure (failure which is recognized as sin) and a new beginning. Jesus summed up this experience in the parable of the Prodigal Son, a parable which reflects the whole movement of the Christian's life--"repentance and

¹Ibid., pp. 9-12.

²Ibid., p. 12.

forgiveness and restoration, all proceeding from the love of God which will not let us go."¹ Preaching enlightens the response to sin; preaching can be a call to repentance when its message is primarily a message about the source and ground of all repentance, viz. the love of God which will not let us go.

Confession plays an integral part in repentance and Baillie makes mention of it in varying contexts in his sermons, however, such mention is surprisingly brief and infrequent. An illustration of the way this theme appears in the sermons is found in a paragraph toward the end of the sermon entitled "Thou art the Man" which has been quoted above. The sermon deals with the nature of sin as that which tends to make men think about it in the third person, yet a confrontation of reality requires self-knowledge which sees the self as the one responsible. In this context Baillie simply says; "And this means, for one thing, that we must confess the sins that are past . . . we must be quite plain with ourselves about these things." He goes on to point out the difficulty of being honest with ourselves about past sins and

¹"The Prophets of Israel: (2) Hosea," Hosea 14:1 (327), 1922-34, p. 14.

stresses the importance of overcoming these difficulties "that we may quite clearly see our sins and receive God's forgiveness for them." The paragraph ends with the quotation of I John 1:8-9.¹ It is surprising to only find such perfunctory mention of confession in the sermons because Baillie views the preaching of the forgiveness of sins as an exercise of the Power of the Keys in which absolution is given, (not, however, to the exclusion of the assurance of forgiveness received in private counsel).² And as the pre-requisite for this absolution is confession, it may be correctly inferred that confession is the pre-requisite for the assurance and acceptance of the gospel of forgiveness preached. This connection between confession and the preaching of forgiveness does not appear in any of the sermons examined.³

¹"Thou art the Man", p. 12. I John 1:8-9 is the text of another sermon quoted above, viz. "Sin and Forgiveness." There the sermon ends with the verse which constitutes the only mention of the idea that the assurance of forgiveness involves the confession of our sins. For the text of the verse see above p. 343 note 1.

²Supra, pp. 43-45.

³The theme of confession does appear briefly in connection with preparation for communion, e.g. "To Make a People Ready," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 176.

The Doctrines Preached and the Doctrines Taught

The problem of preaching on the doctrine of sin and forgiveness are, as we have seen, twofold: (1) to demonstrate that the reality and human responsibility for a world gone wrong has a religious dimension, and as such is properly called "sin", and (2) that when this situation is raised to the religious level healing is possible in the liberating experience of God's forgiveness. The problem is seen against the backdrop of modern man's reluctance to see moral failure as a religious phenomenon. The reason for this reluctance is in part modern man's legitimate reaction against the type of response to sin which he has seen in his forefathers. In large measure, this response has been stimulated by a mistaken emphasis in preaching, i.e. preaching which seeks to stimulate anxiety about some sort of punishment which is awaiting man in this world or the next, and preaching which attempts to stimulate remorse and "crying over spilt milk" for sins of the past. Neither of these attempts to stimulate feelings of anxiety or remorse is the proper emphasis for the preacher who addresses himself to the problem of sin, because in both cases man is being encouraged to think more of himself and his own soul, and less about God

and the life he has intended men to live. As self-centeredness is the essence of sin, preaching of this nature is encouraging sin and missing the whole point of the Gospel's message concerning a world gone wrong. In this respect modern man's reaction against the old idea of sin is a wholesome one, but if it is taken as a summary dismissal of the whole problem of sin, it is misguided naivete.¹

Preaching must not only avoid an emphasis upon instilling feelings of anxiety and remorse because it encourages sin, but also because such an emphasis is a futile waste of time. True, penitence and contrition are an important part of the human response to sin (but, as we have just seen, these must be viewed in the larger context of God's forgiveness in order to avoid a pre-occupation with self-centered feelings), but these acts are of no value if they are coerced or manipulated by emotion centered preaching. Furthermore, people themselves cannot coerce or manipulate genuine feelings of

¹Baillie notes modern man's inability to understand sin in God Was in Christ, p. 161. The whole treatment of forgiveness on pp. 160-67 parallels, often sentence for sentence, the sermon presentation in "Sin and Forgiveness".

penitence and contrition in their own hearts. Speaking about cultivating a sense of sin, Baillie tells his students:

I'm not sure that we ministers ought to preach that directly--to inculcate, directly, a sense of sin; to urge people to penitential tears and the contrite heart, telling them that they ought to feel sorrow and shame for their sins. . . . That is not the way to go about it--telling people what they ought to feel. They can't in any case command their feelings.

The subjective attitudes of mind which accompany genuine repentance are matters which must be left to the individual whose integrity must not be violated by manipulative preaching.

It is not on subjective states, feelings and emotions, that our eyes should be fastened, but on the great objective realities of our faith. For if people really see and grasp these, then the subjective states can take care of themselves.²

These two negative emphases, the encouragement of self-centered feelings of anxiety and remorse, and the attempt to manipulate the subjective state of the congregation, were absent from the sermons. They were absent because Baillie sees the message of the Gospel about sin to be primarily the message of forgiveness.

¹"The Doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins" (Book 9), p. 7.

²Ibid.

Part of the problem of translating the concept of sin into language which is meaningful to modern man involves the matter of communicating the fact of man's responsibility for sin. If man cannot see that he is responsible for his moral failures, the elevation of these failures to the religious plane where they become sin, is a meaningless exercise because no man will sense the need of forgiveness for something for which he is not responsible. The concept of original sin has often led to the misunderstanding of sin as something which men have inherited from Adam simply by the carnal generation of the species. To combat this misunderstanding, Baillie (in the first point to emerge from the sermons) preached that sin is not an impersonal, diffused kind of force or infection that, as a matter of uncontrollable fate, gets hold of men and women. Some of the ideas included under the heading of "original sin" in the lectures are included in the sermons as we shall presently see. However, the phrase itself does not make a significant appearance. This omission can be criticized on the grounds that Baillie missed an opportunity to specifically clarify a much misunderstood concept. But on the other hand its

omission is doubtless due to Baillie's concern to avoid clouding the air with a theological phrase that is so easily misunderstood. The main point which was stressed, without reference to original sin, was the personal responsibility for moral failure and sin.

Baillie's description of sin as self-centeredness in the sermons is essentially the same as that in the lectures and the formal writings. In God Was in Christ he writes:

The very essence of sin is self-centredness, refusal of divine and human community, absorption in oneself, which kills true individuality and destroys the soul. As Martin Luther put it, the 'natural man' (i.e. man fallen from his true nature and unredeemed from his spoilt nature) is incurvatus in se, 'bent inwards upon himself', instead of looking away from himself towards God and his fellows in love. That is what sin is, and all our sins can be reduced to that, even what we call sins of the flesh. The evil comes not from the instincts and appetites connected with the body in themselves: these are part of the human nature God has given us. The sins of the flesh come from this: that we care more for the body (our own bodies) than for 'the Body', the community for which God has created us.

This raises the point of the traditional identification of sin with concupiscence. Baillie goes to some length to show that this is a false identification. Sin is not sensual in origin, at its root it is a "spiritual

¹God Was In Christ, p. 204.

perversion", it is self-centeredness with a religious dimension. Sin is a religious word.¹

In the sermons, sin emerges as a characteristic of society and its institutions. In this connection Baillie finds meaning in the concept of original sin in the lectures. One of the concerns which dominates all of Baillie's thought on original sin is the necessity of preserving the possibility of sinlessness in order that Jesus can be seen as one who was free from sin. The systematic consequence of saying that society is sinful, contradicts this. If man is born into a world which demands his participation in its sinful institutions, it is impossible to see how sin has not in some sense forced itself on him and the possibility of sinlessness vanishes. This problem is not brought out in the sermons, although Baillie recognizes it in his lectures. His insistence on the possibility of sinlessness drives him to the questionable conclusion that participation in human institutions (which are sinful) does not necessarily involve man in sin. But man is continually participating in the sinfulness of society, he is continually sinning; that is why he stands in continual need of God's forgiveness which liberates him

¹"The Christian Doctrine of Sin" (dossier), pp. 39-42.

from the bonds of self-centered pursuits. It would seem that Baillie has momentarily abandoned his own understanding of man as both fallen and created in the image of God, of man whose experience is concurrently an experience of a world gone wrong and life as God intended it to be. When the point in the sermons about man's sinful participation in religious institutions is seen in the context of forgiveness and life as it should be, there is a better balance and tension between two inseparable parts of human experience.

Baillie preaches about repentance as the conscious experience of sorrow directed away from self to God. This experience is the evidence of God's forgiveness because it is coupled with ability to make a new start, unencumbered by guilt. This way of presentation fulfills the requirement of reflecting human experience. But it is helpful to see the way repentance forms the systematic link between the moral failure complex and sin as that which stands in need of forgiveness. Here repentance is quite specifically an act of faith-experience.

Genuine repentance has something evangelical about it. It can only come to a man who has not only a sense of shame for what he has done, but a sense of God's love which he has betrayed and which loves him still. To have a mere "moral-failure complex"--that

is not repentance. Such a complex is morbid. That rather hinders a man from going on to better things. It is morbid. It develops into morbid brooding; and so it does not help a man to better things for the future, but the reverse. The real "repentance unto life" is different. It is sorrow directed towards God, a sense of having turned against the love of God, combined with a longing to enjoy the love of God again. There is in it something not only of conscience but of faith. It is a religious grace.

It is helpful to see this relation of repentance to the moral failure complex, because in the preaching the two themes are treated in separate sermons. In "Sin and Forgiveness" (where the moral-failure complex and sin theme is developed) the role of repentance is only mentioned in one sentence. The sorrow of the mere moralist, Baillie preaches, "needs to be turned into what [Paul] calls the 'godly sorrow', which 'worketh repentance unto salvation, and bringeth no regret', because it leads to forgiveness." (A note of confusion is present in this sentence also because it is said that repentance "leads to forgiveness", whereas in the rest of Baillie's preaching and systematic treatments, repentance is the conscious acceptance of forgiveness which was always there. In the next paragraph he preaches that the daily

¹"The Doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins,"
p. 16.

life of the Christian involves "humbly confessing his sins, accepting forgiveness and the grace of a new beginning . . ." In this second instance, the pre-venience of forgiveness can be more clearly inferred.)¹ In the sermon "Crisis in the Corinthian Church" where the experience of God-directed sorrow is developed as a description of repentance, the moral-failure complex and sin theme is not mentioned. Baillie cannot be criticized for not presenting a full systematic presentation of a theme in any one sermon. But it is important to see the relationship between these two themes explicitly set forward in the lectures.

Baillie's sparse mention of confession in the sermons has already been noted.² Perhaps the act of confession is so bound up with repentance that Baillie found it redundant to stress both. But the word confession does describe an act which is to such an extent a conscious act of articulating the sense of sin and the acceptance of forgiveness, that it is not a word to be dispensed with in preaching which must speak in terms of concrete human actions. One notable theme which appears in the lectures and not in the sermons is that of the

¹To Whom Shall we Go?, p. 122.

²Supra, p. 357

place of confession to one's fellowman. It has been shown that in Baillie's thought the love of God and the love of fellowman cannot be separated in experience. The self-centered rejection of this love demands a conscious act of confession to both God and man in order that forgiveness can be consciously realized. Baillie does not believe that confession to a minister should be compulsory, but does believe that this form of confession should be encouraged.¹ Also the spiritual counsel of any wise and sensitive Christian layman is not to be overlooked in this connection. He feels that the Churches of the Reformation have largely left out this aspect of Christian life. One reason being a false emphasis on the individuality of the faith—"God and the soul, the soul and its God".²

Following an exposition of the place of confession in the Bible, the Fathers, and in Luther and Calvin, Baillie goes on to make some suggestions for a fuller understanding of confession in the Church today. He observes that many people who profess to believe in the forgiveness of sins find it hard to realize the assurance of forgiveness because men need the concrete support of their fellows in the life of faith.

¹"The Doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins", p. 18.

²"Notes on Confession, Absolution and the Power of the Keys" (Book 7), pp. 69-72.

Many people who profess to believe in it, and who ask God for forgiveness, nevertheless fail really to believe in it and accept it. It does not become effective, they do not experience liberation, but go on brooding, as if they did not believe in the divine forgiveness. And I think it is sometimes felt that some concrete act, some assurance through the mediation of our fellow creature, a fellow Christian, a minister of Christ, would be a great help. Instead of wrestling with the matter in lonely isolation, alone with God, the sinner would receive assurance through a human medium in the koinonia of the Church.

Baillie is not sure that the re-institution of the Roman Catholic practice of confession and absolution is the right answer to the problem. He notes that both Luther and Calvin felt that the Roman practice did, in some instances, torment the conscience and not liberate it. This was due to the direct connection between confession of each and every sin in order to receive absolution at the hand of the priest. This practice often led to miserable introspection in the fear of having overlooked a sin and thereby not receiving full absolution. "Whereas the Christian message of justification by faith, the absolutely free offer of divine forgiveness to every sinner who will believe it and accept it has a liberating effect." Whether this contrast is fair or not, the point is that the "Reformers at least meant to give the penitent

¹ Ibid., p. 70.

sinner a far better and more liberating kind of absolution than the Roman confessional was giving."¹

Baillie makes some constructive observations about the nature of confession which he believes need to be more fully realized. The confession of sins to another person can effect a profound release. This is demonstrated by the most rudimentary psychological investigation. In and of itself, this release does not constitute forgiveness, but it is certainly a part of it. Another factor is that in interpersonal confession the opportunity of spiritual counsel can be met. This task is not limited to ministers although it is their special responsibility.

When the giving of spiritual counsel is involved, then we come to something which is surely part of the calling of the minister. Not that it need be confined to ministers: many perplexed and troubled souls have opened their hearts to, and received spiritual counsel from, wise and true Christians who were not ministers, and it is to be hoped that kind of thing will never cease. But surely it is part of the special duty of a minister, one of the things for which he is or ought to be specially trained.²

But the wisest spiritual counsel does not constitute forgiveness by itself.

¹Ibid., p. 71.

²Ibid., p. 74.

The matter of pronouncing absolution, be it in preaching or in a more direct personal way (the latter being an extension of the former), cannot be viewed as as a "judicial forgiving of sins". There must be no sense in which forgiveness is limited to those sins which have been articulated in a particular situation. Indeed the minister can never offer an absolute pronouncement, because he can never be sure that the penitent has genuine faith to accept forgiveness. "But there is a firm offer, and a personal offer of forgiveness to the penitent, if only he will accept it."¹

Baillie is aware of the dangers of, on the one hand, moral exhibitionism, and on the other, clericalism. Nevertheless he concludes that the kind of confessional practice he has outlined has a place in the life of the Church where it is intended that we should "forget ourselves and become humbly anxious only to help others, in a spirit of love to men and of dependence on the wisdom and grace of God."²

The explicit working out of the systematic relation of forgiveness and punishment is another theme

¹Ibid., p. 75.

²Ibid., p. 77.

peculiar to the lectures and writings. Forgiveness is not, in the superficial sense, a cancelation of future consequences of past misdeeds; it is not an action of God which will alter the past. But in a deeper sense Baillie sees forgiveness as marking the end of punishment for past sins. The real punishment for sins is not the evil or hurtful consequences of past sin. In the light of forgiveness a man sees that:

The real punishment lay not in the sufferings themselves, but in the alienation from God, and the frown of His wrath, of which they are inevitably and rightly taken as expressions.

Before the realization of forgiveness, suffering, which is discernable as the consequence of sin, is divine punishment. But after forgiveness suffering no longer exists as punishment for sin.

If a man's sins are forgiven, that is the end of them; now the suffering they have left as their legacy is simply part of his lot, a divine discipline perhaps, but not a divine punishment.

Thus suffering after forgiveness, whatever its origin, is to be understood as part of the human situation which has been examined under the doctrine of providence.¹

The Christian doctrine of sin and forgiveness have been examined to show the way in which Baillie describes

¹God Was in Christ, pp. 167-68.

and addresses one side of human experience, the experience of life gone wrong. Man's responsibility for evil was demonstrated within the framework of his human experience. When man is cognizant of his responsibility, he acquires a sense of his failure to live with others as he ought, he acquires a "moral-failure complex". The paradox of moralism paralyzes any attempt to correct the situation, and man is driven to see his failure on the religious plane as sin. But here he finds the firm offer of forgiveness awaiting his acceptance through repentance and confession. In short, the Christian message concerning sin is primarily and throughout, the Gospel of forgiveness. It is in this way that Baillie has addressed the human experience of life gone wrong. We turn now to his preaching about the human experience of life as it should be, the human experience of the Grace of God.

CHAPTER VI

THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE

Baillie introduces his formal treatment of the doctrine of grace by reminding his students that the subject might well come in at any point of the whole course; "it is a doctrine that pervades the treatment of all the other doctrines."¹ Indeed, grace pervades all of human life. As we have seen, Baillie believes "that the grace of God is continually touching every man, . . . But it is important that he should know it."² The knowledge that grace is active in one's life evokes a paradoxical conviction. In so far as man participates in life as it should be, he says with Paul that it is "Not I, but the grace of God which is with me," (1 Corinthians 15:10). It is well to see what grace means in terms of personal experience before passing on to an examination of the doctrine of the Incarnation, because the understanding of this paradox in our own lives is

¹"The Doctrine of Grace" (Book 9), p. 1.

²Supra, p. 333.

the experiential ground from which we can begin to see the full significance of the Incarnation.

This paradox in its fragmentary form in our own Christian lives is a reflection of that perfect union of God and man in the Incarnation on which our whole Christian life depends, and may therefore be our best clue to the understanding of it.¹

What then is the grace of God which is partially reflected in our lives? The word "grace" has been used so often as the last word to describe the Christian life, that to many it has come to mean little more than a final theological retreat. The problem for the preaching of the doctrine is fundamentally making this theological word come alive as a description of the experience of God at work in human life. The problem is summed up by Baillie in one of the sermons where he preaches:

The word 'grace' sounds mysterious . . . --just a bit of antiquated theological jargon. 'The grace of God'--what does it mean? And what has it got to do with the life of a practical hard-headed man or woman in this modern world?²

The general problem for preaching the doctrine is that it be presented in a manner which can be practically understood, because (as we shall see) the activity of

¹God Was in Christ, p. 117.

²"Pride and the Grace of God," Out of Nazareth, p. 61.

grace is only consciously experienced if it is recognized and known to be the grace of God. That is why the doctrine must be preached. In specific detail, our examination will show the way in which the sermons (1) pin-point and clarify misconceptions of grace, and (2) preserve the tension between the preveni-ence of grace and human responsibility. The latter may also be viewed as the problem of preaching about the all pervasive grace of God and its relation to the free will of man.

The Doctrine Preached

Baillie sees the main obstacle to the recognition of grace at work in human life, the misconception of grace as an impersonal force, a wholly mysterious magical power or quasi-material substance which is poured into the human soul. In a sermon preached at Cambridge University he summarizes this misconception and points the way to a truer understanding.

Grace must not be conceived as anything like an impersonal force or substance or quantity, impinging upon the human soul or poured into it, but wholly as a personal relationship. ¹It is God's gracious personal influence on men.

¹"The Manifold Grace of God," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 161.

Noting the contribution of Christian thinkers on the matter, Baillie cites the following examples to illustrate the point. Professor N. P. Williams counters the age-long impersonalistic misconceptions by going to "great lengths in maintaining that the work of grace is nothing other than the direct personal action of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart."¹ John Oman speaks "of the grace of God as a 'gracious personal relationship' on the analogy of the relation between a father and his child."² Baillie makes use of Professor Leonard Hodgson's apt illustrations of misconceived grace and notes his response:

He warns us against conceiving of grace as something detachable from God's living personal activity, like the medicine which helps a patient between the doctor's visits; or something magical, like the love-potions by which a lover sought to influence a girl to love him; or something mechanical, like an electric current transmitted through a cable. As against all these utterly false conceptions, he reminds us that the grace we receive in the Sacrament is the power that comes into human life through personal communion with a person.³

¹ Ibid. From N. P. Williams, The Grace of God (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930) p. 110.

² Ibid. From John Oman, Grace and Personality (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1962), pp. 75-83.

³ Ibid., p. 161. From Leonard Hodgson, Essays in Christian Philosophy (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1930), pp. 49-51.

Preaching as he is in Anglican surroundings, Baillie is glad to quote one more Anglican divine:

Dr. Oscar Hardmann tells us that grace 'is not a commodity which is conveyed into man's being for the healing and rehabilitation of his nature; but is the power of the Personality of the Creator working upon the personality of each of His creatures by the means which we commonly describe as personal influence.'

Thus, in a few short paragraphs, the illustrative thoughts of four theologians have been summoned to define and clarify what is meant by the word grace; it means a "gracious personal relationship", a gracious personal influence.

It is worth noting that Baillie, though dealing in conceptual terms, uses thought categories which were congenial to the contemporary tradition of his listeners. When preaching on the doctrine of grace in an Anglican community, three of the four authorities cited could claim the theological allegiance of the congregation. Even the one Presbyterian, John Oman, was the late Principal of Westminster College in the University in which the sermon was preached! It is not insignificant to note that the sermon was preached in a language which

¹Ibid. From Oscar Hardmann, The Christian Doctrine of Grace (London: The Unicorn Press, 1937), p. 98.

reflected a conceptual frame of reference shared by the congregation.

Bearing in mind the primary understanding of grace as a personal relationship, it is possible to see the meaning of the prevenience of grace. That which, on the experiential level is the recognition that the love of God comes before and awakens the human response of love and trust (on the analogy of a father's love which precedes and awakens a response of trust in a child), Baillie sees as a re-emergent emphasis in the way theologians speak of grace. He notes that "this is one of the rediscoveries of our time, . . . that the essence of the Gospel lies in God seeking us before we seek him."¹ The sermon continues with illustrations of this emphasis from various theological quarters. Drawing on the authority of Claude Montefiore, (whose research had been largely devoted to the question of the originality of Jesus' message²) Baillie singles out "the conception of God actually going out in quest of sinful

¹"God Carrying His People," Out of Nazareth, p. 13.

²Claude Montefiore, The Religious Teachings of Jesus, (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1910), "Lecture IV," n.b., p. 98.

men who were not seeking Him but were turned away from Him," as a unique feature of the Gospel, a uniquely Christian conception of the manner in which God is related to man.¹

Baillie describes the prevenient action of grace in another way in a sermon which seeks to re-vitalize an old theological concept; the doctrine of imputed righteousness. The sermon draws to a close with a summary statement of the doctrine:

Here are we, created to be good men and women, and yet far from it, with poor imperfect characters. But there is God. It is He that created us for Himself, with His laws in our hearts that we might keep them, His image in our souls, that we might realize it and grow like it. And yet He still wants us for Himself, He still offers himself for our portion. We are unrighteous, but he is righteous: and He offers all that to us in His infinite love, as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. When we understand that, then somehow we are raised above all our past failures, we can lose ourselves in the ocean of his love, we can sink our unworthy selves in the ocean of His righteousness. And then we can begin again, without discouragement and despair, to do God's will on earth. . . . That is something like what our forefathers meant when they spoke of the doctrine of imputed righteousness.²

Three points are to be noted from this quotation.

¹"God Carrying His People," p. 14.

²"The Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness,"
2 Cor. 5:21 (406) 1926, 1937, pp. 11-12.

The first two sentences, which are a summary of the doctrine of man created in the image of God (which is preserved) yet fallen, are followed by the statement that God is ever active in offering His righteousness. Man's resistance against the activity of grace through the Fall has not stopped the prevenient and persistent offering activity of God toward man. In this sense grace, the offering of God's love as a personal influence on man, is irresistible. Grace does not impinge upon human freedom, it is a persistent offer. The second point follows from the first: in so far as man seeks to live life as God intends it to be lived free from discouragement and unresolved despair, it is essential that he understand that the offer is continually being made; consciousness of the offer and acceptance of it are pre-requisites of the liberating experience of beginning again after each failure.

The third point is a minor criticism of Baillie's inconsistency with regard to the history of theological emphases. In the previous sermon he noted that the idea of God continually seeking out sinful men was re-emphasized relatively recently in theological circles. Whereas, in the present sermon the same theme (within the context of the doctrine of imputed righteousness) is said to be a vital part of the religious understanding

of "people of a half a century ago."¹

The experience which is explained by the concept of the continually active offer of God's love to man introduces the sermon. Speaking of the meaning of imputed righteousness in the life of men and women who were conscious of it, Baillie preaches:

You would find Christian people rejoicing and finding peace and strength in the thought that what they depended on was not their own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ or the righteousness of God.²

But as the experience of joy and strength must be conscious to be meaningful, the action of imputed righteousness in the heart of man is manifest by the conscious turning of the mind toward the source of righteousness. The sermon concludes:

Perhaps I might sum up its whole practical meaning in this way: Never think of yourself without thinking of God too. You've got to turn your eyes inward upon yourself, think of your own soul, your own character. But never do that without thinking of God too--the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, his righteousness and His love.³

It will be noted that the joy and strength is both awakened by the knowledge of the offer of righteousness and contingent upon the conscious turning toward it.

¹Ibid., p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 1.

³Ibid., p. 12.

There is that within man himself which responds to love (i.e. the image of God), the action of grace does not merely impinge upon and alter the will of man simpliciter. Man responds to grace by virtue of what he is.

Turning to the manner of presentation, we can see that the sermon began with a description of humanly discernable experience. It was upon this ground that the doctrinal explanation was given. The concluding sentences again returned to the experiential frame of reference to address the experience of joy, by pointing to the necessity of looking beyond the self.

It is most relevant to everyday living to look beyond oneself when thinking of what good there may be exhibited in one's life. The conviction that one's goodness is not one's own provides the foundation for genuine humility and charity. Baillie sees these two characteristics of life as it should be illuminated by the understanding of grace as that which is wholly undeserved. Preaching on the difference this understanding makes, he says:

When we begin to take ourselves seriously and to aim at high things—it is so easy then to become conceited and self-complacent about it. That is always one of the dangers of the religious life. But . . . when we remember that whatever good is in us we owe to God's grace and mercy, then we say, "Not I, but the grace of God which is with me,"

and with all our aspirations. That keeps us humble.

Baillie notes the common connection between self-righteousness and contempt for others reflected in the Psalms:

Some of those Hebrew psalmists when they professed their own righteousness toward God, spoke bitterly and contemptuously of the wicked; for these two things go together. But the Christian has to be charitable towards all when he remembers his own unworthiness.¹

On the surface of things, personal goodness does not, in and of itself, call for humility. Uninformed goodness turns into self-complacent pride and thus negates itself. Goodness is preserved when it is informed by the doctrine of undeserved grace. Experience bears witness to the fact that the awareness of goodness in oneself makes one intolerant of those who fall below one's own standard. This intolerance and contempt for others negates the good. Here too, goodness is preserved when it is informed by the doctrine of grace undeserved.

It has already been shown that man has a part to play in the response to grace. This is not to be misunderstood as God doing His part and man doing his.

¹"Two Saints Contrasted," Psalm 18:20, Titus 3:5 (243) 1921, 1927, pp. 10-11.

²Ibid., p. 11.

Man's part (in so far as it can be abstracted as such) is but the result of what he is by virtue of his creation and the action of the personal influence of love, i.e. grace. But from the individual perspective it is difficult to distinguish man's part from sheer personal volition. But grace must always be spoken of in terms of its corporate dimension. Grace is that which draws men out of themselves into fellowship with fellowman. It is meaningless if understood as an individually received gift. Man's part in accepting the gift of grace is bound up with accepting it as it is mediated through his fellowmen and shared with them. Baillie usually makes this clear, as in one sermon where he preaches:

You can never get much of the grace of God if you try to keep it all to yourself. But the more you give of it, the more you will keep; and in a life of generous faith, and love your soul will grow into health and peace.

However, in another sermon he fails to bring in the corporate dimension and as a result conveys the impression that the acceptance of grace is merely a matter of individual volition. In a sermon entitled "Religious

¹"As poor, yet making many rich," 2 Cor. 6:10 (643), 1934, 1940, p. 9.

Revival" Baillie makes a statement about grace as being prevenient and ever outreaching:

Remember God is here. He is waiting to be gracious to us. It is we that are keeping him waiting. His hands are stretched out to us, if only we would stretch out our hands to Him, and accept what He can¹ give us, and ask Him what he would have us do.

But the tension between the prevenient action of grace calling forth acceptance and the part of man's response within this context is lost at the end of the sermon where acceptance degenerates into a purely individual act of the will.

All that depends so much on ourselves individually. There is one little world for which you have to decide, whoever² you are; the world of your own heart and life.

Two things are to be noticed here. Baillie has stated a true aspect of the way in which grace becomes a conscious part of a man's life, viz. through the conscious act of his free will. This side of the truth must always be preserved if the idea of grace as a fate-ful force which impinges upon man in violation of his freedom is to be avoided. But, on the other hand, by

¹"Religious Revival," Psalm 85:6 (598) 1932-33, p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 11.

placing a strong emphasis on the decision as an individual matter, indeed calling for a self-centered decision, Baillie has all but negated the Christian idea that such a decision depends on the grace of God which is an active personal influence. And furthermore, upon an examination of Christian experience, it is patently false to view a decision to accept the grace of God as a purely individual matter. As we have seen Baillie say on frequent occasions, the love of God and the love of fellowmen cannot be separated. This works two ways. The action of God's love toward any particular individual is mediated through the love of another; the action of God's love, or grace as a personal relationship, is mediated through the community. One's decision of acceptance is inevitably due in part to the gracious influence of God made manifest in the lives of one's fellowmen.

The prevenient and pervasive and personal influence of grace in all man's goodness and moral decisions and acts of acceptance is, however, the dominant emphasis in Baillie's preaching. The tension between the action of divine grace and the responsibility of human free will is less often weakened on the side of individualistic Pelagianism, than it is preserved by a

form of synergism. Here are a few lines from a typical sermon on grace which stand in striking contrast to the last sermon examined. Speaking of the nature of effective influences for change and decision for good in a man's heart, Baillie, preaching on Romans 5:20, says:

The human heart can never be changed by commandments.

.....
 Paul found out that the right way to conquer sin is not just to suppress and squash it, but to outdo it and rise above it; not the negative way of just trying to stem its tide, but the positive way of bringing in a stronger tide that swallows it up and carries you far beyond it. . . . "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." . . . It all depended on the doctrine of Christ's gospel, that God loves us all even before we have done anything to deserve it. It was the realization of that that made all the difference to Paul, and set him free. And that was what he meant by grace.

Man has a conscious part to play in living life as God intends it to be lived, but man's part cannot be viewed as an isolated act of the individual's will apart from the influence of the grace of God. These two sides cannot be abstracted from one another in experience. Baillie consistently sees the prevenient grace of God active in the moral realm whenever man's actions are good. This is a consistent emphasis in the sermons throughout

¹"Grace did much more abound," Rom. 5:20 (308), 1922-47, pp. 13-15.

Baillie's preaching career.

Professor N. H. G. Robinson, in a perceptive evaluation of Baillie's thought, makes the observation (concerning the development of Baillie's thought) that: "it is difficult to deny that the centre of gravity in the moral realm has moved from the moral endurance of man to the prevenient grace of God." At this point, Professor Robinson is not entirely fair to Baillie. The sermon we have just quoted was first preached in 1922 (before the writing of Faith in God upon which part of Robinson's argument is based), then in 1927, 1932 and 1947. Baillie's consistent emphasis upon the active influence of prevenient grace at the center of the moral realm is illustrated by this sermon which spans Baillie's preaching career. Baillie speaks much about morality, but it is ^{to} the human question raised by morality when it is confronted and paralyzed by the paradox of moralism that he is referring. This paradoxical experience is part of the personal influence of grace which can lead man to realize the liberating experience described by the central paradox of the Christian faith, the paradox

of grace.

The tension between the activity of grace and the responsibility of human freedom is preserved by a form of synergism. This is true with one important qualification. In the teachings of Melanchthon (with whom the term is first associated) the human will can be active and co-operative with the grace of God. Melanchthon avoided the charge of Pelagianism by insisting that the primary cause of the activity of the will in accepting grace, was grace itself or the work of the Holy Spirit.¹ Thus far, Baillie's thought parallels that of Melanchthon. The important qualification rests in Baillie's understanding of grace as a personal relationship, a gracious influence on the will, on the analogy of the relationship of a father to his child, (cf. John Oman), not the somewhat impersonalistic concept of grace which dominated the theological scene at the time of the Reformation.

The last sermon to be examined brings together the themes covered under the doctrines of man, sin and forgiveness, and grace. Here, the experience of life

¹F. L. Cross (ed.), The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 1314.

gone wrong is paralleled by the experience of life as it should be. It is to be noted in advance that these two experiences are not isolated from each other in two different types of people; both, in varying degrees of intensity and consciousness, are part of the common human experience. The purpose of the sermon is to show that life as it should be is realized in so far as man consciously experiences a gracious personal relationship with God. The text of the sermon is the classic reflection of this experience: "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me," (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Baillie speaks of the self-centeredness, by which men protect themselves and consequently cut themselves off from the fullness of life, as the "armour of pride" or the "armour of conceit". He lists several examples of concrete experience which illustrate the self-defeating inadequacy of this kind of armour.

For example, there are people who learn very little as they go about the world because they are too proud to admit that they don't know. I dare say most of us are tempted in that direction. We are sometimes too proud to ask questions. Children will always ask them, but we outgrow that, and we pretend to know, and so we don't learn anything like as much as we might. The armour of pride keeps us from learning.

Again, it keeps us from apprehending new truth, even in the deepest things. A great many minds are prejudiced against anything new and unfamiliar in religion, any new truth that sounds a little bit unorthodox or upsetting. And very often that is just the same armour of complacency and conceit--we won't believe we were wrong, we won't stretch our minds to consider anything new. In that way we often keep truth away from our minds, and it isn't good for us.

But above all, the armour of conceit keeps us away from becoming better men and women. It keeps away the grace of God; grace and pride simply don't go together. The Bible tells us that 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble'. Pride saves us no doubt from many humbling experiences, but thereby it keeps us from all moral and spiritual blessings.

The failure to rise above the tendency to be self-centered and proud is not something which can be blamed on outside forces, it is a failure which we perpetrate ourselves.

In our Christian religion we talk a great deal about contrition and repentance and forgiveness and new beginnings; but very often we don't really give ourselves to these experiences.

The failure to participate actively in the life of grace is a failure for which only we are responsible. The reason for this course of action is easily discernible:

We are too proud. We don't want to be rebuked. We are not going to have ourselves continually upset.

¹"Pride and the Grace of God," Out of Nazareth pp. 57-58.

²Ibid., p. 58.

As we go about this world we would receive a good many hard knocks, and often find ourselves in the wrong, and frequently be made ashamed and have to acknowledge our shortcomings--if we were to allow ourselves to be touched and wounded in that way. But very often we won't. We are too proud. We encase ourselves in the armour of pride--we will see our neighbour's faults but not our own. That saves us the pains of penitence. But at a terrible cost. For it keeps us time after time from making a new start. It keeps us from turning our back on the past and becoming better men and women. It is not a good thing to keep ourselves safely encased in the armour of conceit.¹

But this life-negating state of affairs is not the way life is meant to be. When Paul, by the action of his own free will, began to focus his attention beyond his own character and achievements, when he began to think more about God than about himself, his very character and achievements took on new greatness and freedom. In retrospect he was constrained to say that the other-directed freedom he now knew was not something for which he could claim credit. Without abrogating his responsibility for his failures, he was constrained to say that the new dimension of his life was "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." This same experience is a living reality in so far as we know or see in others, a life which is at once both humble and confident.

¹Ibid., pp. 58-59.

Here is a man faced with big responsibilities, a difficult enterprise, which seems beyond his powers of mind and will. He tackles it, without undue worry. He makes mistakes, perhaps big ones. But that does not make him give up. Why not? . . . He will see his mistakes. He will admit them and regret them. But he won't give up because of them. He won't be wounded unto death. He has an armour to save him from that--not the armour of conceit, but the armour of the grace of God. . . . And in the long run he will prove equal to his responsibilities, and yet he won't be conceited about it, because it is, 'Not I, but the grace of God'.

Again . . . here is a man who time after time, every week that he lives, every day that he lives, acknowledges and confesses his sins. Isn't it a wonder that he doesn't give up the business of Christian living altogether? He would if he had nothing better for his defence than the armour of conceit. For the armour couldn't stand it, and a man would soon, with the bitterness of fallen pride, give it up as a bad job.¹

In the light of these real experiences of failure within the life of faith, how is it possible to consciously participate in life as it should be, life which is, at least in part, an expression of love for God and one's fellowman? But men do go on living noble lives in spite of their failures, and this is the answer to the question raised by their failures:

Think of God--His will disobeyed, His love wounded, and nevertheless His grace still waiting for you, ready to accept you again. Think of Him.

That is the one thing that always makes it worthwhile to go on, to begin again, to rise up out of penitence into new hope, because God is

¹Ibid., pp. 59-60.

willing to forgive you, and the great reality with which you have to do is not just yourself, your character, your merits—not you, but the grace of God.¹

This is a way Christians describe and explain their experience of life as it should be. Baillie views it as a fitting description (from his own Christian perspective) of the life of any man, in so far as his life exhibits effective and loving fellowship with God and man:

I am sure that the really practical people, the really effective people, the really enviable people, are the people who have exchanged the armour of self-righteousness for the armour of the grace of God.²

The sermon has proclaimed the good news of God's prevenient and co-operative grace, it has dealt with divine realities. Yet, throughout, the language of the sermon reflected the human experience of these realities. The sermon has also been a demonstration of the way in which a theological concept, grace, can be translated into the language of human experience.

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

In the lectures and writings, as in the sermons, Baillie views the central problem as "the relation of

¹Ibid., pp. 60-61.

²Ibid., p. 61.

the all-pervasive grace of God to the free will of man."¹ His formal treatment of the doctrine is a working out and clarification of this relationship. At the root of the problem is the misleading conception of grace as "some kind of impersonal force that comes into people from the outside and makes them do things that their own free will would never make them do."² Baillie's subsequent re-statement of the doctrine of grace as a personal relationship and influence follows the same outline and sources as in the first sermon examined. He prefaces this re-statement with a detailed study of the Biblical concept and the Patristic and Reformation development of the doctrine which is largely absent from the sermons. The exception to this being the frequent mention of Paul in the sermons and the way he spoke of grace. We shall first examine the lecture material which is not paralleled in the sermons in order to understand the background for Baillie's emphasis upon grace as a personal relationship and influence in both the sermons and the published works.

¹"The Doctrine of Grace" (Book 9), p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 4.

Baillie writes that the emphasis on grace as a personal influence is "fundamentally a return to the New Testament conception, or perhaps an extension or development of it."¹ And the New Testament conception is indebted to Old Testament teachings and extra-Biblical ideas of supernatural powers which play a part in human affairs, e.g. the idea of mana which is common to many primitive religions. However, the line between sheer magic and religion is somewhat obscure in most of these primitive concepts. "The trouble," Baillie writes, "is perhaps that even in . . . Christian thought, grace has continued to be thought of too much in that quasi-material way."² The Old Testament writers use related words to speak of favor bestowed by God or men on other men; a gift given in return for a deed done, a reward for virtue. Therefore, in a sense, "there doesn't really seem to be much preparation in the Old Testament for the specifically Christian, or New Testament, or Pauline use of 'grace',³ that is prevenient, outreaching and undeserved.

¹Theology of the Sacraments, p. 52.

²"The Doctrine of Grace", p. 3.

³Ibid., p. 5.

In the New Testament "grace" (charis) has become a technical Christian term which "seems to mean fundamentally the free unmerited love of God in Christ to sinful undeserving men." This is especially true in the Pauline writings.

One of the fundamental things which Paul discovered in becoming a Christian, and which pervades and explains his whole conception of Christianity, his whole theological system was just this: that God's love to men does not depend on their deserving it.

Paul had no idea of a "semi-material or semi-magical impersonal force" in mind. There was something intensely personal about the kind of grace he spoke of. Baillie concludes the section on the Biblical understanding of grace by quoting Leonard Hodgson¹, "St. Paul went to the heart of the doctrine of grace when he said, 'The love of God constraineth us'."²

The development of the concept in Tertullian saw the emergence of an impersonal, mechanistic abstraction. The Pauline antitheses between works or law and grace became replaced by the antithesis between nature and grace. Grace is viewed as an outside force which impinges upon a human nature which is totally alien

¹ Essays in Christian Philosophy, p. 51.

² "The Doctrine of Grace", pp. 5-9.

and opposed to it. Hence the danger of negating human freedom to the point where the activity of grace becomes mechanistic, impersonal and sub-ethical.¹

There is one basic criticism which Baillie levels at the development of the concept of grace. It can be traced from his treatment of the Fathers right through the Reformation. Throughout he sees the abstraction of grace from nature as a misconceived interpretation of Christian doctrine.

Augustine's view of grace is criticized on the grounds that his doctrine of original sin leaves no room for any natural ground in man with which grace can co-operate. The only way grace becomes realized is through its forcible alteration of man's created (and utterly fallen) nature. Pelagius' counter to Augustine is but one of many subsequent reactions in the interests of human freedom and ethical integrity. The Pelagian abandonment of original sin reduced grace to a mere moral influence for which man could claim full credit when he chose to do good.² Baillie cannot be viewed as a Pelagian because Pelagius divorced free

¹Ibid., pp. 9-11.

²Ibid., pp. 11-13.

moral decision from grace.

Baillie does see the dawning of a truer concept in the mediating semi-Pelagian position where man's nature is only impaired and grace is understood to work with it.¹ But again, Baillie's view is not semi-Pelagian in that the latter position holds that "the first steps toward the Christian life were ordinarily taken by the human will and the Grace super-vened only later."² Furthermore, in all these positions in the Augustine-Pelagian controversies grace was abstracted from free will and moral decision, grace was abstracted as the antithesis of nature, grace was an external impersonal power.

The Reformers, especially Martin Luther, "revived the New Testament idea of grace as the free forgiving love and kindness of God."³ But grace remains abstracted from nature. The Reformers looked at grace,

not as a supernatural power coming to make men morally good and thus worthy of heaven, but as a free justifying mercy, forgiving a man his sins through Christ and thus freely giving him heaven--

¹ Ibid., p. 12.

² The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 1239.

³ "The Doctrine of Grace", p. 13.

while moral sanctification is regarded as the result.

Justification is a gift of mercy, not on the basis of meritorious acts, but on the condition of faith alone. However, grace becomes active only afterwards in the process of sanctification. Therefore the initial act of faith is an act devoid of the co-operation and influence of grace. Grace is related to faith only as an opposing force to human will. The Reformers retained something of the idea of grace as an external supernatural power which could determine the actions of a wholly alien human will. This is especially true in Calvin. To some extent in both Luther and Calvin, the whole process looks "very deterministic and unethical, as if man from start to finish were nothing more than clay in the hands of a potter."²

Baillie makes only passing reference to Melanchthon. Although, as has been shown, his understanding of the activity of grace has close affinities to that of the "Quiet Reformer".

Where Melanchthon reacted against sub-ethical

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 14.

determinism in Lutheranism, Arminius reacted against it in Calvin. Baillie has some doubts about the consistency of Arminianism as it came to be systematized, n.b. in the five articles of the "Remonstrance", but he voices approval for the motives behind the reaction:

It is at least an honest and high minded attempt to work out a theory of grace which will avoid the danger of making the whole business too necessitarian and mechanical, and leave room for human freedom and responsibility, and thus for the free preaching of the Gospel, the free offer of salvation.

In the concluding paragraph of the lecture on the historical development of the doctrine, Baillie notes that although the theological intricacies of the controversies may seem irrelevant to the immediate concerns of his students (the details of theological controversy never appeared in Baillie's preaching on grace), they are important as an indication of the fact that:

whenever an extreme doctrine of omnipotent, irresistible grace is asserted over against complete human corruption and impotence, a reaction or revolt inevitably arises, because human freedom and responsibility, ethical soundness and evangelical freeness, seem to be imperilled.²

Baillie's practical concern is to preserve the freedom

¹Ibid., p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 17.

of the will and moral responsibility. The theological concept which has stood in the way of this concern throughout much of the history of Christian doctrine is the abstraction of grace from nature, the view that somehow man and the good that is in him (which is entirely the work of grace) can be separated into two abstract categories.

At the beginning of Baillie's restatement of the doctrine he notes that the "Reformers claimed to be restoring the New Testament and Pauline idea of grace as simply the free forgiving love and mercy of God. But even that conception can be misused if people think of love as a detachable thing." But the love of God is not detachable from God Himself or from the object of his love. "After all, the love of God is just God loving us—a personal relationship and influence."¹

The remainder of Baillie's restatement of the doctrine of grace in terms of a personal relationship and influence is, as I have noted above, parallel to the presentation in the sermons. His use of the terms "prevenient", "irresistible", and "co-operative" are

¹Ibid., pp. 17-18.

understood, less in the context of their historical origin than in the context of grace as a personal relationship where grace is not abstracted from human nature.¹ Although these technical terms did not appear in the sermons, (doubtless because of the historical associations which have rendered them misleading), the re-defined ideas were conveyed in language which reflected experience.

In his book on the sacraments, Baillie offers a homely illustration of the nature of the activity of grace. It is strange that this illustration does not appear in the sermons, for in spite of the inevitable inadequacies of all human analogies to convey fully the nature of God's actions, it succeeds in communicating many of the themes emphasised in Baillie's understanding of the relation of grace to faith.

Let us imagine the case of a small child, a little boy, entrusted to the care of a nursery governess. When she arrives, the little fellow is taken into the room where she is, and left in her care. But she is strange to him, he does not trust her, but look distantly at this strange woman from the opposite corner of the room. She knows that she cannot do anything with him until she has won his confidence. She knows she has to win it. The little boy cannot manufacture it,

¹ Ibid., p. 20.

cannot make himself trust the governess. His faith in her is something which he cannot create--only she can create it. And she knows that she cannot create it by forcing it; she has to respect the personality of the child; and to try to take the citadel by storm would be worse than useless, and would produce fear and distrust instead of confidence.

She sets about her task gently, using various means--words, gestures, and smiles, and perhaps gifts, all of which convey the kindness of her heart. Until at last the little fellow's mistrust is melted away, she has won his confidence, and of his own free will he responds to her advances and crosses the floor to sit on her knee. Now that her graciousness, using all these means, has created his faith, she can carry on the good work she has begun.

The dynamics of grace are well illustrated by this simple analogy. Our faith in God, our turning toward Him and His graciousness in trust cannot be conceived as the function of a will in isolation from its relationship to grace. We cannot create faith or do any right thing that is expected of us apart from the influence of that relationship. And yet, our act of acceptance and trust is not mechanistically determined by an external coercive force; if it were it would not be truly our response. We respond to the grace of God freely on the basis of who we are, men created with a capacity to respond.

It is not insignificant that the analogy is based on human experience. It is on the reflection

¹Theology of the Sacraments, pp. 53-54.

upon human relationships of trust and love and the consequent responses of uncoerced gratitude that the understanding of the Christian life is best realized. It is on this basis that the language of preaching most adequately bears witness to the Gospel.

The illustration would have been a helpful one in the sermons for another reason. It would have helped to explain the nature of man's freedom. It has been shown in the examination of the sermons dealing with the doctrine of man, that Baillie makes the statement that man is free, in a sense a free individual, but in a truer sense free in so far as he is free in relationship to others and to God.¹ It has also been shown that when Baillie preaches that human will can make a decision to accept grace without due emphasis upon the corporate and dependent dimension of that decision, the vital tension and relationship between grace and freedom was lost.² In the absence of an explicit explanation of the nature of the freedom of the will in the sermons it will be necessary to examine briefly Baillie's formal discussion of the matter. After a review of the classical problems involved, he makes the following positive contribution.

¹Supra, pp. 319-321. ²Supra, pp. 384-86.

"The freedom of the human will does not mean sheer indetermination." Man is free when he acts according to his choice. But he chooses according to his nature. He himself is responsible for his actions because they spring from what he is in relation to the circumstances of the moment.¹

But the moral demands which are thrust upon us by our relationships are not always met by a choice to act accordingly. The "freedom of the will which we all possess does not necessarily carry with it the ability to do or be what we ought to do or be." We lack the ability to choose to act in accordance with the moral demands thrust upon us in so far as we are self-centered. And no amount of concentration upon one's own character will cure this morally paralyzing self-centeredness. We are responsible for the failure to meet moral demands, because our inability to choose right is a function of part of what we are. It is only when this one part of human nature is exercised in isolation that we are not free to do what we ought to do. It is only when the moral consciousness is taken to be a purely subjective and individual matter

¹"Philosophers and Theologians on the Freedom of the Will," Theology of the Sacraments, pp. 133-34.

that we are paralyzed by the paradox of morality, i.e. the self-centered quest for goodness which defeats itself.¹

But men are free and able to do what they ought because they are constituted in a dependent relationship to God and their fellowmen. The saints have illuminated our understanding of the realization of good in their lives by speaking of it as the work of the grace of God. (And as "the grace of God is continually touching every man"², the ability to do good is a possibility in every man.) Therefore true freedom, freedom to live as men ought to live, comes when morality is placed in its proper context, viz. its constituted dependence on that which is outside the self.

It appears to be true in a very plain and practical sense that a man is not really free to live as he ought to live until he passes beyond a self-contained morality into that relationship which the saints have described as dependence on the grace of God.³

¹ Ibid., pp. 134-36.

² "Beyond Morality," p. 54. Also supra, pp. 333, 373.

³ Theology of the Sacraments, p. 137

Thus Baillie concludes his treatment of the freedom of the will; freedom which is defined, not merely as the ability to do what one chooses to do, but the ability to choose what is right and to act upon it. This kind of freedom is a human possibility, because man, though fallen is created in the image of God, an image which is preserved, an image through which the grace of God acts as a personal influence upon the whole man.

And so we are brought back to the theme which dominates the sermons, the good news that informs human experience of the active presence of the grace of God. Preaching is itself a means of grace in that it may be used as a gracious influence to draw men's minds to the conscious acceptance of the grace of God which is with them.

The preacher's message is not a message about mere morality; it is not a coercive catalogue of commandments. As Baillie preached: "The human heart is never changed by commandments."¹ The fragmentary goodness and love that is a part of experience can be informed and preserved by the knowledge and acceptance of grace as its root and source. This is rightfully

¹Supra, p. 387.

the point of emphasis for preaching. Baillie writes that the relevance of the Sermon on the Mount is not its value as an ethical ideal upon which men can mould their lives. It is precisely for this reason that it is an impossible ethic for men to realize by dint of sheer moral effort:

The main function of the impossible ethic is to drive us away from ourselves to God: and then there grows that peculiar kind of goodness which can never be achieved by mere moral endeavour, the Christian kind, which is all unconscious of itself and gives all the glory to God.¹

To stress the point, Baillie can even go as far as to say that, "in a sense Christianity transcends morality altogether and there is no such thing as a Christian ethic."² It is not necessary to take this dictum as an absolute rule for preaching, but it is clear where the emphasis should be.

Moreover, the centrality of the paradox of grace to preaching and Christian experience is intensified by the fact that it is the key to our understanding of the Incarnation. Theologically, it has been shown that the paradox is based upon the understanding of what one does from what one is, morality from religion, human nature from grace. Baillie writes:

¹God Was In Christ, pp. 115-116.

²Ibid., p. 115.

It is false to this paradox to think of the area of God's action and the area of our action being delimited each by the other, and distinguished from each other by a boundary, so that the more of God's grace there is in an action, the less it is my own personal action. . . . Whatever good there is in our lives and actions (and it is but fragmentary) is 'all of God', and it was His before it was ours, was divine grace before it was human achievement, is indeed a matter of God taking up our poor human nature into union with His own divine life, making us more truly personal, yet also more disposed to ascribe all to Him.

And so we end this chapter as it began in anticipation of the next:

This paradox in its fragmentary form in our own Christian lives is a reflection of that perfect union of God and man in the Incarnation on which our whole Christian life depends, and may therefore be our best clue to the understanding of it.

¹ Ibid., p. 117.

² Ibid. and supra, p. 374.

CHAPTER VII

THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION

The Incarnation is a theme present in all the sermons. This chapter and the next (on the Atonement) involve doctrines which are determinative for the whole of the Christian message because words that describe the person and work of Jesus Christ are words that constitute the normative language of both Christian theology and preaching. Throughout the sermons human experience is measured and enlightened by the life and work of Jesus Christ. The present chapter is concerned with an examination of the doctrine which attempts to describe the relationship between the divine and the human as they meet in the person of Jesus Christ. It is concerned to show what is meant when we say that the Word of God was Incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth.

The whole of Christian doctrine is "a story with a plot," a story which tells of the purpose and love of God reconciling man to Himself. The Incarnation is the central chapter. And this central chapter deals

with a concrete historical event. The historicity of Jesus is an accepted essential throughout Baillie's preaching.

The central chapter, which is a clue to the whole plot, is firmly laid down upon the soil of earth in the land of Palestine; it tells of how the Word of God, through whom He made the worlds, became flesh, of how the son of God became man, for man's redemption in Jesus Christ.

Human experience is measured and enlightened by the historical life of a fully human man, Jesus of Nazareth.

Baillie introduces his lectures on the Incarnation by telling his students:

Somebody might object that surely the central doctrine of theology is not the doctrine of Christ but the doctrine of God. Yes: but remember that the doctrine of the Incarnation is not only the doctrine of Christ but [also] the doctrine of God.²

The doctrine of the Incarnation tells what kind of God Christians believe in. From the same sermon quoted above come these words: "Christianity is not merely a story about Jesus. It is a story about God, about the works of God, about the purpose of God."³

¹"These are written that ye might believe," To Whom Shall We Go, p. 112.

²"The Development of Christology," Lecture I (Typescript), p. 1.

³"These are written that ye might believe," p.111.

These two quotations from one sermon throw us immediately into the problem of preaching on the theological theme of the Incarnation. Are we dealing with the life and experience of a human being called Jesus? The answer must be "yes". Are we attempting to speak at the same time about the work and purpose of God? Here again the answer is "yes". These two sides are essential to the doctrine. The problem is to preach so so that neither side is compromised or obscured by the other.

The first quotation has also given us a preview of the complexity of the problem with which the preacher has to deal. In order to preach about both sides, the human and the divine, Baillie takes great care to avoid misleading interpretations of the doctrine. It is not simply a matter of saying "God became man", because this can imply some sort of metamorphosis or a succession of different modes of existence. This misinterpretation was rejected by the Church in the third century when it renounced the Modalistic Monarchianism of Sabellius. It is not simply a matter of saying "Jesus became God" by virtue of what he did or was on earth. This sort of Adoptianism is also a misleading simplification of the problem. Baillie did

not preach that God changed Himself into man by a process of giving up His divine attributes of omnipotence, omniscience etc. for a period of years. This he views as the oversimplification inherent in the Kenotic theories. Baillie is carefully explicit to say that it was the Word of God which became flesh, or that it was the Son of God which became man. It is necessary to make note of the care with which the sermons are phrased at the beginning of our examination in order to see that the presentation in the sermons is set against a background of careful theological study. We shall return to this background after the examination of the themes which emerge from the sermons.

The problem of preaching on the doctrine involves the full statement of both the humanity and the divinity of Christ, but the purpose of such preaching determines the nature of the problem even further. The problem which has exercised much of traditional theology is the working out of how it was possible for the two natures to co-exist in one person. Preaching, and indeed Baillie's systematic presentation of the doctrine, has a different emphasis. The problem as he sees it is not so much the rational or meta-

physical working out of the relationship and definition of the two natures. The central problem is rather the explication of what it means to say that Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine. Baillie tells his students:

Even if we can't altogether answer the question how it is possible, we cannot refuse to tackle the question as to what it means. What do we mean when we say that Jesus was both human and divine, both God and man?¹

Baillie's treatment of the apparent opposites brought together by this doctrine has been anticipated in the previous chapter. The humanity and the divinity of Christ have meaning and can be understood, not as contradictory natures, but as the full expression of a paradox common to human experience, viz. the paradox of grace. Our task is now to examine the way in which Baillie presents the humanity of Christ and His divinity as the full expression of the very meaning of Christian life, which insofar as it is realized, is met by the conviction that it is "Not I, but the grace of God which is with me".

The Doctrine Preached

A major emphasis in the sermons which deals

¹"The Doctrine of the Incarnation," Lecture X (Book II) p. 8.

specifically with the Incarnation is the forthright assertion of Christ's humanity. His historicity is never questioned, but Baillie goes even further to describe the humanity of the historical Jesus as being, not just the Man, but also a man among men.

In the moral realm, Jesus' questions and battles are viewed as genuine in the fully human sense. Speaking of the temptation in the wilderness Baillie preaches:

Everybody knows the story in the Gospels of Christ's temptation by the devil in the wilderness, but do people realize that it was a real temptation? I mean, that it was a real ailurement against which he had to fight, and that throughout his life he had these fights with temptation as all men have, and that it was hard.¹

Taking the mythological element out of ^{the} story, Baillie speaks of Jesus' temptation as a concrete experience:

Suppose the whole story means that at the beginning of his ministry Jesus has to wrestle with the temptation to gain popularity and victory by quick methods which were not God's methods . . . what a living story it becomes. For we see it was a real temptation like our own temptations: not a matter of seeing the Tempter in flesh and blood, and knowing he was the Tempter, and turning him easily away, but rather a matter of fighting against a very plausible temptation, that looked like good though it was evil. That was what Jesus had to do, and of course it cost him a struggle.²

¹"Jesus and Temptation," Hebrews 4:15 (287), 1922-32, pp. 2-3.

²Ibid., p. 5.

Victory in the struggle against temptation is completely realized only in the Incarnation, but Baillie stresses the point that this is a possibility, be it in a fragmentary way, for all men. The sermon concludes: "You can always fight against it. . . . 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation'--that makes all the difference in the world."¹ The point for our present purpose is to see that Jesus is presented in the sermon as a man who was subject to the same intensity of temptation, doubt and struggle as are all men.

In his religious life, Jesus is spoken of as a man among men. He was not continually thinking "religious" thoughts as he went about his work. Speaking about the misconstrued idea of the religious life as being a life where one's thoughts are continually focused on religious subjects to the neglect of the business at hand, Baillie preaches: "Jesus Christ had His mission to carry out amid the dust and toil of those towns of Galilee; and even He couldn't be directly thinking of religion all the time."² When

¹Ibid., p. 11.

²"The Religious Life," Out of Nazareth, p. 117.

the sermon deals with Jesus' physical humanity, Baillie hastens to add a word about his spiritual humanity too:

He needed rest and sleep for his body, but he needed something else too. He needed spiritual refreshment for His soul, and He could only get it in solitary prayer. And so we have to picture Him yonder on the hillside under the waning starlight and the first streaks of dawn, when no one else was abroad, throwing His soul open to the influences of God in meditation and prayer.

The fact that Jesus prayed to God is frequently mentioned in the sermons. The humanity of Jesus' spiritual life is not obscured by his divinity. Jesus' relationship to God is consistently treated as one of filial dependency. Jesus, even in the heart of his spiritual life, is spoken of as being subordinate to God and dependent upon the Father.

The faith which Jesus experienced is spoken of as the same kind of faith as that which was intended for all men. Concluding a sermon on the entry into Jerusalem, Baillie preaches that Jesus was

risking everything for God, trusting utterly in God--it was what He had always taught men to do, whenever he spoke of faith; and now in the last terrible crisis He did it Himself.²

¹Ibid., p. 116.

²"The Weeping Kings," Out of Nazareth, p. 102.

Jesus' spiritual relationship to God was the same sort of relationship which all men can have with Him. It was a relationship of dependent faith.

The mighty works, the healing which Jesus did, are treated not so much as His works but as God working through the faith of men, in particular through the faith of Jesus Christ. In an Easter sermon the resurrection is presented in the same way, i.e. as God's answer to human faith.

It is notable that the New Testament nearly always speaks of the resurrection, not as something that Jesus did, but as something that God did for Jesus. Time after time that is what we find: not that Jesus rose from the dead, but that God raised Him from the dead. God brought Him through the crisis of death, God gave Him the victory. That is the Easter message of the New Testament. Now you may indeed feel puzzled and perplexed as to what it was that actually happened on the first Easter morning. I do not blame anybody for that, and I do not wonder at it. It is plain from the stories that what happened was not something that can be described quite easily and coherently in ordinary perceptual language. Quite plainly it was not simply the story of a dead body being re-animated and coming back to life, to walk about among men as before, as if it had never died. It was something much more supernatural than that. But if you ask me what exactly happened, in terms of our ordinary earthly experience I can't answer you. I can only describe it as the victory of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus did the will of God. He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, He became obedient even unto death, yes, the death of the Cross, absolutely trusting God. And God did not betray His trust. God saw Him through. God raised Him from the dead. God gave Him the victory. It is the story of something that happened, something God did. It is a past indicative.

But it is also a present indicative. It is the story of something that God does, of the victory that God always gives to those who trust Him. . . . There is in the world a fellowship of men and women called the Church of Jesus Christ, and with all its failures and imperfections it bears witness to this as the one true secret of life, the story of Him who "reigns from the tree", who liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore: the Gospel of the Lordship of Jesus and the Victory of God.

Even in the resurrection the full humanity of Jesus is not compromised. The mighty act which falls at the center of Christianity is the act of God working through human faith, and pre-eminently through the faith of the man Jesus.

God and Jesus are never confused in the sermons. Jesus was an historical human figure, a man among men. Yet it is always to Jesus that Christians turn when they think of God. Quoting John 1:18

Baillie preaches:

'No man has ever seen God; but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared (or interpreted Him).' There John is referring to a plain fact of history, a thing which (as he says) men's eyes had beheld and their hands had handled--a human life which had been lived among men, the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

That is what we Christians always come back to--God is a great mystery, and our minds flounder about in thought and prayer, not knowing how to conceive or realize Him, tossed about by perplexed

¹"Easter Day Sermon," Romans 10:9 (716), 1944, pp. 8-9.

and shifting imaginations. But then we bring our minds back to Jesus Christ, how He spoke of God, how He prayed to God, how wherever He went He helped men to believe in the God He believed in, and His very presence made men see what God was really like, until, their deepest instincts told them it was true.¹

The questioner may ask, "If faith in God is the important thing, why do Christians always turn to Jesus when they talk about God? In what sense is it necessary to talk about the divinity of Christ? More central still, what does it mean to say that Jesus Christ is both human and divine?"

Questions such as these were addressed by Baillie on frequent occasions, however, in one unpublished sermon the themes upon which the whole of Baillie's Christology turns are brought together. The sermon, entitled "The Divinity of Christ", was preached in Cardiff on April 14, 1935. Baillie begins by voicing questions which he believes are in the minds of many an honest yet doubting Christian:

"Isn't it enough to believe in God as our Father and in Jesus as our supreme Teacher and Leader? Isn't it enough to say that Jesus can tell us more about God than anybody else, because he went further than anybody else in the knowledge of God? . . . He was a man but that is just what we need.

¹"God in Christ and in our Fellow Creatures," Out of Nazareth, p. 43.

For we too are men, and it is only a man's knowledge of God that could be of any use to us. . . . Isn't that enough--to take Jesus as our Teacher, and so to learn to believe and trust in God?"

Baillie recognizes that these questions and the implied affirmative answer sound "simple and reasonable", but he believes that it is too simple and he sets about to "lead on to something deeper, by asking the doubter some questions in return."¹

The first question pinpoints the misleading vagueness and ease with which we often talk about God.

What kind of God do you believe in? Some people (even some theologians) speak as if the word "God" were a perfectly simple word; as if the idea of God were a kind of counter that could be passed round from hand to hand, or a piece of money, of fixed value, in some current coinage, which could be handed out, in the name of Jesus, to every passer-by, and accepted by everybody without any difficulty. Yes people sometimes talk as if everybody knew, without any perplexity, what the word "God" stands for; and as if, while doctrines about the divinity of Christ are very puzzling and mystifying, it is perfectly easy to believe in God. But is it easy to believe in God? I don't think anything could enable us to do it but the Incarnation. . . . When people talk of the quest of the divine, they sometimes seem to think of God as a remote kind of Being whom we have to find by searching; a far away God, waiting idly to be discovered, sitting, as it were, with His face turned away, or at least waiting quite indifferently; so that we have to do all the seeking, and He is overtaken unawares when at last we find Him.

¹"The Divinity of Christ," 2 Corinthians 5:19 (702) 1935, pp. 1-2.

In this view Jesus can be accepted as the "supreme Seeker and Finder, the Hero who went beyond all others and at last discovered God as He really is." But if this is the case it must also be asked: "What kind of God did he find?" The answer to this question points out the inadequacy of the view of Jesus as merely a Teacher or Discoverer of God.¹

To the man who accepts Jesus as Teacher, yet is perplexed by the idea of his divinity, Baillie says:

Go to the Gospels, where His teaching is recorded, and see. His teaching is the one thing you swear by. What kind of God do you find in His teaching? Is it a God who would wait to be discovered? No, indeed. The very opposite. It is a God who is always beforehand with His creatures; a God who actually takes an interest in the life and death of every little sparrow rolling in the dust; a God who goes out to seek not only those who are seeking Him, but the very people who are hiding from Him or straying from Him; a God who can be pictured as a shepherd going out into the wilderness, at the cost of great hardship to Himself, to seek the lost sheep. That is Jesus' picture of God. . . . There is nothing more distinctive than that. The God He believed in is not a God who could possibly wait to be discovered, but is a seeking God, a prevenient God, who always take the initiative, and who will go any length to find and win His human creatures.

The very fact that the God Jesus tells us about is a God whose loving care, a God whose grace, is prevenient, leads

¹ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

us to affirm something more about Jesus whom we accept as Teacher and Guide.¹

This leads to the second question asked in the sermon:

What then do you make of Jesus? I would say to the doubter: You began by talking of Jesus as the supreme Discoverer and Teacher about God. But if His teaching was right, then you can't stop short with that. In fact, you must go back and tell the whole story in a different way. For after all, if His picture of God was right, God doesn't wait to be discovered, and it isn't a case of man seeking and finding, but of God seeking and finding. To leave that out would be to leave out the deepest part of the story. For at its deepest it is not a story of what man has done but of what God has done. And if Jesus is, as you say, the climax of the story, then we must go back and give a different account of Jesus, and tell of how God sought mankind in Him. In short, we can't have a truly Christian doctrine of God without having also a doctrine of the Incarnation.

Following a re-phrasing of this key point for emphasis,

Baillie continues:

Therefore in the New Testament you do not find people talking simply of the achievement of Jesus, but of the achievement of God in Him. It is very remarkable. They had before them the spectacle of Jesus going on to endure the Cross, and dying on it in perfect faith and love; and you would have expected that for the rest of their lives the theme of their song would be the love of Jesus. Well, so it was, but the remarkable thing is that the Cross made them speak even more of the love of God. They couldn't speak of one without speaking of the other. In fact the two meant the same

¹Ibid., pp. 4-5.

thing for them--the love of Christ and the love of God. . . . It is not just the man called Jesus, winning salvation for mankind. It is the Eternal God. That is where it all began. That is the real meaning of it. "God commendeth His love toward us", says St. Paul, "in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And again he says: "It is all of God"--it is all God's doing. And "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."

The meaning of the Incarnation, the divine activity of God realized to perfection in the person of Jesus Christ, is that God reaches out and grasps man, reconciling him to Himself. His grace is prevenient. That is the central meaning of the Incarnation.¹

But the matter is not left here. How are we to understand the meaning of the Incarnation in terms of our own human experience? How does the Gospel of the Incarnation address our own situation and commend to us the victory and the freedom Jesus knew through faith in God? Is there a clue to the meaning and relevance of the assertion that Jesus, while being fully human, was yet in a prior sense fully divine, in our own experience? Does the paradox of the Incarnation illuminate and address life as we know it? Baillie's third question is:

¹Ibid., pp. 7-8.

Isn't there a paradox running right through the Christian life? I believe there is; and perhaps it may help us to accept the great paradox of the Incarnation, and even in some small measure to understand it. . . .

At the very heart of the Christian life there lies this paradox: the conviction that every good thing a man does is somehow wrought by God. That sounds very strange, but it is true of every one of us, and in our deepest moments we know it. Indeed that is half the secret of the Christian life and of the Christian character. Our every action is our own action, our very own: we are free to choose, and if we make the wrong choice, we are entirely responsible, and our consciences condemn us. And yet somehow, when we make the right choice, our consciences do not applaud and congratulate us. . . . We say: "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy name be the glory." "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." We confess that it was all of God, without whom we could do nothing; so that our very obedience to Him is somehow, and first of all, His gift to us, His work in us. That is the deeper truth. That comes first. It is indeed a paradox, but a familiar paradox, and the conviction of it runs right through the Christian life.

Now doesn't that help us in the matter of the Incarnation? For if we take the paradox in right down earnest, if we really believe that every noble human achievement is first of all God's achievement, then a supremely and perfectly good human life would have to be interpreted and described as God's supreme breaking through into the life of humanity. And that is what we say about Jesus. He was indeed a man, in the completest sense, in body, soul and spirit; and the life He lived on earth was an entirely human life, subject to all our human limitations (that is what the Church has always believed, though people sometimes forget it). But then how can we call Him divine? How can we speak of God Incarnate? Is it in the sense that He achieved divinity by living such a perfect life, that by His goodness He rose up into divine rank? No, that's no use. That would be man climbing up to God. That would bring

in the divine at the end instead of at the beginning. That would reverse the true order. The divine always comes first. God is always prevenient. Haven't we seen that even in our own lives every good thing we do really comes from God? It is divine before it is human. And mayn't that be at least a dim shadow of what is true of the life of Jesus? It was completely human; but at the same time, and first of all, completely divine. It was divine before it was human; God before it was man. Language almost breaks down at such a point, and it all sounds a desperate paradox. But may it not be the supreme outcropping of the familiar paradox which runs right through our religious life? May it not be that this familiar Christian paradox finds its supreme expression raised to its highest degree, in the life of Jesus Christ, God and man, first God then man? That is the great paradox; but (you see) we can't in any case get away from paradox in the Christian life; and perhaps the paradox we know may at least point us in the right direction, and make it easier for us to find a meaning in the grand mystery of the Incarnation.¹

The examination of this sermon has shown that the paradox of the Incarnation has been preserved. The faith-experience of the New Testament writers constrained them to speak of the fullness of the divine activity of God revealed in Jesus Christ as well as the complete humanity of the man in whom this revelation took place; the Council of Nicea defended the Church against attempts to compromise and rationalize the two sides; the paradox was re-affirmed in its fullness at Chalcedon; And the sermon follows in the tradition. But it is important to see that the paradox has not been presented as the mere juxtaposition

¹ Ibid., pp. 10-12.

of two contradictory concepts. The paradox has been presented as a definitive and supreme instance of that which is common to human experience, understood most adequately by Christians as the paradox of grace.

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

The primary source for the doctrine as it was preached is a sermon preached in 1935 at the beginning of Baillie's teaching career. Since 1918 he had been engaged in the parish ministry and it was his concern for preaching which doubtless influenced his approach to systematic theology and in particular his approach to the doctrine of the Incarnation. The preaching of the doctrine has met the criterion proposed by this thesis, i.e. that doctrines be preached in a manner which reflects and addresses human experience. However, Baillie's somewhat original treatment of the Incarnation has not gone without criticism. The clear preaching of the Gospel was a dominant concern, but this was coupled with its indispensable counterpart, the rigorous examination of the theology behind the preaching. During the year preceding the preaching of the sermon which sets forth Baillie's approach to the Incarnation, he delivered for the first time his classroom lectures on the "Development of Christology".

In order to understand ^{the} theological intent and significance of the doctrine preached it will be necessary to examine the background for Baillie's contribution in his teaching.

The question of Christology, Baillie teaches, "involves ultimately the whole question [of] what God we believe in." But this question involves quite specifically the life of Jesus of Nazareth, a life which was an historical event in the fullest sense of the word. It is this life of a real man that provides a starting point for the study of Christology. But any study of history is not a purely objective matter; therefore the historical Jesus is not an absolute starting point for the examination of the question because in approaching the subject we "carry with us to it all that we have inherited and all that we have experienced as regards knowledge of God and of the new life in Him." Never-the-less, what we can know of the words and works and ways of the man Jesus constitutes a basic minimum for the study of Christology.¹

Baillie then asks a question which may well have been on the lips of his students. "If we have

¹"The Development of Christology," (typescript), Introduction and Lecture I, pp. 1-17.

the historical Jesus, isn't that enough?" But merely accepting the teaching of Jesus about God is not enough, because Jesus is not merely mankind's supreme pathfinder towards God, but also, "and in a deeper and prior sense, God's supreme approach to man." Baillie's development of the need for a Christology, rather than just an historical study of Jesus' life, follows the same lines as we have seen in the sermons.¹

With the historical event of Jesus' life and the supra-historical action of God's prevenient love established as the two foci of the problem, Baillie proceeds with an examination of Christology in the New Testament.

Following a study of the Biblical sources, especially the Petrine speeches in Acts, Baillie summarizes the main points of pre-Pauline Christology:

Jesus is regarded very frankly as a man--a man who was specially equipped by God with the power of the Spirit to perform a beneficent work on earth (such as we read of in the Synoptic Gospels).

¹"The Development of Christology" (typescript), Lecture II, pp. 17-32; in the sermons, supra, pp. 422-27. A parallel argument appears in published form in God Was In Christ, pp. 59-65.

²Ibid., Lecture III, p. 39.

At this early stage there is no suggestion of the personal pre-existence of Christ. There is the idea that God had chosen and exalted Jesus to divine office, but this could not be considered adoptianism in the later usage of that term "because (for one thing) divinity or deity is hardly attributed to Jesus" at this stage of development. The early creed of the Church was the affirmation of the Messiahship of Jesus. They said that "He has been exalted as 'Christ'. 'Christ' has not yet become a proper name as it was for Paul. Here it means simply 'the Christ', the anointed one, the Messiah."¹

But there was an even more remarkable conviction about Jesus in the pre-Pauline teachings. Jesus was spoken of as "the Lord". The meaning of this word in its earliest usage was less dependent (if at all) upon its meaning in the mystery religions. It was from the Old Testament that these early Christians drew their understanding of the term. It meant to them that Jesus had revealed to them something quite specifically of God, the same God they knew of in the Old

¹Ibid., p. 40.

Testament. To speak of a man in these terms was a new departure from anything that had gone before.¹

In Paul's Christology, the complete humanity of Jesus is preserved. (There is still no hint of the Virgin Birth, a theme which does not appear as part of the doctrine as Baillie preached it.) So too is His Messiahship. But the new development in Paul is the idea that "Christ was definitely a divine being, whose life did not begin with his earthly appearance, but who had a pre-incarnate existence in heaven." In the earlier period Jesus had been called the Servant of God, but in Paul we find Him called the Son of God. This meant more for Paul than did "Messiah" in the understanding of contemporary Judaism; Jesus was more than just the Anointed One or the Servant of God. But still it did not mean that he regarded "Christ as God in the sense of simple identity." Here as before, "Christ was subordinate to God". It is difficult to systematically state what Christ's divinity meant for Paul. It is more a matter of the way Christ played a part in his life. He prayed to Him. He speaks of sinning against Him. "He sometimes seems to talk of God and Christ interchangeably."

¹ Ibid., pp. 40-47.

In the glorious passage at the end of Romans 8, the love of Christ and the love of God are the same thing. In one verse: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? And a few verses lower, continuing the argument: For I am persuaded that neither death nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Christ is distinct from God and subordinate to God; and yet, in the actual experiences of the religious life, what God does for us and what Christ does for us are inseparable.

Paul did not give up his strict Jewish monotheism at all. And he did not give us a systematic answer to the question as to how the Son of God could be related to the One God he believed in.

St. Paul had hardly got as far as that. So he can't give us a complete ready made Christology, but rather presents us with a remarkable paradox, of which a few years before he wouldn't have believed himself capable. But he was driven to it by a tremendous experience--by the knowledge of what Christ had done for him, or [what] God had done for him in Christ.

Paul's experience constrained him to leave us with a sharply paradoxical understanding of the Incarnation. He "bequeathed to succeeding generations not only a great treasure but a host of problems" as well.¹

The Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews forms a link between the Pauline and the Johannine Christologies. The Epistle has a high concept of Christ which approaches the Logos interpretations, and

¹ Ibid., pp. 47-68.

at the same time the earthly life and humanity is emphasized. Here too we find a definite subordinationism of Christ to God. "Hebrews insists on and makes central the two foci in later Christological dogma: that Christ was consubstantial with God, and also consubstantial with man."¹

The Johannine use of the Logos concept elevates Christology still further. The Logos is identified with God, and Christ is identified with the Logos, eternal and pre-existent. John is emphatic about the reality of the Incarnation of the Logos. To counter docetic tendencies in contemporary Gnosticism "he tells a plain story of a real life lived in the flesh." But many of the human touches of the Synoptics are absent in the Fourth Gospel, and the high concept of Christ leaves us with a picture which is largely "that of a superhuman or divine being moving about among men but not really living in human conditions." However, coupled with this high concept, there is the most remarkable emphasis of John, viz. the deep sense of filial devotion and dependence which the Son shows toward the Father.

¹Ibid., pp. 68-70.

There is expressed

a profound dependence of Christ on the Father--subordinationism again, if you like, but expressed in such a spiritual ethical way. It is moral and spiritual dependence, this absolute selfless dependence, which gives such greatness and power to the Christ of the Fourth Gospel.

The Johannine Christology, with its Logos concept, has helped the Church "to transcend the idea of a second inferior divine Being who came to earth," it has helped us toward a way of speaking about a truly divine Incarnation, "God Himself became Incarnate in a real human life whose very glory was that it was lived in absolute self-less dependence on Him." Here we have been given a clearer glimpse of what is meant by belief in Jesus Christ in Whom we find a union of True God and true man.¹

Baillie's survey of the New Testament development of Christology shows the persistently paradoxical way in which the writers were constrained to speak of the Incarnation. It will be shown that Baillie views the classic heresies as misguided attempts to oversimplify and confuse the paradoxical witness of the Biblical writers. Another theme to which Baillie draws attention is the relationship of the Son to the

¹Ibid., pp. 70-82.

Father. Jesus Christ is not viewed as inferior to God, but His subordination and dependence on the Father is a consistent theme in the New Testament. A third theme which emerges from the survey is that the connection and identity between Jesus Christ and God is spoken of, not in terms of substantive nature, but in terms of activity. "In the New Testament the love of Christ and the love of God are the same thing."¹

It will be well to note what is absent as well as what is present in the development of Christology in the New Testament. The survey has shown that the Biblical witness does not give us a ready made Christology. The writers were not concerned to systematically work out the complex implications of subordinationism in relation to the identity of Jesus Christ and God other than to use such terms of relationship as "Father" and "Son". The questions and language of the later Christological controversies were not the questions and the language of the New Testament writers. It is unfair to read these later questions back into their minds. What we find in the New Testament writers is a witness to their faith that

¹God Was In Christ, p. 68.

God was in Christ, it is a paradoxical witness to the fullness of both God and man in Jesus Christ. What we do not find is the substantive distinctions between Jesus and God which became vital questions for the Church in later years. It is to Baillie's treatment of these questions that we now turn.

In the sub-apostolic age there appears what has often been considered the first of the heretical over-simplifications in the teachings of the Ebionites. They taught that Jesus was simply a great Teacher or Prophet. (If they held to any kind of divinity, it was at best a form of what later came to be called Adoptionism, in that they said that the Holy Spirit descended on Christ at baptism and He was subsequently exalted by God to Sonship.) The Ebionites were conservative thinkers who were

frightened by the undoubted difficulties and dangers of a developing Christology, and instead of going forward with the Church, they fell back upon a commonsense view which seemed simple and safe, but which would not really bear thinking out.

A view akin to that of the Ebionites was addressed by Baillie in the sermons when he challenged those who

¹"The Development of Christology," (typescript) Lecture IV, pp. 84-85.

accepted Jesus as the Teacher to go further and find out what kind of God He taught men about. This in turn led to the question, that if God was conveniently active in the lives of men, then something more must be said about Jesus than that His life was merely the life of a human teacher.¹

In Gnosticism the Church encountered a tendency which was to dog its steps from that time forward, viz. the tendency toward Docetism. By exalting one side of the paradox, the divine Spirit of Christ at the expense of all things material and human, the Incarnation becomes reduced to a mere apparition of God in history.² We have seen Baillie's stress on Jesus Christ's physical as well as spiritual humanity in the sermons.³

In the treatment of the Apostolic Fathers, Baillie draws special attention to the contribution of Ignatius. Ignatius gives us a high Christology

¹Supra, pp. 423

²"The Development of Christology," (typescript), Lecture IV, pp. 85-90.

³Supra, pp. 415-417

which will have nothing to do with either the tendencies of the Ebionites or the Docetism of the Gnostics. With a strong emphasis on the full humanity of Christ, Ignatius goes even further than Paul in extolling the God-ness of Jesus. Several times he even speaks of Jesus as God. Ignatius was not presenting a carefully worked theology of the Incarnation, and often his statements seem to anticipate later heresies. Ignatius sets out the faith boldly, but he does not give us a final fixed Christology. (In Baillie's thought there is no such thing. Theology has the ongoing task of attempting to make as clear as possible the meaning of the Incarnation in the language of the day. The results of such a task are never final or fixed.¹) It is worthy of note to hear Baillie, in summing up the contribution of the Apostolic Fathers, say to his students:

While they represent (inevitably) a slightly more advanced stage of Christology than, say, St. Paul, they are far less theologically minded than he, far less strenuously engaged in thinking out their faith. They cannot be said to make any distinctive contribution.

¹ cf. God Was In Christ, p. 68.

² "The Development of Christology," (type script), Lecture IV, p. 97.

Here he reminds us that the more advanced a Christology may be in terms of glorying in the polarity of God and man in Jesus Christ (as did Ignatius), it is not necessarily fulfilling the task of theology which is to think out the meaning of such statements. The mere positing of sheer opposites is not enough. The Incarnation is to be understood, not as the combination of contradictory natures, but as a paradox, the two poles of which are connected in a way which is (fragmentarily at least) understandable in the light of our experience. One way of doing this has been illustrated by the sermon in which the experience of the paradox of grace was offered as a clue to the meaning of the Incarnation.

The main concept which is to be found in the Christological development of the second and third centuries is that of the Logos. In Justin Martyr, the Logos is the creative Word, power, reason or glory of God which was active in the events recorded in the Old Testament and became fully disclosed in Jesus Christ. It is distinct from the Father; somewhat less personal and more immanent than the Johannine idea of the Logos as primarily the Son of God, God's only begotten Son. In Irenaeus the Logos takes

on the more personal emphasis, as the story of the real human Jesus was foremost in his thought. For Irenaeus the Logos is understood first and foremost as it was Incarnate in Jesus. Baillie teaches: "He is not interested in speculative questions about how the Logos or Son is generated by God the Father, because they are unanswerable." What emerges is the idea that the Logos is really God who is active in Christ for the salvation of man. God's reaching down to save man requires His Incarnation. The soteriological significance of the Incarnation as an activity of God which is directed toward, and active in all men is reflected by a quote from Irenaeus which appears several times in Baillie's writings: "He was made what we are, that He might make us what He is Himself," (Adv. haer. Bk. V, Preface).¹ In Irenaeus the identity between God and the man Jesus is expressed in terms of activity, the saving activity of God in man.

An attempt to simplify and resolve the persistent question of the identity of the two natures of God and Christ appears in Modalistic Monarchianism.

¹"The Development of Christology," (typescript), Lecture V, p. 104, see also God Was In Christ, p. 129.

Set within the context of debate concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, the attempts of this school to preserve the unity of the Godhead lead them to posit the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as different modes of one divine existence. In Sabellius this idea was expressed as a temporal succession of modes, so that Jesus Christ became simply and wholly God existing as a man for a period of years. This gave rise to the conclusion (in its crudest form in Praxeas) that the Father was crucified. Against these ideas Tertullian fought to preserve the idea (as regards the Incarnation) that Jesus Christ was not simply a mode of God's changing existence, but that there was in Him the divine and the human which was not an alloy or mixture (which would render Him neither God nor man, but something in between), but which was somehow fully and distinctly both God and man. Tertullian does not resolve the problem of how this can be. He is caught up in the terminology of the debate and speaks of divine and human substances. These are posed together in a way that preserves a paradox of the Incarnation, but the meaning of the paradox is lost in the language of the debate which has centered around speculations concerning God's

nature in the Incarnation rather than His activity.¹

Origen wrestles with the problem in similar terms of reference. The full humanity of Christ is maintained. The Eternal Logos is also Incarnate in Him. Origen held that the human soul was pre-existent. This enabled him to work out the idea that the Eternal Logos united itself with the soul of Jesus and thus inhabited a human body. More than any others before him, Origen set the stage for the subsequent Christological controversies. He steered clear of Docetism and Modalism, but the lines of argument which were to follow, while the councils struggled to preserve the truth that Christ was true God and true man, were destined to deal with the problem in his terms of reference, i.e. they were to be attempts to define the Incarnation in terms of two natures in one person.²

Baillie begins his lectures on the conciliar movement by stressing its importance and clarifying some misunderstandings. He points out that, rather than pretending to be definitive explanations, the para-

¹"The Development of Christology." (typescript), Lecture V, pp. 103-113.

²Ibid., pp. 113-123.

doxical formulations of the councils often cried out for explanation. Their function was less a positive formulation of final doctrine than defensive statements designed to counter current heresies. They were attempts to steer a true course between errors and over-simplifications which lay on every side. Heretics are not merely to be condemned; they are to be thanked for helping the Church to think out its faith. Truth never resided merely on the side of the winning party or the side of those condemned. Our appreciation of the councils ought not to imply full agreement with this party or that. Often the whole argument was staged within terms of reference which would inevitably be misleading. There is much to be learned from the great controversies if we can get beneath the terminology to see issues at stake.¹

Following a careful examination of the background of the Arian controversy, Baillie draws these conclusions about its significance. (1) The question was not simply over the divinity or humanity of Christ.

¹"The Development of Christology" (dossier), Lecture VI, pp. 1-8.

Arius' intention was, in part, to clarify the distinction between the Father and the Son, but in so doing he gave up the full humanity of Christ as well as his full divinity. The question did not involve the antithesis of the two. (2) The controversy was more concerned with the nature of God and the nature of the pre-existent Logos. To Arius God was thoroughly remote so the Logos must be quite separate from Him to be present in Christ. The main problem was that God, for Arius, was an abstraction, removed and never touching His creation. Baillie notes, "Arius never speaks of the love of God." (3) The Arian party could not bring themselves to say that even the Logos, or Son of God, "was made man". In a very true sense the Athanasian party was fighting for the humanity of Christ. (4) The Athanasians were also defending the Church against the poly-theistic idea of the Logos being separate from another, a totally inaccessible, God. They were defending Christian monotheism. Baillie sees modern day Arianism, not in those who are hastily condemned as modernists who deny the divinity of Christ, but in much of popular orthodoxy which views God and Christ as two separate people conversing together and taking council to-

gether for the salvation of the world much as the matter is pictured in the third book of Milton's Paradise Lost. The victory of the Athanasians at Nicea saved the Church from an over-simplification of the problem which was congenial to popular thought, viz. solve the mystery of the Incarnation by simply positing another god or demi-god. Against all this the First Council insisted that Jesus Christ was "very God".¹

Apollinarius attempted an explanation of the natures in Jesus by saying that while His body was human, the place of His mind had been taken by the divine Logos. This compromised the full humanity of Christ and was attacked by the Cappadocian Fathers on soteriological grounds. Baillie sums up their argument: "If it was not in a completely human life analogous to our own that the Word was made flesh, then God has not really come all the way for our salvation." Apollinarianism was attacked on ethical grounds by the Antiochene school, because if Jesus' mind was not human then He was raised above moral struggles and the true condition of humanity.

¹Ibid., pp. 30-39.

Against all this the Second Council insisted that Jesus Christ was "very man".¹

In introducing the problems which confronted the Third Council, Baillie mentions that Nestorius (who was condemned by the council) was a member of the Antiochene school where Theodore of Mopsuestia was a leading figure. Baillie appreciates the ethical interest of this school and sees close ties between its concerns and a contemporary understanding of the Incarnation. Theodore spoke of the two sides from which each good action can be viewed; one a manifestation of God's power, and the other an expression of man's will. When speaking of the Incarnation, Baillie writes that Theodore

emphasized the real human will of Christ, and thought of Him as the man in whom God supremely and uniquely dwelt, by a kind of moral union of wills. With the strong ethical interest of the Antiochene school Theodore conceived of the union of divine and human in Christ as rather an ethical than a metaphysical union. God dwelt in Jesus not substantially but by grace or favour.²

This statement is the closest we have come in the present survey of the Patristic contributions to the

¹"The Development of Christology," (dossier), Lecture VII, pp. 1-10.

²"The Development of Christology," (dossier), Lecture VIII, p. 1.

understanding advanced by Baillie in the sermons. Here the terminology breaks free from the concentration upon the substantive nature of God as it is related to Christ, and speaks more of the activity of God manifest in Christ, i.e. grace.

The Nestorianism which the Council condemned involved the division of Christ into two persons which was probably not a conclusion drawn by Nestorius himself. Cyril of Alexandria, who led the attack against Nestorianism, advanced the idea that Jesus' center of consciousness was divine and not human. Thus, even though the unity of the person of Christ was preserved, the victors at the Third Council tended toward a Docetism which compromised the full humanity of Christ.¹ It has been shown that Baillie rejects the idea that Jesus' center of consciousness was not fully human. The sermons stress that at the deepest point of his moral consciousness, Jesus was subject to the same battles and temptations as we are.²

¹ Ibid., pp. 1-9.

² Supra, p. 416.

The difficulty of preserving a real and personal humanity resulting from the decision of the Third Council led to the growth of the Monophysite doctrine. Eutyches, a student of Cyril of Alexandria was quite explicit in drawing the conclusion that in Christ there was but one nature which was divine. This view was condemned, and the one constructive outcome of the bitter controversy was a long doctrinal epistle written by Leo, Bishop of Rome, which formed the basis for the Chalcedonian definition.¹

The Chalcedonian definition did not solve all the problems of the doctrine of the Incarnation, but it did set the paradox of the Incarnation in bold relief (at least within the substantive terms of reference which dominated the scene at the time). In setting forth the two distinct natures which are united in one person, the definition is largely phrased in negatives. This is part of its genius. It does not explain a great deal, in fact it makes the paradox of the Incarnation seem all the more difficult to comprehend. But, Baillie goes on to say:

¹"The Development of Christology" (dossier), Lecture IX, pp. 1-2.

It carefully excludes all possible errors about the Person of Christ and thus in that indirect way it seems to preserve and to hand on all the rich reality of the facts. . . . It represents not so much a ready made theology as a practical document of guidance and safety [for] the Church.

Never-the-less, the definition does not answer questions about the meaning of the Incarnation in positive terms. Concerning the conciliar formulations Baillie writes:

The meaning of Jesus Christ is not adequately expressed in these formulas. We can see their historical necessity and value, we can accept them and treasure them as part of our heritage. We can perhaps see that they were the right answers in their day; that, as the questions were then formulated, the Church was wisely guided in answering them as they did. . . . But . . . we must ask the questions in different ways for ourselves and try to get some light as to the answers.²

The theological themes in Baillie's preaching have indeed been based on different questions. The question which introduced our examination of all the sermons had little to do with who or what God is, but rather with what He does. The question had less to do with how the God of Christian belief can be defined as to His nature, and more to do with His activity

¹Ibid., p. 12.

²Ibid., p. 14.

among men, i.e. "Does belief in God matter?".

In the sermons on the Incarnation, the questions addressed have to do with the meaning of the Incarnation as it applies to human experience. The themes we have traced in the post-Biblical development of the doctrine are largely absent from the sermons, except negatively where classic misunderstandings form a background for positive preaching. The reason for their absence may be seen in that the Christological controversies dealt with assertions about the substantive nature of God and the substantive nature of Christ's person. The major emphasis of the preaching is on the activity of God as it is manifest in Christ's person. The sermons preserve the intent of the conciliar definitions in that the paradox of the Incarnation is not obscured, but the terms of reference are quite different.

We shall return to this issue when dealing with criticisms of Baillie's Christology. But it will first be necessary to examine and compare his formal restatement of the doctrine with the themes which have been seen in his preaching.

Baillie begins his several parallel re-statements of the doctrine with an emphasis upon the

solidarity of Jesus' humanity with what we know to be our own humanity.¹ He writes that when we say that His human nature is homo-ousious with our own it means that it is "essentially the same as ours".² Baillie sets this forth quite explicitly. "Jesus' knowledge was essentially the limited knowledge of man." It is a mistake to view any of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' knowledge about things in a super-human way which would differentiate such knowledge from the knowledge of those with whom he lived.³ Jesus' miracles are treated under his humanity. They were the actions of God in response to human faith. It is a mistake to try and "prove" his unique divinity by citing the accounts of his miracles.⁴ Jesus' moral and religious life was human in the same way as is ours. His moral conflicts were genuine, his religious life was one of dependent faith upon the Father.⁵ These themes are all present in the sermons

¹God Was in Christ, Chapters I-IV; "The Development of Christology" Lectures X-XVIII (Book 2); "The Meaning of the Incarnation" (Book 52); "The Modern Approach to the Incarnation" (Envelope 73); and in summary form in a lecture entitled "Can Jesus Be Both God and Man?," Out of Nazareth, pp. 160-166.

²God Was in Christ, p. 10.

³Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁴Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁵Ibid., pp. 14-15.

with the exception of the specific mention of Jesus' finite knowledge. However, here there was never any implication that his knowledge was different from ours in a superhuman sense. Baillie notes that psychological studies of Jesus have been deplorably inadequate because, even though if we are to psychologize about Jesus it must be in terms of human psychology, yet these studies are so often blind to the

immense gulf between the quality of His spiritual life and that of our own at its highest and best--a gulf so great that in our attempts to understand Him we can only follow afar off with a sense of mystery. But the gulf is not a gulf between human minds and a mind that was not human, for He was made in all things like unto His bretheren, His psychical constitution was the same as ours.

When Baillie preaches and teaches about the humanity of Jesus, he clearly states that what it meant is that His humanity was the same as the limited finite humanity which is shared by all men.

It follows from the forthright treatment of Jesus' humanity that Baillie views Jesus' life as an historical event in the fullest sense of the word. The importance of history to theological method in

¹Ibid., p. 20.

general¹ and to the doctrine of the Incarnation in particular² has already been discussed. Baillie finds the uncompromising assertion of Jesus' humanity to be a fruit of the "historical Jesus" movement of the last century. The tendency of classical theology (inspite of the intentions of Chalcedon) has been in the direction of Docetism. But since the advent of historical criticism it has been possible to rise above this tendency. The "Jesus of history" reconstructions are criticised for their sentimentality and aura of human hero worship, Christism at the expense of Theism, but Baillie sees the movement as a whole offering a positive and permanent contribution to theology in so far as the historical Jew is to be taken with the utmost seriousness as the history of a fully human Jesus of Nazareth.³

For this reason, Baillie is duly critical of the twentieth century's radical reaction against the historical Jesus movement, particularly among Continental theologians. He finds that Brunner, Barth

¹Supra, pp. 20-25.

²supra, p.

³God Was In Christ, pp. 30-58.

and Bultmann have shown a helpful corrective in that the reconstruction of an historical Jesus, in and of itself, is not enough for faith, but the line of thought represented by these thinkers is taken to task for having abandoned the serious contribution of the nineteenth century, viz. that Jesus can be known as a fully human historical man. This is essential for Christology because without it there can be no true Incarnation. "If revelation is by Word alone," Baillie writes. "then Christ lived for nothing, and the Word was made flesh in vain."¹

The serious appreciation of Jesus' historical humanity leads directly to the serious appreciation of what he did and what he taught. Although critical studies have considerably illuminated the manner in which the texts are to be used, it is clear that a dominant theme of the Biblical witness to Jesus' life and teachings is that he taught about and gave credit to "a God who takes the initiative, a God who is always beforehand with men, a 'prevenient' God who seeks His creatures before they seek Him."²

¹ Ibid., p. 54.

² Ibid., p. 63.

Baillie's emphasis here is the same as that in the sermons, and it paves the way to an understanding of the necessity for not merely the historical Jesus, but also a Christology. When Jesus' teachings about God are taken seriously, we are compelled to say something more about Jesus than that he was simply a great human teacher; we are compelled to see that his historical human life and activity, was, in a deeper and prior sense, the life and activity of God. Baillie's approach to the problem can be seen in bold relief against the background of recent debate when he writes: "We must pass beyond words like 'discovery' and even 'revelation' to words like 'incarnation'."¹ This means that the task of setting forth the doctrine must involve the uncompromising grasp of both sides of the paradox of the Incarnation, true God and true man.

Baillie's presentation of the doctrine in the sermons must also be seen against the background of several modern schools of thought which he believes compromise or obscure the one side or the other. One

¹Ibid., p. 64.

such attempt to resolve the paradox has been based on the traditional idea of anhypostasia, with which Cyril of Alexandria led his party to victory at the Third Council by advancing the concept that Jesus' center of consciousness, that which determined his persona or hypostasis, was divine and not human. The Divine Logos simply assumed a human nature which had the human experiences of Jesus. This idea led men to speak of the "impersonal humanity of Christ". Baillie believes that this method of accounting for the simultaneous presence of true God and true man in the Incarnation compromises the humanity of Jesus in much the same way as did the teachings of Apollinarius. But Jesus without a human mind or center of consciousness cannot be understood as a fully human person. Baillie documents a tendency in this direction in the writings of R. C. Moberly, Leonard Hodgson and Emil Brunner.¹ The overlying difficulty of this method of explaining the Incarnation is that it is limited by traditional substantive terms of reference. The presence of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ are spoken of as if they were substantive

¹Ibid., pp. 85-93.

quantities which occupied defined areas of Christ's person.

Some distinctively modern attempts to explain the Incarnation are to be found among the Kenotic theories. The central idea common to these theories is one in part derived from Philippians 2:7, where Paul says that Christ "emptied Himself". Accordingly the Incarnation is explained as the event in which the Son of God, or Divine Logos set aside His divine attributes for a period of time and lived within the limitations of humanity. This idea is quite congenial to modern thought in which the humanity of Jesus has been so rigorously brought to the fore by the historical Jesus movement. Baillie writes: "Without the influence of this movement the modern Kenotic theories of the Person of Christ could never have come into existence."¹ But even though the humanity of Jesus seems to be preserved by this theory, Baillie argues that it will not bear thinking out on three grounds. (1) The crude distinction between the First and Second Persons of the Trinity presupposed

¹ Ibid., p. 32.

by the theory, renders unanswerable William Temple's question as to what was happening to the rest of the universe while the self-emptied Deity lived his earthly life. (2) The implications of the theory necessitate a view in which the Incarnation is not truly man and God, but a temporary theophany in which God, by a process of metamorphosis, changed into man. (3) The difficulties are further aggravated when the permanent union and relationship of God and man is considered. Did this cease when Christ left this world? Christianity has usually replied: "No".¹ The basic difficulty of the theory is that divine attributes and human finitude cannot be united simultaneously in one life. This difficulty is, at its root, due to the conception of divinity and humanity in substantive terms, i.e. they are thought of as substances which cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

In the light of the foregoing background against which Baillie's presentation is set, it is clearly seen that his presentation is not put forward

¹Ibid., pp. 94-98.

in a theological vacuum. His formal restatement of the doctrine¹ in his writings follows the same pattern as we have examined in the sermon "The Divinity of Christ". It has been shown that the presentation succeeds in (1) preserving the fullness of both sides of the paradox of the Incarnation, i.e. in the person of Jesus Christ there is a union of true God and true man, and (2) it passes beyond mere paradoxical formulation by presenting the meaning of the Incarnation in terms which are understandable within the context of human experience, i.e. the experience of the paradox of grace.

Baillie's treatment of the doctrine in the lectures and in the formal writings involves, to a considerable degree, a running dialogue with other theologians and a fair amount of guarded polemic. By way of contrast, this does not appear in the sermons. Baillie does not use the pulpit as a forum for theological debate or a platform for theological polemic.

But the most striking difference between the sermons and the controversies and schools of thought

¹Ibid., pp. 118-132.

against which Baillie's re-statement is offered is the notable absence of traditional substantive terminology in his preaching. Familiar terminology such as "Word of God" and "Son of God" does appear,¹ but when they are explained within the context of the doctrine of the Incarnation they are not defined as substantive deity but as the divine activity of grace in union with, and not delimited from, the humanity of Jesus. The divinity of Christ is not defined as a static fixed quantity which it is possible to differentiate from another such quantity called "humanity". In this connection it will be necessary to examine the criticism leveled at Baillie's Christology by the Rev. Professor J. H. Hick.

Professor Hick draws the distinction between two ways of speaking of the "true God" side of the paradox of the Incarnation. There is the adjectival way of describing Christ as divine; and there is the substantive way of saying he is deity. Hick contends

¹Supra, p. 412.

that Baillie adequately deals with the idea that Christ was divine; but that he fails in stating his deity. He writes:

The task of any Christology which intends to serve the historic faith of the ecumenical creeds is to illumine for modern man the conception of the deity of Christ--or more cumbrously, of the substantival as distinguished from the adjectival divinity of Christ.

Hick's criticism is correct in the sense that Baillie does not speak of Christ as deity in terms of substantive identity. In this respect Baillie is careful not to confuse the first and second Person of the Trinity. Baillie is careful not to say, as it were, "Jesus is God"; but rather that God was in Christ, and furthermore, God was in Christ in that he was active and doing something, e.g. reconciling the world to Himself. Hick views this as a departure from the historic faith of the Church. He interprets dogmatic orthodoxy as that which definitively separates Jesus Christ, by virtue of his deity, from all other men as a substantively different being. He writes:

The Nicene and Chalcedonian position is that God was in Christ in a unique sense which is not approximated or paralleled in the case of any other human life.²

¹J.H. Hick, "The Christology of D.M. Baillie," The Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 11, No.1 (1958), p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 6.

But, we must ask, is it not true that neither council addressed itself to the approximation of the divine presence or activity in other men, but only in Jesus of Nazareth? Both councils were adamant in defending the Church against facile oversimplification of the paradox of the Incarnation; at Nicea the council rejected Arius' idea of a demi-God; at Chalcedon the council renounced the Monophysitic obscuring of the two natures into one. At no point do the definitions comment on the relative absence of God's presence in other men vis-à-vis Christ. (Although the councils did not say anything about this, it is true that this has been one of the subsequent interpretations. But does this interpretation do justice to the intent of the definitions?)

Hick does not accept the idea that the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ is the same grace which enables men to be what God intends them to be. For Hick, grace in the Incarnation must be "causally" related to grace in other man,¹ instead of being a full revelation of that which is (to a fragmentary extent) in all men as God's continual offer of help.

¹Ibid., p. 7.

He writes that Baillie does not succeed in preserving "a unique position for Christ as the source of the paradox of grace in others."¹ This is, in a sense, correct, for Baillie emphasises throughout that God is the source of grace, or better, grace is the activity of God, not an impersonal quantity or commodity, but an active personal relationship. The activity of grace in Christ, or the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ", is that to which Christians look in dependent faith. The Incarnation is the criterion by which all theology and faith-experience is measured, yet the grace which constitutes the Incarnation is the grace of God.

Baillie is further criticized for occupying "the unsatisfactory position that Christ's uniqueness is one of degree--degree of divinely enabled moral achievement."² In a sense, this too is true of Baillie's position. In the sermons, it has been shown that Baillie says that the paradox of grace in Christian experience "finds its supreme expression raised to its highest degree in the life of Jesus Christ,

¹ Ibid., p. 8.

² Ibid.

God and man, first God then man."¹ However, Hick's reason for viewing this as an inadequacy is highly questionable. He calls it an "adoptionist [sic] Christology".² He rightly states that Baillie believes that in Christ we find

a perfect response to God, a complete obedience to His will, so that every act of Christ combined both the divine prevenient grace and a free human moral choice. This union of divine and human activities constitutes the Incarnation.

Hick takes this to mean, "that the first man to be wholly transparent to the divine grace was ipso facto the Son of God."⁴ He admits that this is not what has traditionally been called adoptianism, and coins the technically contradictory phrase "continuous adoptianism" to describe Baillie's position. Adoptianism which cannot speak of a date or time of adoption is not adoptianism in any sense which has been traditionally assigned to the term. To sum up the argument: Hick's criticism is that Baillie views the Incarnation as that which is related to the experience of

¹Supra, p. 427.

²Hick, Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 11, No. 1, p.8.

³Ibid., p. 10.

⁴Ibid.

grace at work within a human context, as the perfect is related to the fragmentary. The criticism fairly represents Baillie's thought. But, the reasons Hick offers in attempting to prove that this view is inadequate and untrue to the conciliar definitions mentioned cannot be accepted.

John Baillie, in a reply to Hick's article, defended his brother's view that the divine grace of God in Christ is different in degree from the experience of grace in other men on the grounds that "when a difference of degree is 'taken at the absolute pitch' it is already a difference of kind."¹ This is one way to defend the position, but it is necessary to see Baillie's emphasis in the light of Hick's terms of reference quite precisely. Baillie does view the Incarnation as different in kind from the experience of grace if this is understood as a difference in degree raised to its highest pitch. But, if difference in kind is taken to mean a substantive difference which precludes a connection or relationship between Incarnation and humanity, then D.M. Baillie

¹ John Baillie, "Some Comments on Professor Hick's Article on 'The Christology of D.M. Baillie'," The Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1958), p. 265.

disagrees.

Professor Hick has raised an important question for preaching. Can a Christology which views the Incarnation as being substantively unrelated to the rest of humanity meet the criterion of theology which is to be preached, i.e. doctrine which is presented as the truth of God which reflects, describes, addresses and is directly related to human experience? If there is no connecting relationship between the Incarnation and humanity, if the grace of God in Christ is wholly other than that in man, if there is conceived an absolute gulf between what God did in Christ and what he can do in all men, preaching on the doctrine of the Incarnation cannot be expressed as that which is intimately related and relevant to human life and experience. The conception of the Incarnation as being substantively discontinuous and absolutely separated from humanity cannot meet the requirement of a theology for preaching.

Baillie offers a presentation of the doctrine which does fulfil the requirements for a theology for preaching, and in doing so he has also remained true to the intent of the Chalcedonian definition. The definition places the doctrine in sharp bi-focal per-

spective, stressing the polarity of the paradox of the Incarnation against attempts to over-simplify it or to obscure either side. The terminology of the definition has led to the subsequent view of the "very Godness" of Christ in static, impersonal, substantival terms which separates the nature of Christ (in his Godness) from anything related to the man God reconciles to Himself in Jesus Christ. However, Baillie remains true to the intent of the definition in preserving the sharp polarity of the paradox while at the same time he refuses to be limited by the substantival connotations which can be seen in the definitions. He presents the uncompromised Godness of the paradox in terms of activity; "very God" is one with "very man" in that He is perfectly active in and through him. Professor John McIntyre writes that in Baillie's presentation, "The Chalcedonian problem has been bypassed but it has not been solved."¹ It is true that many of the problems which have bubbled up in the wake of Chalcedon are not solved. The problems which involve substantive definitions of the natures in the person of Christ have been by-

¹John McIntyre, Review of God Was in Christ, by D. M. Baillie, The Reformed Theological Review, Vol. 7, No. 2 (November, 1948), p. 18.

passed. But the definition itself has not been bypassed nor cast aside. Professor W. Norman Pittenger evaluates Baillie's presentation more accurately when he writes: "It is exactly this line of approach which the Chalcedonian definition implies."¹ And Henry P. Van Dusen can write of the relation of Baillie's presentation to traditional Christology that while it "breaks genuinely new ground" it is "essential orthodoxy".²

With the meaning of the Incarnation presented in terms of the activity of God's grace in human life, it can be seen that this activity, this creative Word or Logos, was active before it was fully revealed in Jesus Christ.³ The meaning of this "pre-existent" relationship between God and man, as it can be preached, has been treated in the previous chapters, e.g. those dealing with the doctrines of Creation, Providence and Grace. So too, the activity of God in Christ did not cease with the end of Jesus'

¹W. Norman Pittenger, Review of God Was In Christ, by D. M. Baillie, Review of Religion (January, 1950), p. 172.

²Henry P. Van Dusen, Review of God Was in Christ, by D. M. Baillie, Christianity and Crisis (December 25, 1950), pp. 172-173.

³God Was in Christ, pp. 147-151.

earthly life.¹ The meaning of this side of the story, as it can be preached, must await further discussion in the chapters to come, e.g. those dealing with the Holy Spirit, the Church and the Sacraments. The definitive character of the activity of God in Jesus Christ is the subject of the chapter to which we now turn. How does Baillie present the meaning of the Atonement in his preaching and teaching?

¹Ibid., pp. 151-156.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

The doctrine of the Atonement confronts the preacher with the problem of presenting the profound seriousness of sin and the costliness of genuine forgiveness on the one hand, and the prevenience and victory of the gracious love of God on the other. This must be done without obscuring or compromising either side, i.e. the love of God cannot be presented in a way that obscures the gravity of sin and makes forgiveness seem cheap, nor can the seriousness of sin and the costliness of forgiveness dim the vision and possibility of genuine reconciliation. The problem is to bring these two poles together as an experiential reality which is addressed by an historical event (the Cross), and an experiential reality in which man is genuinely aware of God's saving work in his own life, i.e. atonement as it is lived and actualized in faith-experience.

This chapter illustrates the fact that a theology for preaching cannot turn to mere experience in general as the basis for what it says about Christian doctrine. The uncritical use of experiential analogies has been particularly misleading in some traditional expressions of the doctrine of the Atonement. This chapter will demonstrate the importance of correlating faith-experience with the sources of the doctrine, especially the Biblical witness to the interpretation given to the death of Christ by the early Christians.

The Doctrine Preached

Baillie introduces a sermon on the doctrine by clearing away some misconceptions which he believes cloud the understanding of many people in the Church today. The misconceptions involve, to a large extent, the idea that "God is angry with sinners and determined [to] punish [them]. But Christ is pitiful and took [the] punishment. This changed [the] attitude of God [and] let sinners off." This idea is a travesty of the New Testament basis for the doctrine. Baillie goes on to say that it makes the con-

text of atonement look like a law court (an unjust law court at that) instead of the Father's house. It interprets atonement along the lines of what man can do to appease an angry God, instead of the New Testament teaching that a loving God reconciles man to Himself; it sees atonement as that which is oriented from man to God, rather than from God to man.¹

What then is meant by atonement? In another sermon Baillie begins with a positive statement of the doctrine; his first sentence reflects an emphasis we have seen throughout his preaching.

One of the great discoveries of the New Testament was this: that God loves us before we have begun to be worthy of His love. He loves not only good people, but bad people. He loves us while we are yet sinners.

The New Testament witness is, of course, based on the story of Jesus, of how He behaved toward sinners, befriended sinners; and of how He explained and defended it by teaching that God Himself was like that--as in the parable of the Prodigal Son, whose Father ran out to welcome him, and the parable of the Shepherd who went out into the wilderness to find the one lost sheep.²

Thus Baillie sets forth the one pole of the doctrine, the pole which stresses the prevenience and victory

¹"What do we believe about the Atonement," Romans 5:11 (475), 1928, 1933, (a sermon outline), p. 1.

²"The Atoning Sacrifice," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 130.

of God's love. It is set forth in terms of the concrete historical events of Jesus' deeds and teachings.

If God's love is like that, why speak of atonement? Baillie goes on to present the other side of the problem.

But now, if all that is true--if God is as willing to forgive sinners freely as the father in the parable was to forgive and welcome his prodigal son--then where is the need for anything like an atoning sacrifice? . . . I must begin my answer by asking you another question in return: Do you think all this costs God nothing? Is it a kind of good natured amnesty on God's part? Does he pass lightly over our sins, as if they did not matter much to Him? Is it all as easy as that? And if we thought of the divine forgiveness in that easy way, would it really have a liberating effect and send us forth to better things? Surely not. Surely that makes it all too cheap. The classical example of that may be found in what the German poet Heine said on his death bed: 'God will forgive me: that is His business.' We can all see that that is a complete misunderstanding of what God's mercy means. That is what the heroic Dietrich Bonhoeffer called 'cheap grace'.¹

Forgiveness, in order to mean anything, is a costly process. The second pole of the problem has been set forth in the sermon.

Baillie then brings the two together in terms

¹Ibid., pp. 130-31.

of a human experience which is readily understood.

Suppose I have a friend who is a pure and noble soul and who loves me deeply. And suppose that I sin against his friendship behind his back, betraying him in some unworthy way, and he discovers it. What will he feel and say and do? If he were a shallow soul and our friendship were on a shallow level, he would perhaps drop me quietly altogether and ignore me ever after. Or perhaps he would gloss the matter smoothly over, and pretend that nothing had happened, so as to avoid an uncomfortable scene. But if he is indeed an honest and noble soul, and loves me deeply, he cannot take these easy ways. He will be honest and straight and agonizingly relentless--not because he does not love me, but because he does. The reconciliation will not be easy and painless; it will be costly and painful. And it is my friend, far more than I, that will pay the price and suffer the pain, because he is a better man than I, and he loves me. He will suffer grief and shame, not because of the injury done to him, but because of me. He will bear the agony of the shame of what I have done. And it is out of that whole costly experience of suffering in his heart that there will come the forgiveness, the reconciliation.

Can that be a faint analogue of the love of God which bears the sin of the world? Just because he loves us with an infinite and everlasting love, His grace cannot be 'cheap grace', His forgiveness cannot be easy and good natured amnesty. Just because he loves us infinitely, He suffers infinitely for our sins. And out of that suffering comes the divine atonement, the divine reconciliation. Atonement means 'at-one-ment' or reconciliation.

Baillie has presented the two sides of the problem and brought them together by way of an experiential analogy. The first question, "What is meant

¹Ibid., pp. 131-32.

by 'atonement'?", has been answered. He has used reconciliation as a synonym for atonement, and we may fairly ask why, in the light of the confusion which surrounds the word "atonement", it is not replaced altogether by the word "reconciliation"?

Baillie goes on to ask: "What connection has that with the Cross of Christ? And why call His death an atoning sacrifice?" He explains that Jesus death cannot be viewed as a sacrifice in a literal sense. The language of the Epistle to the Hebrews is metaphorical; Jesus was strictly speaking not a priest but a layman and "the cross on which He died was not an altar, but a gallows. His death was not a ritual sacrifice, but a judicial execution." The use of the words "atoning sacrifice" take us back beyond the event itself to the Old Testament which provides part of the frame of reference within which the event was first interpreted. Baillie explains the background for the interpretation as two seemingly contradictory strains in the Old Testament.

On the one hand, you have the system of sacrifices as a divinely appointed means of having one's sins expiated and forgiven. It was not so much the flagrant transgressions of the moral law that were dealt with in that way, but rather the ceremonial offences which men might commit without any evil

intent: these could be wiped out by certain sacrifices which God in his mercy had appointed. The flagrant and deliberate transgressions of the moral law were different. For these great sins men could not count on God's mercy. These things could not be expiated by the ritual sacrifices which wiped out the smaller offences.

On the other hand, the teaching of the prophets was that the

transgressions of the moral law were what God really cared about--injustice, cruelty, deceit, dishonesty in common life--and so long as men practised these things God took no pleasure at all in their sacrifices, and would not accept them. But also this: that if only men would repent of their evil ways and return to God, then he would freely forgive all their sins, even their most flagrant transgressions, without any distinction. Nothing was needed but genuine repentance--no sacrifices, no offerings on the altar.

Following a documentation of this theme in the prophetic literature, Baillie states that these two strains persisted side by side right into the time of Christ and the New Testament.¹

The sermon now takes up the New Testament frame of reference within which Christ's death was interpreted.

Which of these two contradictory strains did the New Testament take up and carry to its climax and fulfillment: the strain which spoke of the need of atoning sacrifices, or that which spoke of God's absolutely free forgiveness? The breath-taking

¹ Ibid., pp. 132-33.

answer is: both together, and both equally, only now they have come together without any contradiction, they have become one--because it is God Himself who both makes the sacrifice and forgives the sin. The doctrine that God freely forgives the sinner is carried further than ever in the teaching of Jesus, as in the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Lost Sheep. At the same time the long tradition of atoning sacrifice reaches its climax, but in a way that is completely transformed, because now it is God Himself who provides the victim, and as it were out of His own bosom, for the victim is His own Son. . . . Here are all the old terms of the Old Testament sacrificial system--offering, sacrifice, atonement, reconciliation, expiation. But now they receive a radically new interpretation--not only because they applied to the death of Christ, which was not in a literal sense a sacrifice at all, but also because it is God Himself who is regarded as making the sacrifice, providing the victim, bearing the cost.¹

Bearing in mind Baillie's understanding of Jesus Christ as being true God and true man by virtue of the fulfilled activity of grace in Him, it becomes evident that "true God" participated fully in the suffering of the Cross. In stating that it was God who bore the cost, Baillie makes it clear that God Himself suffers. It will be recalled that he rejects the idea of divine impassibility.² It can be seen that it is systematically necessary to reject this idea if one's understanding of God is to be consistent with one's understanding of the costly reconciliation realized in the Atonement.

¹ Ibid., p. 134.

² Supra, p. 227.

Having first presented the two poles of the problem and brought them together in a way that could be understood in terms of contemporary experience, Baillie has proceeded to present the two poles and brought them together within the Biblical frame of reference from which our understanding of the event is derived. In fact, atonement has meaning within the realm of concrete human experience because it is something that happened in history, interpreted by faith as the activity of God. Baillie sums up the meaning of the doctrine and its connection with the Cross:

So the Atonement is not a sacrifice offered to God to appease His anger and to reconcile Him to us. No, it is the love of God bearing the brunt of the sin of the world that He may reconcile us to Him. That is something eternal, because God is love. It had its outcropping into the plane of history in the Passion and Cross of Christ, and it goes on for evermore. That is the Atoning Sacrifice.¹

Baillie has retained the use of the word "atonement" (rather than merely using "reconciliation") in order to make clear the costly character of reconciliation. However, with the difficulty which stems from the literal transference of the Old Testament concept of

¹To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 135.

sacrificial atonement to Christ's death, perhaps the simple use of the phrase "costly reconciliation" might well embrace the two facets of the doctrine in a less confusing manner. Never-the-less, the sermon has clarified the meaning of a traditional term which is easily misinterpreted.

It is important to note that the historical event of the Cross is spoken of as an "outcropping in history" of something that takes place all the time. Our understanding of God's activity is wholly dependent upon this historical event, but God's atoning activity is not limited in time by this event. God's costly reconciliation of men to Himself is not spoken of as being causally related to the death of Christ. The death of Christ is the revelation of God's activity, not the cause of it.

The final question Baillie asks in the sermon is a question characteristic of the focus of all his preachings: "What difference does it make?" He answers:

What keeps the whole idea of the forgiveness of sins sound and wholesome is the Christian Gospel of the divine atoning sacrifice. If we hold that Cross of Christ before our eyes, then we shall never make the divine forgiveness either too cheap on the one hand or too impossible on

the other. Some people make the one mistake, and some the other. Some make it too cheap and easy, as if our sins did not matter much; and that is not the way to better things. Others make it too difficult, and can't forgive themselves at all, and that is also not the way to better things. But we can't make the first mistake if we remember what our sins have done to the Son of God. And we can't make the second mistake if we remember what the Son of God has done with our sins. And these two things come together in the Cross of Christ.¹

For an elaboration of what did happen at the Cross we shall turn to another sermon which seeks to answer its title question, "Why did Jesus Die?" It is here that Baillie makes clear the dependence of Christian faith upon, not reconciling experiences in general, but a particular event and the experience of men in the face of that event.

Baillie begins the sermon by asking why Jesus was put to death. He answers that the

thing that turned the religious leaders against Jesus and shocked them more than anything else was this: His attitude towards sinners, His way of mixing with sinners. I mean the people of openly sinful and godless life, disreputable people, outsiders, all those men and women who in the Gospels are lumped together in that familiar phrase, 'publicans and sinners'. These people were beyond the pale of religion, and no self respecting rabbi would be seen talking to

¹Ibid., p. 135.

them. But Jesus seemed to be more interested in these people than He was in anybody else: and He practically said that God was too. . . . The Scribes and Pharisees used to say to each other, with a good deal of self-righteous head-shaking 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.' And Jesus said to those Pharisees: 'The publicans and the prostitutes go into God's Kingdom before you.' He meant, of course, that they were all sinners together, there were no righteous people, they all needed God's forgiveness. Only, He was more hopeful about the outsiders, because they were more ready to admit it.

It was Jesus' uncompromising acceptance of the unacceptable that prompted men in positions of authority to turn themselves and their people against Him. Jesus was put to death, quite explicitly, because he loved sinners.

The next question raised in the sermon is, "Why did Jesus Himself choose to die?" Baillie is consistent with the themes in sermons which deal with the humanity of Jesus, his finite knowledge and spiritual life of dependent faith, when he points out that it is false to think that Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen to him from the start. That idea, Baillie preaches, "is too simple", and it "does not do justice to what Jesus did and suffered." Jesus was

¹"Why Did Jesus Die?," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 125.

not merely playing a part in a pre-arranged drama. No, "He had to go forward in the dark, walking by faith, and not by sight." When it became clear to him that the crucifixion did lie ahead, he shrank from the prospect and prayed that it might not come. But the final outcome was not a matter of mere fate, it was a matter of painful personal decision on Jesus' part, and as has been shown in the doctrine of the Incarnation, this means for Baillie that Jesus' decision was a manifestation of the activity of God's grace in his life.¹

However, Baillie stresses that it was also a human decision involving genuine choice. "Did He choose the path of the Cross?", Baillie asks. The answer is unequivocal.

Yes, indeed He did. He was not a helpless victim. There was a choice before Him, and He went on with His eyes open. He could have saved Himself. How? By changing His course, by going in for a different kind of ministry, a more conventional kind, less embarrassing to the authorities.

And yet in retrospect, as we look squarely at the life and teachings of Jesus, we are compelled to say something else.

¹Ibid., p. 126.

He could have done it. And yet, of course, He couldn't do it, . . . Why not? Because it would have meant . . . giving up the sinners, giving up His shocking habit of being 'a friend of publicans and sinners'. He could not give that up. And it cost Him His life. It brought Him to the crucifixion. . . . It is manifestly true in the plain historical and local sense that He died for sinners, the sinners of His own immediate environment, the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel' in His own time.

Jesus choose to accept death on the Cross, quite explicitly because he persisted in his love for sinners in an historically concrete and personal sense.¹

What bearing does all this have upon atonement today? It is clear that Jesus' reconciliation of sinners to himself was costly; it cost him his life. Baillie asks the third question of the sermon: "What was the meaning of the death of Jesus in the eternal purpose of God?" The answer to this question reflects the specific faith-experience of those who were confronted by the event of his death. It is from this concrete experience that our awareness of God's saving activity is derived.

When Jesus' own followers looked back and pondered on that dreadful event, what did they make of it? In the whole history of human thought there is nothing more extraordinary than this: that the

¹Ibid., p. 127.

crucifixion of Jesus made people think of the love of God. Not simply of the love of Jesus, but of the love of God. . . .

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When they thought of Jesus going to the Cross in His love for sinners, they said, 'God must be like that'. Nay, but they said even more than that, something still more wonderful. Not simply 'God must be like Jesus', but, 'God was in Jesus' when He suffered and died for sinners. As St. Paul put it, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.'

And when we come to know what happened in the experience of those who first responded to Jesus' death in the light of his life, the event of the Cross becomes as it were, the gracious personal influence of God calling us back to him. The sermon concludes:

In the presence of that Cross and Passion we are all sinners. There are no righteous people. And now, . . . from that Cross of Christ God Himself is stretching out His hands to us, appealing to us to repent and return to Him and be forgiven and make a new beginning. St. Paul expressed that appeal when he said, . . . 'God commends His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' [Romans 5:8] And three centuries later another great saint expressed it in words of magnificent symbolism, when he said: 'It is only on a² cross that a man dies with outstretched hands.'

It is clear that the doctrine which has emerged from the sermons involves a view of the atonement which sees its contemporary meaning, not in terms of a

¹Ibid., p. 128.

²Ibid., p. 129.

sacrificial appeasement of God's anger which changed His attitude toward men, but as a display of His love in history for all men to see, that they might change their attitude toward Him. The costly reconciling act of God in Christ is the climax of the activity of grace in the Incarnation. As such it persists in the experience of men as a gracious personal influence calling men to repentance and the victory of a life of new beginnings.

It is important to note that Baillie preaches about the victorious experience of those who responded to the Cross in the faith that God was active in and through Jesus' death in similar terms as those with which he describes what happened at the resurrection. It has been shown that he told his congregation that it was not a "story of a dead body being re-animated and coming back to life, to walk among men as before, as if it had never died." What Baillie does say about the resurrection is "I can only describe it as the victory of God in Jesus Christ." We may conclude that Baillie, in his preaching, views the life and death of Christ as concrete historical events upon which the faith-experience of Christians is totally dependent, and the resurrection as the symbolic description of the supra-historical "story of something that

happened, . . . the story of something that always happens, of something that God does, of the victory that God always gives to those who trust Him."¹ It is fair to say that Baillie understands the resurrection to be a symbolic expression of a supra-historical reality, parallel to his understanding of the creation and the fall. But the conscious realization of the life of new beginnings is dependent upon a knowledge of the concrete event of Jesus' death and the subsequent experience of those who responded to this event interpreting it as atonement.

The death of Christ has been presented in the sermons as an "outcropping into the plane of history" of the activity of God whereby men are reconciled to Him at great cost. Therefore human sin is taken with utmost seriousness and forgiveness is not understood as merely a matter of "good natured amnesty". The paradoxical truth has also been preserved that God's love is prevenient and victorious. The paradox was not left as the mere juxtaposition of contradictory assertions, but a glimpse of the connection between the two poles was afforded by way of an experiential

¹"Easter Day Sermon", Romans 10:9 (716), 1944, pp. 8-9, Also supra, pp. 419-420.

analogy of genuine and satisfactory forgiveness. The paradox was further expressed in terms of the Biblical backgrounds which interpreted the meeting of the two poles in a particular event. This event, the death of Christ, has contemporary relevance as the gracious personal influence of God, calling men to repentance and a life of new beginnings.

The death of Christ has emerged as an "historical outcropping" of an activity of God which cannot be limited to any point in time. Our understanding of the Atonement is dependent on historical event, but the activity of God in the Atonement is an eternal activity.

From this it can be seen that the sermons have presented a doctrine of the atonement which is both objective and subjective, objective in that it is a specific historical event that makes effectual the realization of the life of new beginnings or salvation. This life, the life of faith in God's totally adequate and costly forgiveness of the repentant sinner, is brought into being as a genuine conscious experience by knowing what happened in the life and death of Jesus Christ. But atonement is also subjective because the life of new beginnings

involves a human response to the gracious personal influence of God made known by the death of Christ, a response of repentance.

These are the themes which have emerged from the doctrine as Baillie preached it; how do they compare with the themes which he presented in his teaching and formal writing?

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

The comparison of Baillie's preaching with his formal presentation of the doctrine can best be examined by taking the questions asked in the sermons and finding the answers given in the lectures and essays. The questions are (1) "What is atonement? What does the word mean? And why is it necessary in addition to the themes presented under the doctrine of forgiveness?", (2) "What is the connection between atonement and the Cross?", and (3) "What difference does it make?".

What does the word "atonement" mean? Unlike the sermons, the lectures offer an extensive discussion of the definitions of words associated with the doctrine, words like atonement, reconciliation,

expiation and propitiation. Following a treatment of the Hebrew words which have a bearing on the New Testament understanding of atonement, as well as a study of the Greek words pertinent to the matter, Baillie offers the conclusion that in the New Testament we find

the idea of reconciliation of sinners to God as something wrought by God Himself through Christ as a result of His love for sinners; along with the idea that this involves a work of something like expiation, and that this also is provided by God Himself in Christ.

The concepts which are thus summarized are those which were present in the sermons. i.e. that atonement involves both the prevenient and forgiving love of God and the idea of a costly forgiveness and reconciliation of man to God.

Baillie's use of the word "atonement" instead of "reconciliation" in the sermons has been questioned above.² The question was raised in the interests of clarity because of the many misleading connotations implied by "atonement". In this connection it is important to see Baillie himself write:

An examination of the New Testament conception of salvation through Christ leads one to re-interpret many of the words: "atonement",

¹"The Doctrine of the Atonement" (dossier), pp. 11-12.

²Supra, pp.475-76, 479-80.

"propitiation", "ransom", "imputed righteousness of Christ", "expiation", and leads to [the] conclusion that the central idea is reconciliation, (the true meaning of "atonement").

In the course of the classroom presentation Baillie takes time to point out why the word "propitiation" is not an accurate word to use in speaking of the atonement. It is a word that did not appear in the sermons; here are the reasons for its omission. The Greek hilasterion (translated by the Authorized Version and the Revised Version as "propitiation") comes from the verb hilaskomai which means primarily "to appease" or "to make merciful" with God or gods as its object. It can also mean "to expiate" with sin as its object, thus "to forgive". The former meaning is more common in pagan writings and inscriptions, but it is not the Biblical idea where God is the object. Quoting C. H. Dodd, Baillie points out:

In accordance with biblical usage . . . the substantive (hilasterion) would mean, not propitiation, but "a means by which guilt is annulled". . . . The rendering propitiation is therefore misleading, for it suggests the placating of an angry God, and although it would be in accord with pagan usage, it is foreign to biblical usage.²

¹"The Work of Christ" (mss. held by Professor W. R. Forrester), p. 17.

²G. H. Dodd, The Epistle to the Romans (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1959) pp. 78-79, quote by Baillie, Ibid., p. 10.

The word "propitiation" was not used in the sermons in order to avoid any possible connotations of Christ and his death as being an appeasement offered to a hostile God.

The word "ransom" is also associated with the doctrine. It too appears in the Bible, but it does not occur in the sermons. Baillie points out to his students that this word, and related phrases such as "bought with a price" (I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23), are to be taken metaphorically not literally. The idea of a ransom is a "figure of speech, used to indicate the cost of our salvation".¹ In the light of the presence of this idea in the Bible, the forthright statement of its metaphorical character in a sermon on the atonement might well have cleared up some confusion concerning the doctrine.

Baillie goes on to present various theories of the atonement which have appeared in the history in Christian thought. The first of these is the Ransom Theory which was dominant in various forms down to the twelfth century and Anselm of Canterbury's

¹"The Doctrine of The Atonement," p. 13.

criticism of it. The difficulty, at its simplest, was that the Fathers took the idea of ransom literally and then developed the doctrine that "the death of Christ was a ransom price paid to the devil, who had captured and enslaved mankind and who had to have a price paid if mankind was to be set free and restored to God."¹ The following sentences from the lectures could well have been included in a sermon to clarify the intended metaphorical use of "ransom" in the New Testament.

We sometimes speak of lives laid down in the two wars at the price paid for our safety and freedom. But we never dream of asking 'To whom was the price paid?' because we realize that we are speaking metaphorically.²

The Ransom Theory is never presented in the sermons. However, Baillie's presentation comes perilously close to it when he preaches that Christ's crucifixion "was the price He paid", and

we believe with St. Paul that somehow this was the manifestation of the sacrificial love of God--somehow it is God Himself that has paid the ultimate price³ for the blessing of our life and our salvation.

¹Ibid., p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 20.

³"Bought With a Price," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 50.

The statement appears with no clarifying comment on the metaphorical sense which is intended by the use of this idea. It is quite possible that someone might well ask "To whom was the price paid?" It would have been better if Baillie had been explicit about his meaning in this sermon which had for its text I Corinthians 6:19-20, "Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: . . ."

It is well to note that the Ransom Theory is a method of presenting the doctrine which, although it draws its terms of reference from a human experience and extends it into a metaphysical transaction between God and the Devil, is not a method which will stand up against an examination of the Biblical sources dealing with the particular historical life and death of Jesus Christ. Preaching requires that doctrine be made meaningful in terms of human experiences, but these experiences must be those which are valid analogies of the Biblical witness.

Many theories of the Atonement fall into the category of what may be called the Substitutionary Type. Generally speaking these theories "concentrate on the idea of something done or suffered or rendered by Christ in our stead. . . . Christ is regarded as

taking the place of guilty man, particularly in His suffering and death."¹ Baillie presents the theories of this type as they are developed by Anselm of Canterbury and then by some of the Reformers, noting the similarities and the differences. He then offers the following points of appreciation and criticism.

This type of theory

takes sin very seriously, not only the power of it, but the guilt of it, as something that cannot simply be passed over with a good-natured indulgence. . . . Our sins do matter much to God, and . . . therefore something must be done about them, and something of divine dimensions, if we are to be accepted and forgiven, reconciled and restored. The substitutionary theories do take that seriously, and that is their great merit.²

But these theories have often used the idea of substitution in a mechanical way which is wholly out of touch with the true nature of the reconciliation of man to God. This is especially true in the penal or forensic theories where the analogy of the law court is used: the defendant is found guilty and sentenced, then someone steps in to take his punishment for him and the defendant goes free, someone

¹"The Doctrine of the Atonement," p. 21.

²Ibid., pp. 26-27.

has offered himself as a substitute for the guilty party. This is not only a violation of justice in human terms but also

it is quite plain that you cannot transfer that analogy simpliciter to the realm of the relation between sinners and God. In that moral and spiritual realm there can be no direct substitution of penalties, there can be no sheer transference of punishment from one person to another. The real punishment of sin is not any separable penalty. It is a moral and spiritual penalty, it is a degeneration of the soul and life, it is alienation from God. And that cannot be transferred from one person to another by any kind of transaction. There is indeed such a thing as vicarious suffering, one man bearing the shame of another man's sin, because he loves him, and there is something peculiarly redemptive in such vicarious punishment. But that is not the transactional kind of substitution at all. For the sinner has also to bear the shame and pain if he is to come to a true repentance.

The sheer objectivity of the substitutionary theories must be coupled with the subjective reality of repentance and acceptance of forgiveness.

The doctrine taught is consistent with the doctrine preached with regard to the treatment of the substitutionary idea. The words "substitution" or "substitutionary" never appeared in the sermons because

¹"The Doctrine of the Atonement," (Book 3), p. 28.

of the misleading connotations associated with them. Indeed, the mechanical interpretation of the atonement in its penal or forensic forms was explicitly repudiated in one sermon.¹ The idea within these theories which was preserved was limited to the seriousness of sin and the costliness of forgiveness and reconciliation. The examination of this type of atonement theory has again highlighted the danger of uncritically using an analogy from human experience (a law court) and extending it literally into the realm of dogmatic theology. The task of a theology for preaching is to examine human experience in order to see where it reflects, be it in a fragmentary way, the two sided truth of God's costly yet reconciling activity among men. The forgiveness and difficult reconciliation brought about by the suffering of a friend who loves the wrong doer is,² in this case, a more accurate reflection of what faith believes God to be doing than is the concept of a law court and a substitute victim.

¹Supra, pp. 472-73.

²Supra, p. 475.

A third type of atonement theory is the Moral Influence type. Although there are serious qualifications made by Baillie regarding the way this type has been put forward it is a type that comes close to the doctrine which emerged in his preaching. In defining the broad outlines of this approach he tells his students:

This type of theory lays the emphasis upon the influence of Christ's sacrifice on us rather than on the Godward side of it.

It is we that need to be reconciled to God. It is not God's attitude that needs to be changed, for God loves us through all our sin with an everlasting love. But we need to be brought back to God. It is God's love alone that can do this. And the supreme revelation of God's love is in the passion and cross of Christ, which thus does its atoning work on us, bringing us to repentance and forgiveness and reconciliation. Thus it is sometimes said that this type of theory conceives of the Atonement as working not objectively but subjectively, as a moral and spiritual influence upon the sinner.¹

This way of presenting the doctrine was advanced by Abelard in the twelfth century and has often been called the Abelardian type of atonement theory. Baillie notes the connection between Abelard's deep and tragic experience with human love and his theology of the atonement.² Following a brief treatment of

¹"The Doctrine of the Atonement" (dossier), pp. 29-30.

²Baillie cites in this connection, Helen Waddell, Peter Abelard (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1958) see esp. pp. 240-253.

this view and some contemporary expression of it, a critical appraisal is made. This interpretation, Baillie teaches:

has the great merit of making the love of God quite fundamental, as an eternal unchanging love which does not wait for sinners to turn from their sin, but loves them 'while they are yet sinners' and thus melts their hearts into penitence. It has the great merit of regarding the cross of Christ as above all an expression of the love of God--not a sacrifice to appease the wrath of God, not a forensic necessity, but a willing sacrifice of life, for love's sake, a supreme exhibition of self sacrificing love for the undeserving, and thus a supreme manifestation of God's love for sinners.¹

It is not only the death of Jesus which this theory views as the supreme manifestation of God's love, but the life which preceded it and the spirit or motivation behind Jesus' death which gives us an understanding of reconciling love.

Substitutionary theories have too often isolated the death of Jesus as if that in isolation had the atoning power. But the Abelardian type of theory takes the life of Jesus seriously.²

But Baillie feels that criticism is in order in that there is the danger inherent in this emphasis to overlook the costliness of God's reconciling love

¹"The Doctrine of the Atonement" (dossier), pp. 33-34.

²Ibid., p. 34.

made manifest by the life and death of Jesus. There is a need to balance this view with the understanding that in the Atonement there is an element of "infinitely costly expiation" which goes deeper than the mere moral influence of a supreme act of love. It must be understood that sin matters and that genuine forgiveness requires that the love of God, perfectly revealed in the Cross of Christ, bears the full brunt of shame and suffering for sin;¹ that is why reconciliation involves repentance.

Baillie's lectures continue by offering ways in which the doctrine has been put forward in recent times; but our survey of the historical lines of thought has been sufficient to show that the presentation in the sermons cannot be identified with any one of the classical theories. The difficulty with each of the theories examined is that in their attempt to logically explicate the paradox of infinitely costly forgiveness and victorious reconciling love they become one sided. Baillie's presentation in the sermons avoids this difficulty by presenting the two

¹Ibid., pp. 34-35.

poles of the paradox side by side, but not leaving them as sheer contradictory statements. They are brought together in terms of a human experience which is also paradoxical, yet understandable because the two sides are no longer abstract concepts but parts of the same experience of love working reconciliation through the costly and painful process of genuine forgiveness.

Baillie's formal restatement of the doctrine involves a discussion of sin and the need for forgiveness which has been examined above.¹ Baillie then presents the necessity of atonement by asking "Is there no difference between a good natured indulgence and a costly reconciliation?" The formal line of argument is the same as that which has been documented in the sermons. The paradoxical human experience which serves to point the way to an understanding of the doctrine is the same as that used in the sermons.²

The formal presentation then goes back to the Biblical sources which formed the basis for the interpretation given to the death of Christ in the

¹ Supra, Chapter V.

² God Was In Christ, pp. 171-174.

New Testament. The Biblical exposition in the formal writings covers the same themes as those which were offered in the expository section of the sermons. In both cases the exposition serves to show how reconciliation, as a human necessity, became identified with the Cross.¹

The connection with the Cross is not left simply as a matter of Biblical interpretation. The connection is intimately bound up with the final question asked in the sermons, "What difference does it make?". This is the same question which Baillie asks in introducing his treatment of the Atonement in God Was In Christ.

Any knowledge of Christ, or any Christology which cannot show how it makes a vital difference, and brings 'saving benefits' to our human situation, must be more than suspect.²

Why does Baillie spend a whole chapter on the experiential reality of sin and the need for forgiveness, and the experiential reality of reconciliation before coming back to the specific relevance of the Cross to the doctrine? His own answer to this question

¹Ibid., pp. 174-78.

²Ibid., p. 159.

shows that his formal approach to the doctrine is one which follows the pattern which may be described as the appropriate pattern for a theology for preaching:

I have tried to exhibit the Christian experience of reconciliation in order to work back from it to a consideration of that which, made it possible, the Cross and Passion of Christ.¹

It is this same pattern (progressing from an experiential description of what is meant by reconciliation through the demonstration of the need for reconciliation, to the definitive revelation of reconciliation and what it means to faith-experience) that we have seen developed in the sermons. The answer to the final question (about the difference the Cross makes in our lives) involves the story of an historical event which tells why Jesus died. Baillie's treatment of this theme in his formal writing parallels the presentation in the sermons.²

The remaining themes which have been examined in the sermons are the same as those elaborated in God Was In Christ and the lectures, i.e. the continual activity of God in doing what we have come to know about through a specific historical event (the Cross)

¹ Ibid., p. 186.

² Supra, pp. 480 ff.; "The Doctrine of the Atonement" (dossier), pp. 57-65; God Was In Christ, pp. 180-186.

and the simultaneous objectivity and subjectivity of atonement.¹ There is, however, one theme in the sermons which, although it does not contradict anything in Baillie's other writings, does offer a much more definitive statement. This is the forthright assertion (in the sermon) that the resurrection is not a matter of re-animation on the plane of observable history, but a symbolic way in which Christians describe "the Victory of God in Jesus Christ."² This view is implicit in his discussion of history and mythology,³ but at no point does he state the supra-historical character of the resurrection as unequivocally as he does in the sermons.

The doctrine of the atonement brings "the story with a plot" to a climax. To demonstrate the interdependence and relation of this doctrine to the others in Baillie's system, it is fitting to conclude this chapter with his own words which bring all that has gone before into perspective as doctrines which lead up to the contemporary relevance of an ancient

¹God Was In Christ, pp. 190-202.

²"Easter Day Sermon," p. 8.

³God Was In Christ, pp. 218 ff.

historical event, viz. the life and death of Jesus Christ, and the sense in which He is "risen" and "with us" today.

We can now say about the Incarnation not only that it gives us the Christian view of God, but also that it gives us that outcropping of divine atonement in human history which makes His mercy effectual for our salvation. The Christian message tells us that God was incarnate in Jesus, and that His sin-bearing was incarnate in the Passion of Jesus. His love is inexorable towards our sins, just because it is infinite love and sin is its opposite (self-centredness, lovelessness); and for the same reason it persists indefatigably through all our sinning. That is how He bears our sins. And that is how He overcomes them. That is the costly 'expiation' out of which forgiveness comes. And the story of that, as it was incarnate in Jesus, is what gives us the liberation which leads to a new life. For that story, with the Christian interpretation of it, makes us willing to bring our sins to God, to see them in His light, and to accept from Him the forgiveness which we could never expect to earn. That brings release and a new beginning. And that leads to a new kind of goodness, not the 'Pharisaic' kind, which grows in those who try to save themselves and take credit to themselves for having (as they may think) achieved it; but the Christian kind, which is never conscious of its own merit, but only of God's mercy. That is the secret of the Christian character. . . . It is because 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses'. When we receive that message, and accept the forgiveness of our sins, then we begin to be set free from ourselves. Because God does not reckon unto us our trespasses, we will not reckon unto us our virtues. Our confession will be: Not I, but the grace of God.¹

¹ Ibid., pp. 201-202.

It is through the preaching of the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Atonement that the Christian answer to the basic human question raised by the paradox of morality is brought to a climax. It is the enabling power of grace supremely revealed in Christ which paves the way to the life of new beginnings, life more fully lived as it should be lived, life sustained by the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER IX

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Baillie uses the term "Holy Spirit" interchangeably with many others. In one sermon he speaks of the way the disciples described the active presence of God in their midst after the death of Jesus by saying: "They might call it the Spirit of God, or the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of Jesus, or the Risen Christ--surely all just different ways of saying the same thing."¹ In his writings the Holy Spirit is treated as a parallel expression for grace. Speaking again of the way the early followers described the newly discovered phenomenon in their lives which emerged after Jesus' death, Baillie has them say:

This is the Holy Spirit . . . giving us the presence of Christ in a new and greater way, to dwell in our hearts and to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. Thus they could say, thenceforth, concerning any good that was in their lives: Not I, but the grace of God

¹"Great Christian Doctrines: 4. The Holy Spirit," John 14:25-26 (325) 1923-1928, p. 11.

that was with me. It is not we that speak, but the Spirit of our Father that speaketh in us.

Grace is the central term used by Baillie when he speaks of the activity of God. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is used as a means of describing two dimensions of grace; the historical dimension and the epistemological dimension. It is used to preserve and explain the relationship between the activity of grace in past history, viz. in the life and death of Jesus, and the activity of grace in present experience. It is used also, when Baillie speaks of the way we know that grace is active; the understanding of God's presence is described as the work of the Holy Spirit.

These two dimensions are brought together in the problem to which Baillie addresses himself when he preaches on the doctrine. On the one hand the life of faith is wholly dependent upon the revelation of God's grace in a particular event of past history. Yet, in a very real sense lives are lived in faith wholly removed from that event and quite independent of it in time and indeed of many of the specific issues which make up the content of that event. The

¹God Was In Christ, p. 146.

doctrine of the Holy Spirit is presented as an explanation of the way the individual and the community of faith understand their life, which is at the same time wholly dependent on the life and death of Jesus, and yet wholly removed in time and often quite different in vocation from that life.

Baillie's sermons on the Holy Spirit run into difficulties because of his inconsistent treatment of this doctrine. This is the one doctrine which does not receive systematic treatment in his formal writings. This chapter illustrates the importance of a systematically integrated theology for preaching. The chapter also demonstrates the necessity of preaching from the perspective of human faith-experience, not other-worldly speculations.

The Doctrine Preached

Baillie introduces a sermon on the doctrine in a way which is characteristic of much of his preaching. He is less concerned that his congregation give intellectual assent to the doctrine than he is to show the difference it makes in the lives of men and women. He passes over the facile way in which the creed is recited when "I believe in the Holy Ghost"

is said, and asks "Do we know what we mean by it? . . . Does this doctrine of the Holy Spirit make any difference to us all?"¹

Turning to the New Testament, Baillie points out something which is indicative of his own treatment of the subject. He notes that the books of the New Testament are constantly speaking of the Holy Spirit in one way or another, yet:

If you try in the New Testament to get a clear and consistent doctrine of the Spirit, you can't do it. . . . Sometimes it is put in one way and sometimes in another. . . . But you do find a great practical reality, something which meant a great deal, which almost meant everything to the early Christians. . . . What did it really mean to them? What was it in their religious life which was so significant? Why did they speak so much of the Spirit? That is the question we have to try to answer.²

The focus of the sermon is set. Baillie is not setting about to present a theologically consistent doctrine; he is going to tell of a practical reality. (It will be shown that in so far as a doctrine is presented, it is in fact, not thoroughly consistent.)

The sermon then takes up the way in which the disciples were totally dependent on Jesus during His life-time.

¹"Great Christian Doctrines: 4. The Holy Spirit," pp. 1-2.

²Ibid., p. 3.

In His company they felt fit for anything. But if he was to be taken away, what would be left? That would be the end of everything. As for carrying on, how could they possibly do that without Him? They would indeed be an army without a leader; and a "contemptible little army" which had always depended entirely on its wonderful leader. What could they do without Him?

But there is a striking contrast between what one would expect and what happened:

In the Gospels, during the life-time of Jesus, the disciples seem so weak and foolish and worldly. But in the Book of Acts, after His departure, they are wise and bold and devoted until everybody wonders at them. And they carry on in the most marvellous way, until Christianity spreads like wild fire, to conquer the world: far beyond what anybody thought of during the life-time of Jesus. . . . Then they were thrown back upon the spiritual presence of God Himself. Then all that they had learned from Jesus began to become more real for them in their own experience.²

Baillie continues to speak of the Holy Spirit as that which brought the life and work of Jesus into the life and work of his disciples. The life which had been an external example and influence upon them, now became a part of what they were. "It was an experience of the present; it was the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Jesus, entering into their own lives."³

¹Ibid., p. 4.

²Ibid., pp. 6-7.

³Ibid., p. 9.

Passing on to the contemporary meaning of the doctrine, Baillie first points out that faith in Jesus Christ is not a matter of just looking to the past, but it is a matter of present experience too.

We are always apt to look back to the past for inspiration. And in a sense that is quite right. We must look back to the times of the New Testament and of Jesus. We must look back to the long tradition of our forefathers. Yes, but we must remember that whatever God did in the past for His children God can do now.¹

In one sense Baillie views the Holy Spirit as an extension along the plane of history of God's activity in the Incarnation and Atonement. It is the same Spirit of God which became manifest in what Jesus did that is present and active in the lives of men today.

To further establish the connection between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, Baillie goes on to speak in a way which seems to indicate that the work of the Spirit began in time with the Incarnation.

For if it all began through the appearing of Jesus on earth, it all went on through the working of the Eternal Spirit of God, leading His people into more and more truth as the centuries rolled on.²

¹ Ibid., p. 12.

² Ibid.

The use of the word "Eternal" in the same sentence with the idea that it somehow began "through the appearing of Jesus on earth" is confusing. The point could have easily been clarified from the perspective of the human awareness of the work of the Spirit and saying that through the appearing of Jesus on earth men saw a full demonstration of the work of the Spirit, a work which is not limited by that event in history, but fully revealed by it.

Thus the first point Baillie makes about the contemporary meaning of the doctrine is that the life of faith in Christ, although rooted in the past events of history, is very much a present matter. The connection which ties the two together is the activity of God's Holy Spirit.

The second point takes up the way in which men come to know of God's active presence. Referring back to the New Testament, Baillie notes that something happened in the lives of men and women when they heard the story of Jesus told. Frequently Baillie speaks of the Spirit in connection with the telling of the Gospel story. For example: "When the story was told, then the Holy Spirit did his work."¹ In

¹Ibid., p. 13.

many instances it appears that the work of the Spirit is in some sense indispensably related to the telling of the message or to preaching, as in the case of Peter's sermon at Pentecost.

The difference that the telling of the story made in the lives of those who heard it was a matter of real experience, not just intellectual understanding of the events recounted.

The story went home to one heart after another. They not only accepted and believed it, but made it their own, and God came into their hearts and the result was seen in their daily lives--the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control.

Thus the presence of God becomes a living reality in the lives of men and women today through the telling of the story of His work in Christ, and it becomes manifest in experientially discernable characteristics of a person's life, i.e. love, joy, peace etc.

Baillie does make it clear that the "experience" he is referring to is not the same in every person who hears the story, even though the same Spirit is at work. "There is room in the Church of Christ," he

¹Ibid.

preaches, "for all sorts, with all sorts of gifts and temperaments and experiences and outlooks: and all these . . . are worked by the self-same Holy Spirit."¹ There is something about the activity of the Holy Spirit which cannot be defined or pinned down; it is to a large extent determined by the personal character of the experience. Indeed Baillie seems to view the whole subject matter of his sermon, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as a contradiction in terms, because in the closing paragraphs the following sentence appears three times (and the sense of this sentence pervades the entire conclusion): "Religion" (or the "real work of the Holy Spirit") "is not a matter of doctrine or hearsay, but a matter of experience."²

One is bound to agree with Baillie that the work of the Holy Spirit varies in its manifestation from person to person and from one time in history to another, but the sermon reveals a definite shortcoming in that it has not taken seriously the task of examining human experience in specific detail in order to be able to say something sensible about the

¹Ibid., p. 14.

²Ibid., pp. 13-15.

Holy Spirit. In the first place the relationship between God's activity in past history to His activity in present experience is clouded by the inconsistent way in which the Holy Spirit is spoken of as being eternal and also as something which made its advent into human history with the Incarnation. In the second place the work of the Spirit emerges as a personal response to the hearing of the story to the point that the mediating function of the community is all but lost. There is no mention of the corporate dimension of the work of the Spirit; there is no mention of the Church in this sermon on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Baillie's inconsistent preaching on the place of the Holy Spirit in history is further documented in another sermon. We have seen that the Holy Spirit is used as a parallel expression covering certain aspects of grace. We have also seen that Baillie understands grace to be active in all men to a greater or lesser extent. Yet when we come to his preaching on the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament there is a discrepancy. Baillie speaks of the prophets as men who were unique because the Spirit was in them and not in others. Among the people of Israel

there would appear a man who was different from the rest, a man who was obviously meant to be a spokesman for God. Somehow the Spirit of God was upon him, he could know God for himself, and enter into some of God's secrets, and tell other people about God's mind and will. But of course that could only be one man in a thousand, nay perhaps one in a hundred thousand, one in a generation, a man apart, a friend of God, a prophet.

This statement is inconsistent with the assertion that God's grace is continually active in the hearts of all men, fragmentary though the fruits of this activity may be. Baillie is inconsistent in his preaching about the universal activity of the Spirit. He is also inconsistent about the advent of the work of the Spirit in the history of mankind; was it something which has always been present, did it first appear in the prophets of the Old Testament, did it first appear in Jesus Christ, or was it something which only emerged in the lives of men after His death? Baillie says all of these at various points in his preaching.

Some of the confusion as to the universal or limited scope of the activity of Spirit is clarified when we come to another of Baillie's treatments of the Holy Spirit as that which makes God's loving and

¹"Your Sons and Your Daughters Shall be Prophets," To Whom Shall We Go?, pp. 31-32.

reconciling work understandable, i.e. the work of the Spirit as the epistemological dimension of grace.

Still engulfed in the inconsistency we have just noted, Baillie preached that Moses wished that all men could be filled with the Spirit, then that Joel predicted the day when this would happen, and then that Peter declared that it had happened at Pentecost. But the reason offered for this new development in the activity of the Spirit, i.e. that it had become a universal possibility instead of one limited to a select few, clarifies the connection between faith today and the Incarnation.

What happened to bring it about?
 Jesus of Nazareth had lived among men in Palestine; and wherever He went, with His words and works, His faith and love, His sense of the presence of God—wherever He went, God became real, and ordinary people could understand Him.

The definitive work of Christ, in this connection, was that He made the loving work of God understandable to all men. And the story of what He did and said continued to be understandable by ordinary men and women (not just apostles and prophets). This understanding of God's activity was the work of the Holy Spirit.¹ The sermon concludes with three illustrations of the way men understand God's presence in the con-

¹Ibid., pp. 32-35.

temporary world, three ways in which the Spirit can work today: a man brings his faith to bear upon the issues raised by the reading of his newspaper, a girl lives a life of selfless burden bearing for others, and all manner of different people are brought together in unity at least once a week in the worship of God, the communion of the Holy Spirit.¹

This sermon helps to clarify some of the inconsistencies of the first one examined. Baillie still is vague when he talks about the activity of God as the Holy Spirit because there is a discrepancy between the universality and the limited scope of this activity. However, when he uses the term to refer to that which makes God's loving work understandable to men, then the connection between the Jesus of past history and the present experience of faith becomes plain. The same Spirit of God which infused the hearts of men so that they could understand His love through the work of Christ is present now enabling men to understand that God's grace is active in their lives if they will only become aware of its presence.

¹Ibid., pp. 35-36.

And it is through the telling of the story, the preaching of the Gospel, that the Spirit enables men to become aware of God's grace in their lives.

In another sermon Baillie makes it clear that the work of the Spirit is to be understood as that which directly causes the awareness of God's activity in the hearts of men. In this regard the knowledge of God is never to be viewed as a matter wholly determined by an external authority. He preaches that the Bible is not to be viewed as such an external authority, for it is only through the work of the same Spirit that inspired its writers that we come to understand and know what the words of Scripture mean. He makes the distinctive place of the Biblical witness contingent solely upon the vocation of the writers:

Instead of talking of different kinds of inspiration, it is more in keeping with the New Testament to use the idea of vocation. Different people have different vocations, are called by God to different functions, are given different "spiritual gifts", and not for their own sakes but for the sake of the fellowship. . . . Prophetic and apostolic souls have a unique place and an indispensable part to play in God's providential purpose; and we are dependent on their witness as it comes to us in the words of Scripture. Not blindly dependent--nay, we read their words by the illumination of the Holy Spirit in our own hearts--the same Holy Spirit that inspired them.

¹"Revelation and Inspiration in the Bible,"
Psalm 119:105 (un) 1936-1940, p. 15.

We come to know God's work and will for our lives through the witness of others, particularly the Biblical writers, but this knowledge only becomes meaningful by the Holy Spirit which works through our own vocations within the fellowship of the faithful. And we have been called to face situations which are quite different from those of the Biblical writers. Therefore it is essential not to view its teaching, even its story of Christ, as a static external authority. In a real sense our vocation can only be fulfilled by dependence on the direct work of the Holy Spirit which makes us understand the meaning and relevance of God's gracious activity in our lives and in the lives of those with whom we have been called to serve.

Baillie also makes it clear that the awareness and knowledge of God's work and His will which is inspired by the Holy Spirit is not something which depends on intellectual acumen or scientific study. He describes the sort of knowledge he is talking about by saying: "It is an assurance, an understanding, a revelation, given to humble honest obedient hearts."¹

¹"Science and Religion," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 169.

Baillie's presentation of the doctrine in the sermons is to be criticized for its inconsistency with regard to the place of the Holy Spirit in history. He is inconsistent in what he says about its advent into the experience of men. He is inconsistent about its universal or limited scope. This renders his attempt to deal with the problem to which he addressed himself in the sermons somewhat confusing. The aspect of the problem which bore on the Holy Spirit as the historical dimension of the doctrine of grace was not clear because Baillie did not work out a systematic theology in which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was explained in relation to the other doctrines.

On the other hand the presentation of the doctrine as it is relevant to the matter of understanding the activity of grace does clarify the problem to which the sermons are addressed. It is clear why the early Christians and countless men and women since speak so much about the Holy Spirit. It is because of the intimate connection between their hearing of what God did in Christ and the experience of assurance and understanding in their own lives. This

experience must be attributed to the same Spirit which was at work in Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. It is important to see that the two poles of the problem, the pole of past history and the pole of present faith, have been brought together in the sermons by way of the examination of an experience of faith. i.e. assurance, understanding, etc. It is strange that Baillie did not make more use of the experience of comfort and the classical idea of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete. Perhaps he felt this idea was adequately explained by the experience of assurance which followed the hearing of the Gospel, but surely the Biblical idea of the Comforter is a valid one for preaching which seeks to reflect, address and minister to human experience.

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

Baillie makes frequent mention of the Holy Spirit in the lectures and other writings, but he does not offer any separate treatment of it as he has in the case of all the other doctrines examined in this thesis. And even though he preached sermons specifically on the doctrine, his preaching reflects the fact

that at no point does he undertake a systematically integrated study of the doctrine. Where both the doctrine of God and Christology receive extensive treatment in their own right, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit only receives systematic treatment in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity. However, the themes which have emerged from his preaching can be found in varying contexts in his formal writings.

In the sermons where Baillie describes the way in which the disciples came to speak of the Holy Spirit he makes reference to their total dependence on Jesus during His lifetime.¹ The implication is clearly that the coming of the Spirit was a subsequent experience. Yet when Baillie undertakes a criticism of Karl Heim's concept of Leadership as a clue to the understanding of the Incarnation,² he makes it plain that those who knew Jesus were not led to feel a sense of total dependence on Him as an external authority. Indeed in the examination of the doctrine of the Incarnation it has been shown that Jesus was intent upon

¹Supra, p. 511.

²God Was In Christ, pp. 98 ff.

pointing away from Himself to God. Baillie writes of Jesus' authority as that which was not the authority of His person alone, it involved the working of God in the lives of those who heard Him and knew Him. Instead of Jesus acting in a way which would lead to the total dependence of His disciples on His earthly person, Baillie is quite explicit in saying that: "His endeavour was to make men see the truth for themselves."¹ Even during Jesus' lifetime it was the Spirit which was at work enabling the disciples to understand that it was God at work in Christ. The authority for their faith was an inner authority then as it was in the days to come. At no point is the Christian life to be viewed as that which must rely upon an unmediated external authority. "It is by 'enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ' that the Holy Spirit calls us to the Christian life."² Thus we can see that Baillie's emphasis, inspite of the implication in the sermon, is clearly that the Spirit was at work during Jesus' life-time as well as after it. The dichotomy drawn in the sermon between

¹Ibid., p. 101.

²Ibid., p. 102.

the disciples' experience before and after His death is too sharp and therefore misleading.

The one difference between the disciples experience before and after Jesus' death was that after His death they discovered that the power which they had known during His lifetime was in fact still with them; they discovered that, although they came to know it through Him, it persisted in their lives independent of His earthly presence. Baillie sums up the problem to which he addressed his preaching, and the historical experience which makes it understandable in a few short sentences:

But what happened through Him did not come to an end when 'the days of His flesh' ended, though the disciples thought it would and were appalled at the prospect of His being taken from them. Very soon afterward they made two great discoveries. They discovered, first, that the divine presence of which they had become aware while their Master was with them in the flesh had come back to them, and was going to continue, in a far deeper and more marvellous way, in a way independent of His actual presence in the flesh. It was the same, and yet different, for it was as though their Master had now drawn them into something of that union with God which had been His secret, and now they know God for themselves as He has taken possession of them. And their second discovery was that this experience, which depended entirely on Jesus, need not be confined to those who had known Jesus in the flesh. It could come to anybody anywhere through the story of Jesus and their witness to its meaning. They

want hither and thither and the thing kept happening. It was a new experience of God, and it lifted people out of themselves, and above moral struggle, into a spontaneous goodness which claimed, no credit for itself but gave all the glory to God.

These few sentences clarify what is meant by the activity of the Holy Spirit in a way which the sermons failed to do. Why? The sermons attempted to wrestle with the problem from the perspective of what the Holy Spirit was doing at various points in time; they attempted to say what was happening from the divine side of the picture. In the above quotation, Baillie approaches the matter from the perspective of human experience. He describes what men discovered, or were given to know, about what was happening in their lives. The work of the Spirit is described in terms of how man's understanding of it developed, it was an understanding of something that was happening which could only be interpreted as the work of the same Spirit which men had come to experience through Christ.

This leads us to a further consequence of Baillie's thought. In the sermons it has been shown that the Holy Spirit is spoken of as that which works

¹Ibid., pp. 145-146.

through the telling of the story of Christ to an awareness of the activity of grace in men's lives. It is that which is manifest as the understanding and assurance of God's presence. It has also been shown that Baillie's understanding of the Incarnation is contingent upon the paradox that although Jesus was a man, He was also true God in the sense that grace was fully active in Him. What then of the connection between the Incarnation in Christ and God's gracious activity in us? It was the same grace and the same Spirit which was active in both cases. Baillie writes: "The God who was incarnate in Christ dwells in us through the Holy Spirit; and that is the secret of the Christian life,"¹ The Holy Spirit forms the link between the historical Incarnation and the present experience of faith. It does so by enabling men to see that God in His grace is incarnate in men, working in and through them to perfect His reconciling purpose in their lives. The Holy Spirit is that which enables men to become consciously aware of God's work and so to share in it.

The problem raised by the dependence of faith upon an historical event and its simultaneous separation

¹Ibid., p. 154.

in time and independence from it is also put forward by Baillie in another context. The following way of putting the problem (which was the problem addressed by the sermons) will further demonstrate that the problem is not raised by a need to speculate about the transcendent activity of the Spirit, but a problem was raised by the human experience of faith which has for its criterion the Incarnation of God in Christ. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is again presented in a way which reflects the bringing together of the two poles in faith-experience. One pole can be called the Jesus of History, the other the Christ of Faith. Here is Baillie's discussion of the problem.

The Jesus of History movement was very one-sided, and the reaction against it is one-sided in the opposite direction. And it seems to me that the New Testament conception of the Holy Spirit can save us from both kinds of one-sidedness and preserve the true relationship . . . between history and faith, between the historical and the experiential. . . . Time is reality, it has to be taken seriously. Jesus of Nazareth stands at one point in that line, and we stand at another and later point, so that we have to look back. And yet . . . our faith is not simply a matter of looking back. And this is where we have to add the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to the doctrine of the Jesus of History.

¹"Jesus and the Holy Spirit" (Book 72), p. 5.

It is stretching the use of language to the point of nonsense to speak of Jesus being made contemporary with us. Baillie is also important with the "straining of ones eyes with historical imagination and reconstruction to discern the figure of Jesus of Nazareth and find therein the locus of revelation."¹ No, the experience of faith is a present reality for men and women in the world. Therefore theology cannot be merely Christocentric, with all that that implies about God and Jesus Christ, it must also be Trinitarian. It is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that explains and describes what is an experiential reality; we believe that God is active in our lives today, yet we are aware of His activity through what we have understood about an historical life far removed in time from where we stand. Our knowledge of the inseparable connection between the Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History is described (as it was described by those who have witnessed to their experience in the New Testament) as the work of the Holy Spirit.

The comparison of the doctrine preached and the doctrine presented in the formal theological

¹Ibid., p. 6.

writings has shown that the inconsistent treatment of the place of the Holy Spirit in history rendered the sermons confusing. Part of the difficulty rested in the failure to place the doctrine in relationship to the others in a systematic fashion. Part of the difficulty was due to the misleading perspective from which the matter was approached in the sermons, i.e. it was approached from the speculative perspective of trying to say what the Holy Spirit was doing instead of telling of the discovery of its activity in human experience.

Another difference between the presentation was that the Holy Spirit was only implicitly related to grace in the sermons, whereas the Holy Spirit as an historical and epistemological dimension of grace was made explicit in the writings. In the sermons the Holy Spirit is presented as that which applies the story of Jesus to men's hearts. It is a deep inward understanding which sees the message in relation to the immediate situation in which men exist. But there is no direct link made between this and the consequent moral actions that are thus demanded of men. The work of the Spirit emerges from the sermons as a morally passive experience, whereas grace was the

morally active and enabling power of God. It is not until we come to the writings that the inevitable connection between these two is drawn out explicitly. There we have seen that the hearing of the story involved the work of the Spirit which made it understandable in the immediate situation of the hearer which in turn involved the enabling activity of grace in the moral realm; the assurance and enlightenment of the Spirit demands the active demonstration of love. The relevance of the doctrine would have been made more clear had this connection been made explicit in the sermons as well.

The remaining themes which appeared in the sermons have their parallel statements in the writings.¹ The omission of the mention of the church in the sermon which was specifically on the doctrine has been noted, however, Baillie does speak of this essential corporate dimension of the work of the Spirit in another context, viz. the doctrine of the

¹The themes of the Holy Spirit's action in and through the hearing of the story, the theme of the Spirit's manifestation being contingent upon the vocation of the individual, and the place of the Bible as 'inspired' are treated in "The Word and the Spirit" (Book 58).

Church. The personal, almost individualistic view of the work of the Spirit noted above² is balanced in Baillie's preaching and teaching on the community of the Holy Spirit to which we now turn.

¹Supra, pp. 515-16.

CHAPTER X

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

This chapter is determinative for all the others in the "story with a plot" because the doctrine of the Church defines the sense in which the word "experience" is used throughout. It has been shown that the word "experience" refers, not merely to individual experience, but to experience in relationship. And it is the particular kind of experience in community described by the doctrine of the Church which a theology for preaching must reflect. It will be shown that Baillie describes salvation as the human experience of God's activity within a particular kind of community life. The plot of the story is God's work of reconciling man to Himself and to fellowman; it is a plot which reaches its climax in salvation. The other chapters, particularly those dealing with the Incarnation and the Atonement, pass into soteriology, and it is here in the doctrine of the Church that the experiential description of salvation is presented. The kind of experience which

a theology for preaching is to reflect is the experience of men and women in so far as they have been saved from self-centeredness and live in love as members of one Body, the Body of Christ.

But the doctrine of the Church is immediately related as an indispensable counterpart to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit applies the message of Jesus Christ to the hearts and minds of individuals where they stand in the world. This work of the Spirit is realized as the experience of assurance and understanding. But the message thus applied demands the living out of the content of that message. The inward witness of God's love demands, and has for its very meaning, outreaching love. Baillie's preaching on the doctrine is focused in the central problem of showing that the Gospel is not only fully individual, it is also, paradoxically, fully social. He seeks to show that there can be no salvation without a community in which salvation can be demonstrated; without salvation there is no Church, without the Church there is no salvation.

This chapter also illustrates two special problems for preaching. The first is that a critical appraisal of experiences which are documented in the

Bible is essential in order to select those which are appropriate reflections of the truth intended by Christian doctrine. The mere presence of a recorded experience in Scripture does not automatically qualify its validity for preaching. Care must be taken to see that the example used truly represents the major thrust of the Gospel message.

The second point illustrated arises out of the doctrine itself. The Church has a definite message and preaching is the central way in which the Church proclaims its message. Preaching is the message of the Church for the Church, but (as will be shown) the boundaries of the Church cannot be limited. Therefore the language of preaching must reflect and address experience which is not limited to a particular tradition or even a special "religious" compartment of life. In this sense preaching must speak to men and women within the context of their whole life in the world.

The Doctrine Preached

Baillie introduces a sermon entitled "The Community of the Holy Spirit" by posing the two sides

of the problem. "True Christianity is an individual Gospel. . . . True Christianity is a social Gospel. . . . They can't be separated or they both go bad." He goes on to describe what happened in the lives of those who experienced the work of the Spirit at Pentecost, presenting themes parallel to those examined in the last chapter:

The Gospel of Jesus had made religion a far more personal thing for the ordinary individual, than it had ever been before, and it was on the Day of Pentecost that this came home to them.

But a new element is introduced:

If you had been there, you would have also been struck by another thing (here is the paradox). You would have noticed that religion had also, all at once, become a more deeply social thing than it had ever been before. Quite plainly, this was not any lone-wolf kind of religion. There was nothing solitary, or introverted, or cloistered, or escapist, about it.

Thus the paradoxical framework for the doctrine is set. The Gospel, when it came to be applied to the hearts of men and women, was a personal and individual thing, but it was also inseparably bound up with their relationship to each other in a community.¹

¹ "The Community of the Holy Spirit," To Whom Shall We Go?, pp. 66-68.

What was the nature of this community? When did it originate? What were its boundaries? What did it mean to those who participated in it? To answer these questions, Baillie describes the way in which the two sides of the paradox are brought together in the experience of men and women in the Church.

Although Baillie speaks of the Church as having come into existence with the message of Jesus, particularly when it "came home" at Pentecost, he is quite clear in stressing that this community, was not an entirely new innovation. The men who bore witness to the earliest days of what we call the Christian Church saw themselves as part of a movement in which the God of their fathers had continually been active.

They were not claiming to be originators or inventors. They just had received a wonderful new thing in the Gospel of Jesus, and that was enough. They had not manufactured it, it had come to them from the God of their fathers; and they never for a moment thought of posing as the inventors of a new religion. . . . They were just the disciples of Jesus, believing that they had found in him the fulfilment of all the hopes of the dear old religion. And that had come to

them as a great and precious gift of God, which they must pass on to other men.

Baillie points out that the name "Christian" was not a label coined by self appointed originators of a new religion. Like the names "Quaker" and "Methodist" it was a name applied to a group which arose out of a conviction (a conviction which influenced all who came near), by those who resisted the conviction and the influence. It was a name given in ridicule.²

The naming of the community which came to experience God's work in its life can be traced to a place and time in history, but the reconciling activity of God in men, which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, stretched back over the pages of history. Thus the beginning of the Church can only be spoken of as an event which occurred in the first half of the first century in a qualified sense. God has always been touching the hearts of men and calling them into His service.

But there is a sense in which the community which arose after Jesus' death did take on a distinctively new dimension. Most notably this new dimension was

¹"Called Christians first in Antioch," Acts 11:26 (279) 1922-33, pp. 4-5.

²Ibid., pp. 1-3.

characterized by the realization on man's part that through Jesus Christ God had demonstrated that His love and purpose for mankind was not limited to any national or racial group. It was a universal love and purpose. With this conviction in their hearts, those first Christians "overleapt these old barriers. They would tell the story of Jesus to anybody and offer the Gospel to anybody."¹ The community of which they were a part could rightfully claim no limits or boundaries.

This new dimension gave a definite stamp to the character of the early Church, particularly in the Gentile city of Antioch. Baillie describes this church.

It was the most go-ahead congregation in the whole Christian Church. . . . The Christians at Jerusalem were conservative and slow-moving but the Christians at Antioch were liberal-minded and aggressive, so much that they sometimes scandalized the timid Jerusalemites. Antioch was a large Gentile city, and it was there that the Christians came to look at the Gospel in a wide and generous spirit, throwing its door wide open to Gentiles as well as to Jews.²

Baillie has chosen the experience of the Antioch church

¹Ibid., p. 8.

²Ibid., pp. 7-8.

to describe the character of the community he is preaching about for good reason. The behaviour of Antioch Christians reflects the universal import of the Gospel revealed in Jesus Christ more accurately than did the behaviour of the Jerusalem Church. Once again the importance of examining experience to see where it most accurately reflects the Gospel is demonstrated. At no time does Baillie preach on the virtues of the Jerusalem Church in this connection. Even when using historical experiences accounted for in the Bible, care must be exercised in presenting the experience which best reflects the nature of God's reconciling activity towards all men.

Coupled with the outward directedness of the Church is the supportive fellowship within the community. Baillie describes the character of life in the early church following Pentecost:

These people--all sorts and conditions of men and women--seemed to have become a new community, with one heart and one soul, with a new and wonderful comradeship that the world had never seen before. Quite true. The like of it had never been seen. And it was not mere emotion and sentiment. It was practical and sacrificial. These people would do anything for each other--they even forgot about the rights of public property, and made a little

experiment in voluntary communism in Jerusalem. There sprang up a new kind of care for the poor, and presently a new attitude to slaves. They had a new sense of responsibility for all their fellow-creatures, and they started to spread the good thing that had made them into a community.

The situation in which they lived was different then than it is now. Baillie makes it clear that new demands are thrust upon the contemporary Church which were not dreamed of in the first century.

Of course they didn't embark upon a programme of social reform. They didn't even try to banish slavery. How could they? They had no political power in the great Roman Empire; most of them had no vote; they had none of the opportunities of modern democracy--that was far beyond the horizon.

Never-the-less the basic pattern and underlying social thrust of the Gospel was there:

The Spirit was there--a spirit of community with all mankind--a new community without distinctions of class or race, in which every man was a child of God, a slave just as much as his master. That was Christianity.

And this spirit has direct relevance in new ways in our day:

And now we do live in an age of democracy, where we all have voting power, and must all share responsibility for the dreadful evils of our social system, the Christianity that did not care about social reform would not be genuine Christ-

ianity at all.¹

Thus even the supportive fellowship within the community has as its inseparable counterpart the outreaching social dimension of the Gospel. And this social dimension does not have a boundary which limits it to any defineable group. The paradoxical conviction that God's reconciling work is both deeply personal and universal in scope is reflected by the missionary zeal and outreaching concern of those who have come to experience the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.²

What does life in the community by the message of Jesus Christ mean to those who participate in it? What does it mean for those who live out the paradoxical conviction that the love of God is realized both individually and corporately? Salvation is the answer given by Baillie to these questions. He explains the word in terms of human experience:

'Being saved': What does that mean? It does not mean a passport for a place called heaven. It means being transformed into the sort of person that can't separate his own welfare from

¹"The Community of the Holy Spirit," To Whom Shall We Go?, pp. 68-69.

²"Called Christians first in Antioch," pp. 12-15.

that of his fellows--that can't bear to see his fellow creatures missing the true opportunities of life, or living in conditions he wouldn't live in himself. But doesn't salvation mean being set free from my sins? Yes, and sin is equal to self-centredness, and my supreme sin is that I don't care enough about the woes of my fellows, both spiritual and material. . . . When we hear God's voice through Jesus Christ, it calls us out of ourselves into community with God and man. And then individual Gospel and social Gospel become all one--we can't separate them without killing both, and running away from God.

Salvation means being saved from self-centeredness.

The Church is the legacy of God to man through Jesus Christ that makes this salvation a living possibility.

God was incarnate in Jesus Christ, and He created in the world a new community--the fellowship of the Holy Spirit--to draw us out of ourselves into community with God and man, for our own salvation and for the salvation of the world.¹

The inseparable connection between life as it should be in the Church and salvation is brought out most clearly in another sermon where it comes at the end of a presentation of the doctrine of election. The first point puts the whole matter in its proper perspective. Speaking of the Old Testament understanding of "a chosen people" as the background for the New Testament conviction that people are chosen

¹ Ibid., pp. 70-71.

not because they deserve it but out of God's mercy,
Baillie preaches:

That is what the Church of Christ on earth must always be: not a society of good people, but a community of sinners forgiven, claiming nothing for themselves except God's mercy, and praising Him for His unspeakable gift. It was not they that chose God, but God that chose them in His grace.

The second point clarifies the meaning of election. It must be understood in "the sense of being chosen not just for one's own benefit, but for the service of God and of mankind." Election, in the first instance, has nothing to do with the salvation of one's soul; it is election to a vocation. And it is through the realization of one's vocation to serve God and man that one is saved.¹

The third point brings the Church into the picture and explains the sense in which it plays an indispensable part in the salvation of men.

Why talk so much about a people, a community at all? Why must the Church come into this traffic between the soul and God? Are we going to return to the terrible old doctrine that outside the Church there is no salvation? That would indeed

¹"A Peculiar People," Isaiah 49:1-16, I Peter 2:1-16 (un) 1949, pp. 1-8. Parallel themes are developed in "Election," To Whom Shall We Go?, pp. 180-185, but without the final point which is crucial in the present context.

be a dreadful doctrine if it meant what people have sometimes imagined: as if the Church were a kind of privileged club, and unless you can show your membership card, you have no chance of admittance to the blessings of heaven. But the real point is this. The true life of man, the blessed life, is not a "lone-wolf" existence. The very thing that is wrong with the world is the "lone-wolf" spirit, breaking up mankind, which ought to be one body, into a host of selfish little atoms. What we need is to be drawn out of ourselves, back into the community with God and man for which we were created. That can only be done through a community. And the community that God uses is the fellowship of the Cross, the Church of Christ.

I once heard a question asked at a "religious brains trust": Must one belong to the Church in order to be saved? In the course of the discussion a working man said that such a question had once been put to the American evangelist Billy Sunday, and he had replied: "Well, if you want to cross the Atlantic, there are two ways, and you can choose. You can either take the boat or--you can swim." I thought that was very good, in a rough and ready way. But I should wish to develop the fancy further, in order to get it quite right. It is not advisable to try to swim to the celestial shore when you might take the boat--not merely because you are not likely to get there, but because even if you did you would not be fit to land. You would be a self-centred individualist, suffering from a "swelled head", because you had done it all by yourself. And how could such a person in such a spirit be fit to enter the kingdom of heaven? So you have to take [the] ship for this celestial voyage, not merely because the ship means safety from the waves, but because the ship means community, it means a ship's company with which you are going to mix and play your part. You are going to be aboard the vessel, not as a stowaway, keeping yourself to yourself, or even as a passenger--you might almost as well not be aboard at all. Nay, you must make the voyage in the ship's company with all the give and take of a community, because this vessel of the Church is

a floating colony of the Kingdom towards which it is sailing; and that is where we learn its way of life. That is how we are saved from ourselves and made ready for the life of heaven-- by forgetting ourselves in the fellowship of that community through which God is saving the world, that kingdom of priests, that peculiar people, the Church of Christ.¹

The Church is defined as the community where men and women are drawn out of themselves toward each other and toward God (the two cannot be separated). The experience of this kind of life is what is meant by salvation. Thus membership in the Church does not determine salvation, but salvation determines the Church. In a sense it is true to Baillie's thought to say that outside the Church there is no salvation, but it must be understood to mean that salvation, or being saved from self-centeredness, is the mark of the Church, not the reverse. In so far as men and women live in love for one another and for God, there, by the power of His grace is the Church.

In a sermon preached in Glasgow Cathedral, Baillie brings together the themes examined above as the climax of "the story with a plot". It will be well to see the way in which the Church (as it has been defined) is the realization of God's reconciling work on earth, and its relationship to all that has

¹Ibid., pp. 9-12.

gone before, from the creation and fall to the Incarnation and atonement.

God created mankind to be a fellowship in which all men would live together in Him. That is what mankind was meant to be, in the divine plan: a real community, a single body, an organism, or fellowship of persons, the life of which would be God Himself, and the spirit of which would be perfect love. But somehow mankind has gone wrong. It has got broken up into a multitude of separate selfish individuals, with a false individualism, each going his own way, each living for himself, seeking his own ends, each refusing to sink himself in the fellowship, refusing to live in the spirit of love, which is the spirit of God. That is what has gone wrong with mankind. That is why we say that man is a fallen creature. We all inherit that selfish tradition which has broken up humanity into atoms, and that is what is meant by original sin. For this is the very essence of sin--the refusal of divine and human fellowship, the denial of community, the rejection of love, the choice of selfish independence. This is what is wrong with the world--that mankind has refused to live as one body, united in the love of God.

But nineteen centuries ago something happened which gave mankind a new beginning. A human life was lived in Palestine in perfect unity with God and in perfect fellowship with man. Jesus Christ broke away entirely from that long train of selfish individualism, and lived and died in complete abandonment to the spirit of love. It was the beginning of a new humanity. He called a dozen men to be His followers. He bound them together into one body. That was the beginning of the Church. It was the nucleus of a new type of human society, in which individuals would forget themselves and live for the whole Body--lose and find themselves in a life of fellowship with God and man. That is how Christian salvation came

into the world. It made religion more personal than ever it had been before, but it did that by giving a far more wonderful fellowship. Salvation means being delivered from absorption with ourselves, and brought into fellowship.¹

The problem which is addressed by the doctrine of the church is the paradox of salvation. The experience of salvation embodies the two poles of the individual assurance and understanding, and the corporate fellowship of outreaching love. These are brought together by an experience which is best described in Matthew 16:25: "For whoever saves his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." That is the experience of life as it should be, that is the experience (be it ever so fragmentary) of those who make up the Body of Christ, that is salvation.

Having presented salvation as the definitive characteristic of the Church which is the climax of God's work in the world, Baillie goes on to summarize the way in which this work has been manifest in the world.

So this new body, the Church of Christ, went out into the world, exhibiting to the world what true fellowship was, and drawing men into its

¹"The Church and the Eldership," Ephesians 4:11-13 (un) 1938, pp. 1-2.

marvellous fellowship. It spread, and spread, and is still spreading. And just because it is a community of love, it can never be content until it has spread over all mankind, breaking down all selfish individualisms, transcending all barriers of class and caste, overcoming all distinctions of race and nation, a universal fellowship in Christ, making mankind again into a single organism, a real community, one body, as God meant it to be: "till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" [Ephesians 4:13].

The sermon continues with Baillie's most forthright statement of the inseparable connection between salvation and the Church.

That is why the Church is of the essence of the Gospel. That is why Christian divines enunciated [sic] the staggering doctrine "that outside the Church there is no salvation". They meant that salvation cannot be individualistic. It is from our selfish selves that we have to be saved. When the early Christians preached salvation they meant: "Come into this fellowship of God and man through Christ". And that was the Church, the new community, many members, but all one body, the Body of Christ.

It is clear that Baillie is impatient with all attempts to define the Church in terms of ecclesiastical form or structure.

We need to get clean away from both the selfish individualism of much of our religion, on the one hand, and on the other hand from mere ecclesiasticism, "churchiness". Our religion is not Christianity at all and our Church is not the Church at all, unless it is an unselfish community of love,

making men to be the one body of Christ, How much we need to revive that conception of the Gospel! How such a true Church of Christ would win the world!

Another way in which Baillie describes the defining characteristic of the Church further emphasises the inadequacy of institutional definition. The question of the Church's continuity has been a divisive factor for centuries. It has been a divisive factor because men have tried to define the Church in terms of a mechanistically conceived apostolic succession of grace endowed clergy;

as if the Church were a kind of installation by which the grace that entered the world with the Incarnation continues to flow through the history like a stream of oil through a pipeline or like an electric current through a cable!

This view implies a static conception of grace; it

would imply that grace was something left behind by Christ when He died, to be stored up because He is dead. And so we have a dead Christ in the distant past. But all that makes nonsense if grace is a personal relationship. Then we are not concerned with a dead Christ in the distant past, whose grace has to come to us across the centuries, but with a living Christ, who lives in His Church here and now in a gracious personal relationship with us. And all that we say about the Church and the Ministry and the Sacraments must be said in the light of that.

¹ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Thus it is not by the presence of an ecclesiastical order that the Church is to be defined; the Church is not present in the world today "because the grace of God flows down through the centuries as it were through the fingertips of ordaining bishops or presbyters." The Church is present where the grace of God revealed in the Incarnation is manifest in the lives of men and women.¹ The Church is defined by Baillie in terms of the activity of grace, not static structures or ecclesiastical organization.

It is clear where the major emphasis of Baillie's doctrine of the Church lies. His primary definition can be put: Where ever, and in so far as, the kind of love revealed in Jesus Christ is manifest in the relationships of men and women within, and reaching out from, a community, there is the Church.

But there is another theme which, although it receives little mention in the sermons, is important to note because it qualifies much that has been said. It has been shown that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is

¹"The Manifold Grace of God," To Whom Shall We Go?, pp. 163-64.

an explanation of the way the individual and the community of faith understand their life, which is at the same time wholly dependent on the life and death of Jesus, and yet wholly removed from it in time and often quite different in vocation from that life.

This paradoxical experience is true of the "community of the Holy Spirit". Baillie preaches: "The vertical relation to the Living Christ can never be independent of the horizontal relationship to the historical Incarnation."² The continuity of the Church is defined in terms of the activity of the Holy Spirit examined in the preceding chapter. But at one point Baillie explains the continuity of the Church in a way which limits the Church in terms of the particular demonstrations of a particular community of believers whereby they show their dependence on the historical Incarnation.

It is through the Gospel of the Word made flesh, interpreted by the witness of the Church in Word and Sacrament, that God gives His grace to men,³ in every age and the Holy Spirit does His work.

This sentence is misleading because it implies a limitation of the activity of grace and the work of the Spirit. The introduction of "the witness of the

¹Supra, p. 509.

²"The Manifold Grace of God," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 164.

³Ibid.

Church in Word and Sacrament" as notes of the Church raises difficulties with the doctrine as it is preached. Up to this point Baillie's descriptions of the activity of grace and the work of the Spirit have been unambiguously universal in scope; now a limitation appears. The situation is further aggravated by the close association of salvation with the Church. If the Church is to be defined by the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, is salvation to be limited in like manner? All this runs counter to the emphases of Baillie's preaching on the unlimitability of God's prevenient grace as we have come to know it in the life and death and risen experience of Jesus Christ. And is it not true to say that there does exist the human experience of self-less love in the relationships of men and women which reflects the kind of love revealed in Jesus Christ, even where the ministry of the Word and Sacraments is not present to offer the edification and support cherished by a limited community? The conclusion to be drawn from the examination of this theme in Baillie's sermons is that the preacher must never imply that God's saving

work or the community of the saved is limited by the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. The particular part of that community in which these functions are performed realizes that it is important that men know that the grace of God is at work in their lives in order that they may consciously participate in that work in a spirit of gratitude to God; for them the ministry of the Word and Sacraments is the best way of achieving this end, but the preacher must never imply that it is the only way. (The Society of Friends is a good example of a part of the community which participates in God's saving work without the aid of preaching or the Sacraments.) It may be concluded that the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments are not rightfully presented as definitive marks of the Church. They are rightfully presented as ways in which the particular kind of life which marks the Church is definitively described and demonstrated.

Above and beyond the difficulty raised by Baillie's brief implication limiting the grace of God, the doctrine which has emerged from the sermon has been a description of a genuine human experience, the

paradoxical experience that love is both deeply personal and individual, and also wholly dependent upon a relationship with a person or persons outside one's self. It is a matter of giving and receiving. It is a matter of living together. In dependence on the divine love of God revealed in Jesus Christ and applied to their hearts, men and women have gathered together in communities to demonstrate and share this love, for without a community the message and the love could not be demonstrated or shared. This community is the Body of Christ, the Church. It is essential for the living of life as it should be, for it is by being drawn out of themselves in love toward God and fellowman, that men and women realize the experience of God's saving grace. We turn to the community which audibly and visibly affirms its dependence on the historical Incarnation through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments because it is here that our human need for reconciliation to God and man is most adequately met, and definitively described and demonstrated.

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

The presentation of the doctrine in the lectures differs from the presentation in the sermons most notably in that the lectures are largely devoted to an examination and explanation of traditional terms which have been used to define the Church such as the Catholic notae ecclesiae, the Protestant notes of preaching, Sacraments and discipline, and other terms, e.g. "visible" and "invisible". With the exception of the brief (and possibly misleading) use of "Word" and "Sacrament", these themes were absent from the sermons dealing with the doctrine of the Church.

The major emphasis of the doctrine preached was that the Church, the risen Body of Christ, is comprised of all those people who, in so far as they have been drawn out of themselves in love for God and fellowman, experience the saving grace of God as it was revealed in the Incarnation. This community (for it is only in a community that men can give expression to the love of God in Christ and thus partake of salvation) knows no boundaries, be they racial, national or institutional. This was demonstrated by

the missionary zeal of the early Church in going out to tell any and everybody of what God had done and was doing for their salvation, viz. calling them into the community fellowship in which they could truly become one body. The fundamental criterion for the following comparison of the doctrine preached with the doctrine taught is the impropriety of using any terms of definition which limit the boundaries of the Church and the saving activity of grace. This criterion, which arises out of the presentation of the doctrine in the sermons, is justified on two grounds which determine the content of theology preached: (1) The major thrust of the Gospel message speaks of the reconciling activity of God, revealed in the Incarnation, in unlimited terms which know no boundaries. (2) This gracious activity of God is reflected (be it fragmentarily) in the human experience of relationships where self-centeredness is overcome by outreaching love beyond the bounds of any humanly defineable limits, be they racial, national, institutional or historical.

Baillie begins his classroom lectures on the doctrine by clearing away some popular misconceptions of the Church. The Church cannot be thought of as

"that department of national or social life which deals with religion," to the exclusion of other narrowly conceived "non-religious" aspects of life such as medical work, education and welfare agencies. Religion, in so far as Christianity is concerned, "is concerned with every department of human life. It is an attitude to life as a whole." It cannot rightfully be relegated to a compartment. The Church cannot be viewed in Erastian terms as an arm of the civil government for two reasons. As such it would have to be an agency for the promotion of religion in general embracing all the divergent climates of religious opinion represented within the state, whereas the Church is "based upon . . . a definite message, a definite Gospel."¹

In the second place the Church must be quite separate from the state. It is fair to allow the Church in any given national state to be distinguishable by the customs and life of that nation. "Indeed it is difficult to see how the Church in any country can be entirely without national character unless it is remote from the life of the people and the soil in which it ought to be rooted." But the "Church can

¹"The Doctrine of the Church" (Book 7), pp. 2-5.

never be identical with the nation, and can never be subject to the nation, because it has a higher and more ultimate allegiance." The Church must be free to rise above parochial concerns and be "the conscience of the nation." "The Church within a nation may be called to protest against an enactment of the state, and to summon its members to disobedience." The Church cannot be the Church if it is merely a compartment in the social structure of a society or a department of the civil government.¹

The "Church is not simply an association for the quest of religion. It is not even an association for the promotion of religion." That definition is too narrow because the Church is concerned with more than religion in the popular limited sense of the word; it is, or ought to be, "connected with every part of life." That definition is too wide because the Church is not an organisation for promoting interest in religion in general. It is not even "an association formed for the quest of truth, but a fellowship created by the revelation of truth." And the truth

¹"The National and supra-National Character of the Church" (Book 39a), pp. 4-5.

revealed in Christ involves a particular kind of life. The Church is "a fellowship . . . which has been created by a particular divine message." The particularity of the Church does not rest in the particular religious habits of a given community with no reference to their "non-religious" activities. The particularity of the Church stands for the particular kind of relationship which permeates the whole life of the community, a particular kind of relationship defined by a particular Gospel.¹

The lectures then deal with the question of the Church's origin. Can it be that the Church is an historically limited community; was there a time when it was not? In the sermons this theme was treated by saying that early Christians viewed their community, not as an innovation but as a fulfilment of God's work among men on earth which had been active throughout the past centuries. In the lectures the theme is considerably elaborated. Taking up the question raised by Matthew 16:18 ("On this rock I will build my church."), Baillie presents the

¹"The Doctrine of the Church," pp.4-5.

exegetical problems and offers the possible interpretation that, as ecclesia on the lips of Jesus (if the verse is to be taken as the ipsissima verba of Jesus) would have had Old Testament associations. He may have been speaking of a rebuilding of the ancient congregation of Yahveh, the Israel of God. Baillie is, however, uncertain about the verse, and does "not wish to make any pronouncement on the passage."¹ It is significant to note that no sermon was preached on this text. The problem of the origin of the Church is treated at one point by saying:

If you had asked one of the Apostles, "Who Started the Church?" what would he have answered? To begin with he would be rather puzzled by your question, he would hardly know what you meant. But if you persisted, he would answer, "Why, of course, God." God started the Church. Who else could? And if you had asked him whether he meant that Jesus had uttered those words about the rock, he would perhaps have been surprised, and he would tell you that it was a very much older story than that. And then perhaps he would have gone on to tell you of how, in the dim distant past, God had called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and how, later on, God had called Moses, and so on; and of how, ever since, God had had a people, a Church; and finally visited and redeemed His people, by sending Jesus Christ through whom the Church had been transformed and rebuilt--the Church of Christ, the Church of God.²

¹Ibid., pp. 5, 13. Cf. The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 59.

²Ibid., pp. 6-7.

When the Church is defined as people called into a community for the service of God and man, then in this broad sense there can be no historical boundaries of the Church. God's redeeming activity is not historically limited. Baillie continues with a word study of the relevant Biblical terms, especially ecclesia, noting that "the regular New Testament use of ecclesia as meaning the Church rests, of course, on an Old Testament background, for ecclesia is a common word in the Septuagint [translation of the Hebrew gāhāl] meaning the Assembly of the people of God."¹ Although the sermons did not deal with Greek word studies, the point of the Church's continuity with the Old Testament, and in this sense the absence of historical limitations, is consistent in both sermons and lectures. So too with the theme that the dominating idea in the minds of Jesus and the disciples "was not innovation but fulfilment."²

The dominant emphasis in both sermons and lectures is that the new element in the Church introduced by Christ was the full awareness of its universal

¹Ibid., p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 9.

scope. The fulfilment was marked by the explicit affirmation of the universality of God's reconciling purpose, "that God's purpose of love and redemption included Gentiles as well as Jews—that the real ecclesia of God was a universal ecclesia, determined not by race but by faith in Christ."¹ It was the faith-experience of realizing the love of God as it was demonstrated in the Incarnation that determined the true Church. But Baillie's understanding of what determines the Church was not entirely unambiguous in the writings. At one point he asks: "Is not the true spirit of community sometimes found among outsiders in a generous measure which might put the Church to the blush?"² This question seems to imply that the "true spirit of community" (which as we have seen is the experience of salvation) can exist outside the "Church". Then he asks if the "ancient principle that 'outside the Church there is no salvation'" can be truly affirmed. (There follows his treatment of the Billy Sunday illustration and

¹ Ibid., p. 10.

² "With one accord—Communion or Comradeship" (Book 34), p. 16.

the statement of the necessity of the Church for salvation which we have seen in the sermons.¹) But in the course of the discussion he says: "The Church must never imagine that God's redemptive work is bounded by any ecclesiastical boundaries."² Baillie here uses the word "Church" ambiguously. On the one hand there is the idea (which is consistent with the sermons) that the Church is the "true ecclesia of God", the true community in which men experience salvation, a community of experience which cannot be limited by racial, national, ecclesiastical or historical boundaries. On the other hand there is the idea (at least by implication) that the "Church" is an ecclesiastically defineable body. The dominant emphasis of Baillie's preaching and teaching is clear, but this ambiguous implication highlights the importance of not supporting (even by implication) the popular and mistaken simple identification of the word "Church" with any ecclesiastically limited community.

It will be apparent that a consequence of

¹Supra, pp. 546-47.

²"With one accord--Communion or Comradeship," p.17.

Baillie's dominant definition of the Church is that the Church embraces many people who, although they experience the salvation of reconciliation, do not claim the name Christian. Baillie does however, stress the supportive significance of fellowship with those who are explicitly conscious of the source and ground of their experience, viz. Jesus Christ. The closing sentences of the first lecture on the doctrine of the Church bring out both aspects but the emphasis on Christian (in the explicit sense of the term) fellowship is clear.

Those who have come to know something of the treasure of the Gospel--the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ--are inevitably drawn together into a very deep fellowship; a fellowship which both expresses and feeds the Christian life. . . . And that fellowship is the Church. The Christian life in its very essence is not a lonely individualistic matter. Salvation in the Christian sense doesn't come to the individual in selfish isolation; indeed it might be said that salvation in the Christian sense means being delivered from obsession with one's own lonely self, being made to lose oneself in the love of God and man. That gives one a solidarity with all humanity; but it gives one a special solidarity with one's fellow-Christians. A new kind of fellowship comes into existence as a very part of the Christian life. And indeed it is only through this fellowship that the Christian Gospel and life can be handed on. That fellowship is the Church; and extra ecclesiam nulla salus.

¹"The Doctrine of the Church," pp. 14-15.

Even though Baillie did not preach on the doctrine using the notes ecclesia of the Catholic Church as a thematic basis for any of his sermons, he does spend considerable time explaining the profound element of truth which is contained in these terms in the lectures. The credal affirmation that the Church is One means different things to different people. Baillie cannot accept the narrow interpretation of una ecclesia which understands unity to mean that the true Church is limited to one organization which "is the appointed means of grace, with valid orders, kept by succession and valid sacraments, and valid government, through which alone [italics mine] sacramental grace can normally come for the salvation of the individual." Organizational unity is not the important thing. Baillie had a keen and active interest in the ecumenical movement and he deplored the divisions within the Church, but the nature of the unity he sought was not a unity of form or structure but a unity of fellowship and communion which transcends the different ways different communities have for organizing their religious life.

It may be questioned whether the true goal is a complete unity of organization and government; but at least a complete unity of fellowship; so

that there would be no separate sects but one communion with many churches, and no sense of division, no sectarianism, or rivalry.

Baillie hastens to add that this unity of fellowship is far from an accomplished fact, but it is along these lines of fellowship, demonstrated, among other ways, by the practice of intercommunion, that unity must be sought.¹

Holiness is the second note of the Church. It does not mean that the Church is limited to those whose individual characters can be defined by the term. Baillie teaches that in the New Testament agios "does not refer directly to character. It does not mean good, saintly. It means, rather, set apart to God." To speak of the One, Holy, Catholic Church, is to speak of "a divine call and commission and inheritance." The importance of understanding the Holiness of the Church in terms of its calling, rather than a definition of its membership, is brought out where Baillie asks:

Should the Church really aim at reducing itself to a small body of first class Christians? Would the result really be a holy Church? Surely the result would be a small body of first class Pharisees. Whereas the Church ought to be a

¹Ibid., pp. 15-17.

great redemptive fellowship, throwing its arms open to all sorts of outcasts and sinners who are willing to come and share the redemptive secret it possesses in the Gospel of Christ.

To describe the Church as Holy, is not to limit its boundaries, but to describe the goal of perfect reconciliation which is intended by God for all men through their life as the One Body of Christ. Holiness describes the Church's vocation, and its goal.¹

These three marks of Catholicity, the third note of the Church, were set down in the Vincentian Canon as quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est. This Western attempt to define the Church in terms of doctrinal uniformity Baillie finds inadequate. He finds the Eastern concept of sorbornost² more congenial to the true meaning of catholicity.

The essence of the truly Catholic spirit is that each member of the Church should in a warm intimate living way feel himself to be part of one Body of Christ, sharing its wisdom and relying thereon, not in the sense of accepting an external authority making dogmatic pronouncements, but in the sense of feeling himself nourished by the life and wisdom of the whole Body, and well content to be.

The Church is not to be defined in terms of any external doctrinal authority which is believed, always, every-

¹ Ibid., pp. 17-20.

² For a discussion of the meaning of sorbornost see above p. 41.

where and by everybody. Such a doctrinal standard does not exist; doctrinal uniformity has never been the experience of men and women to whom lives the Gospel has been applied by the Holy Spirit. Catholicity describes the quality of relationship in which one knows solidarity with all mankind.¹

Apostolicity is the fourth note of the Church. Baillie re-states the difficulty of the somewhat mechanistic views on this matter which appeared in the sermons.² But there is a sense in which the Church is built upon the Apostles and utterly dependent on them.

It is through them--through their story, and their interpretation and their faith and their witness--that we ever get to the historic Jesus at all. We can't side track them, or pass them by, or refuse to listen to them if we are to believe in the historic Incarnation at all. No one could ever take their place. And therefore, if we are to remain true to the Gospel of the Incarnation, the Church must always be built upon the witness of the original apostles--it must be an apostolic Church. The Church must not be built simply on time-less truths: it must be the Apostolic Church, continuous with the Church of the Apostles, identical therewith, and depending on the witness of the Apostles.

To say that the Church is Apostolic is not to define

¹"The Doctrine of the Church," pp. 20-23.

²Supra, p. 551.

its limits in terms of ecclesiastical structure. It is to affirm the Church's dependence on those through whom we know the universal Gospel revealed in the historic Incarnation; it is to affirm the goal of the Christian life as one which conforms to the apostolic witness concerning Christ.¹

It will be seen that the truth, contained in the four notae ecclesiae, describes the Church as it ought to be, not as it is. They do not describe a Church which can be identified with genuine experience. Men do not have the experience of participating in a Church which is a unified fellowship, the community of perfect reconciliation intended by its Holy calling, a Church which demonstrates its catholic solidarity with all mankind, a community whose life conforms to the apostolic witness of the Incarnation. The notae ecclesiae describe a goal, an ideal Church which lies beyond the realm of human experience. The terms are useful as teleological conceptions which point in the direction the Church must go; they point to the fulfilment of life as it should be. They could well be used in sermons which seek to present the consummation of the kind of life described by the

¹"The Doctrine of the Church," pp. 23-28; cf. The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 57.

Gospel. But they do not describe the Church as it is. Yet behind each term is a concrete experience realized each time men are given to know a relationship in which self-centeredness is overcome by love. Baillie has chosen to describe the Church (in the sermon) in terms of this experience, not in terms of universal abstracts which deal with an "invisible" concept; he has chosen to describe the Church as it exists in so far as and where ever men experience reconciling love and salvation from self-centeredness. The notae ecclesiae meet the doctrinal criteria in that they can be interpreted in terms which do not limit the boundaries of the Church. However, as descriptions of the Church, they do not meet the criterion for preaching which reflects genuine experience.

The lectures continue by dealing with the Reformed notes of preaching, the Sacraments and discipline. In the light of the fact that the Church, as it exists, is not One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic (although these are to be preserved as a credal hope or expectation), the Reformers,

amid the plurality of Churches, . . . felt they must have some more ultimate test, and they found it in Scripture. . . . For them the test of a Church was simply: Are its preaching, its Sacraments and its

discipline, faithful to the Word of God as found in Scripture.¹

Baillie speaks of the Scriptural conformity of preaching, the Sacraments and discipline as the "test" of the Church. He does not say that the demonstration of these functions delimit the Church. However, as in the case of the sermons, there is an ambiguity in his presentation. He finds virtue in the Protestant notes because they refer to things that actually happen in the life of the Church, i.e. preaching, the celebration of the Sacraments, and to a lesser extent, discipline. These are tangible parts of the Church's experience. But is the Church present where these things do not happen? Baillie does not give an answer. If he is to be consistent with the fundamental definition of the Church presented at the beginning of the lectures and in the major emphasis of the sermons (a definition which is also expressed in terms of an experience which actually happens), then his answer must be, Yes. When Baillie presents Scripture as the "text" of the Church, he is to be understood as saying that it is the kind of life attested to by Scripture as God's will for mankind that is the criterion and definition of the Church as it exists. Preaching, the Sacraments and

¹Ibid., pp. 30-31.

discipline demonstrate the presence of the Church in so far as they themselves reflect the message which describes that kind of life. If the themes of Word and Sacrament are presented in that light, then they meet the criteria for preaching i.e. that the terms do not imply a limitation of the boundaries of the Church, and that the terms reflect part of a genuine human experience within the life of the Church.

The distinction between the classical Catholic notae ecclesiae and the Protestant "tests" of the Church has often been spoken of as if the former apply to the "invisible" Church and the latter to the "visible". Baillie traces this theme, which was absent in the sermons, through its development and summarizes the distinction in the way it is usually conceived:

The visible Church is the earthly institution which we can all see with our eyes, the society of all who profess Christianity, some bad, some good, some sincere, some hypocrites, but all equal members of the organization. . . . But in contrast to that there is the invisible Church--not of course altogether different from the former, and yet distinct. It contains no imposters, and has no divisions. It is raised above all that. It consists of the truly elect, and no others, and its boundaries are known to God alone. In that sense it is invisible. We can't certainly distinguish the truly elect from the non-elect. They both equally have their status as members of the visible Church. But "the Lord knoweth them that are His". The invisible Church is an unseen unity which transcends time and space and is known to God alone. Yet to some extent it shows

itself through the visible Church, and varyingly from time to time and from place to place, according as a Church has pure preaching of the word and rightly administered sacraments.¹

Why does Baillie not use this distinction to describe the Church in the sermons? In the first place he is concerned to speak of a Church that actually exists, or better, he is concerned to describe something that actually happens in the realm of human experience. In this sense he speaks of a visible Church. But it is not a visible Church defined by institutional boundaries; it is a Church defined by the experience of God's reconciling love. And this Church is not wholly invisible, it is discernible in so far as, and where ever men exhibit the kind of love revealed in the life and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, both adjectives are unsuitable for describing the true ecclesia, the Body of Christ. The first violates the criterion of using terms which do not limit the Church by historical or ecclesiastical boundaries. The second violates the criterion of using terms which reflect genuine and visible human experience.

Baillie does, however, offer an apologetic for the importance of affirming an "invisible" character of

¹Ibid., pp. 33-34.

the Church. Rather than speak of an "invisible Church", he would have his students appreciate the importance of the "invisible unity" of the Church, and to set their sights on doing all they can to make the unity which is invisible more visible. In this sense he stresses the importance of recognizing the truth contained in the notae ecclesiae, and the vocation to which all men have been called. This vocation and its goal are recognized and affirmed when we "can honestly say, with the ancient Creed: 'I believe in one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church'."¹

It is apparent that Baillie's emphasis in presenting the doctrine of the Church has been on describing a community which is part of past and present experience. Salvation, as the mark of the Church, has also been presented as it can be seen in past and present experience. But by the mention of the goal and destiny of this community using the language of the creed it is clear that there is an eschatological element involved in both salvation and the Church. This theme must await treatment in Chapter XII, which deals with the Christian hope and the Kingdom of God. It is important to note, however,

¹ Ibid., pp. 40-42.

that the theme of salvation was introduced within the context of the doctrine of the Church. And in so doing Baillie was able to present salvation, not merely as a future hope with all the individualistic connotations of self-centered concern for the state of one's soul, or as something to be earned in fear of never attaining it, but as a contemporary experience to be recognized, a contemporary challenge to be accepted, a contemporary gift of grace to be demonstrated as the life of the Church.

The lectures on the doctrine draw to a close with a re-statement of the themes which we have seen to be Baillie's dominant emphasis in presenting the doctrine of the Church in the sermons. The best summary of this presentation, showing its intimate relationship to the rest of the "story with a plot", is contained in the concluding chapter of God Was In Christ.¹

Two points which are relevant to this thesis as a whole have emerged from the examination of Baillie's treatment of the doctrine of the Church. The first has to do with the particular kind of experience which preaching, and the theology which serves it, must reflect.

¹"Epilogue: The Body of Christ," pp. 203 ff. This parallels the presentation in the sermons; supra, pp. 548-50.

The task of a theology for preaching does not involve an indiscriminate or eclectic approach to human experience. The task is one of examining experience in order to see where it conforms to the kind of life revealed in Jesus Christ. This kind of life involves a paradox. The Gospel tells of salvation realized through reconciling love in terms which are both intensely personal and individual, and also uncompromisingly social and corporate. These two sides of the Gospel message can never be separated. In fact they meet in human experience. In the sermons this experience was described by telling the story of the early Church; the inward witness of the Holy Spirit and outreaching love went hand in hand. This is the particular kind of experience that positive preaching must reflect, experience which conforms to the message of God's activity in the Body of Christ.

The second point has to do with the frame of reference within which preaching must make sense. Preaching is an activity of the Church. But the boundaries of the Church cannot be limited. Therefore preaching must be understandable (i.e. presented in terms which reflect and address genuine experience) by men and women regardless of their place within a particular tradition or community

delimited by ecclesiastical boundaries. Indeed, the language of preaching must seek to reach beyond the exclusively "religious" compartment of the lives of those in the pew to show where and how God is active in their experience reconciling them to each other and so to Himself. In so doing preaching can serve the vocation of the Body of Christ to make more visible the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

CHAPTER XI

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

One of the central ways in which the Church tells its story and demonstrates its faith is through the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The content of the story thus told is contained in all the chapters of the "story with a plot", particularly those which explicate the doctrines of the forgiveness of sin, grace, the Incarnation and the Atonement. When preaching on the sacraments, themselves, Baillie focuses his attention upon answering the question as to why the Church uses these particular modes of expression to demonstrate its faith.

This chapter illustrates the importance of preaching which gives a reason for even the most central and generally accepted aspects of the Church's life and worship. It will be shown that the mere acceptance of traditional ritual is not enough; even if the direct dominical institution of the sacraments could be demonstrated (and there is doubt about this), this in itself

would not be enough to justify celebration. Preaching must seek to show why these things are done from the perspective of genuine human needs; preaching must seek to address the faith-experience of men and women by showing what happens in their experience of life together in and through the sacraments.

Baillie believes that it is important for the preacher to undertake the task of preaching on the sacraments because of the widespread ignorance about their purpose and function in the life of the Church.¹ The question which he seeks to address in preaching is captured in the opening sentences of a communion sermon where he gives voice to the attitude of many men and women concerning the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Young people, I believe, are sometimes a little impatient of it, even when they are communicants themselves: they don't quite see the point of it, or the use of it, and they can't help questioning a bit. And older folk, even if they don't ask questions much, sometimes feel rather blank about it too. "The Lord Jesus took bread", and so they do it too, as a matter of loyal custom. But why?²

The question is, "Why do we celebrate the sacraments?"

Baillie's sermons present an answer in three parts:

(1) the human need for sacramental expression, (2) the

¹"The Preaching of Christian Doctrine," The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 146.

²"As they were eating, Jesus took bread," Matthew 26:26 (un) n.d., p. 2.

historical connections which determine the particular form and matter of the sacraments celebrated by most Protestant Christians, (3) the function of these sacraments.

The Doctrine Preached

It is true to human experience to say that the deepest truths often depend on material symbols for their communication; the gift from a loved one, the touch of a hand. The Gospel message relies heavily upon the spoken word for its communication, yet words by themselves are not wholly adequate. There is a human need for a further means of expressing its truth. The Christian Gospel is

too great and high for any words. It can't quite be put into human language, even the sublime and impassioned language of psalm and hymn and prayer. There is always something left over which, as Browning puts it, "broke through language and escaped". The very noblest words of our religion, taken by themselves, or even wedded to music or to emotion, are sometimes powerless to bring home the truth to our minds. The words beat in vain against the windows of our dull minds, and convey no revelation of God. We are like simple children who gaze blankly at the teacher, because the teacher's words are too abstract, and their minds are untouched, and they don't understand. Then the wise teacher sees their blank faces and adopts a better method: picks up some common object in the room, holds it in her hand, weaves a lesson round about it, lets the children touch and handle it. And their attention is

riveted, their imaginations begin to move, and the lesson is learnt--because it has become an object lesson. Well, do you see, in the great mysteries of the Kingdom of God, we are all but as little children. Our minds so easily flag, and lose hold of unseen realities. Words alone can't convey them. We want an object lesson too. We want "sensible signs"; we want a sacrament. And therefore Jesus took bread.

The first reason why sacraments are used as a means of communicating the Gospel is the experiential fact of the human need for material and dramatic modes of expression in order that men may have a fuller grasp of the message.

But why, in the case of Holy Communion, has the Church adopted the particular kind of sacramental expression it has? The sacrament is a symbolic expression which points beyond itself to a particular truth, the truth about God's presence and activity among men as revealed in Jesus Christ. And He made use of a particular kind of symbolic expression to convey His message. Jesus often used parables,

appealing to ear and eye and imagination to make vivid and plain the things of the Kingdom of Heaven. But this last night, alone with His disciples, on the eve of his death, he had still more difficult things to convey, about Himself and His coming death, and divine forgiveness and human fellowship. How could he explain it to those slow disciples? What

¹Ibid., pp. 3-4.

new parable will he use? Ah, he [will] go further than ever before: He will act a parable, and put an object-lesson into their very hands. That will be something they will not forget. That will come back to them when He is gone, and the deep, deep truth will come back with it. And so "the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to them and said: Take, eat, this is my body".

Therefore the Church uses the same form and matter that Jesus used, because it is His message that it intends to communicate. There is nothing arbitrary about the choice of symbols; the sacrament has a direct connection with a specific historical event, an event which gives the sacrament its meaning, and the event which defines the form and matter of the sacrament.

The disciples repeated the dramatic parable after their Master's death and the impact of His life and presence became real to them all over again.

Christ became real again. He "became known to them in the breaking of the bread"; and their hearts rose up again in faith to God, went out again in loyalty to Christ, and turned in brotherly love to one another.²

Baillie frequently stresses the point that the function of the sacrament is not so much a matter of drawing the attention of the communicant inward upon himself, but

¹Ibid., pp. 4-5.

²Ibid., p. 5.

outward toward God and fellowman.

God has given us this Sacrament to enable us to look away from ourselves to Him, not gazing inwards upon our own souls, but outwards upon His grace and mercy and peace, which are as near and as real as the bread that is placed in our hands. And even the faith by which we receive these gifts is not of our own making, but is His gift bestowed on our empty hands.

The very actions involved in the celebration draw the communicant out of himself toward others and giving becomes a part of receiving.

As you take the bread from your neighbour's hand, and pass it on to your neighbour, that will remind you, in heart and conscience, that the people beside you are your fellow Christians, to whom you are pledging yourself in Christian friendship, with all ill-will repented of. When the bread is broken, you will think of the broken body of Jesus, and of his broken heart of love, and with its call² to you to live in that spirit among your fellows.

Thus the function of the sacrament is to draw us out of ourselves in gratitude, in faith and in love for those with whom we live and work.

Baptism, too, is not an individual matter. It is a symbolic action of the Church and for the Church. It is interesting to note that Baillie does not preach about

¹"To make a people ready," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 175.

²"As they were eating, Jesus took bread," p. 6.

baptism in terms of the symbolic cleansing or death and resurrection of the individual child. He speaks rather of the acknowledgment that "it is the parents and the Church that accept the responsibility" for the child; baptism is the recognition of the fact that "it is through the faith of the parents and the Church that God's grace will come to the heart of the child."¹ In recognition of this fact, baptism anticipates confirmation and then communion with all the giving and receiving involved therein. Baillie preaches:

You haven't understood the meaning of Infant Baptism until you have come to think of it as pointing forward right through a man's life, and especially pointing forward to the time when he confirms its covenant for himself and is admitted to communicant membership of the Church.²

Thus the function of baptism is the recognition and admission of a child into the life of a community; it is not an individual matter but an expression of gratitude for the prevenient grace of God which works in and through the persons in the community of faithful, the Body of Christ.

¹"Baptism, Confirmation, Communion," Exodus 12:26-27 (un), 1940, p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 6.

Grace is God's personal influence on men which draws them out of themselves toward others in love.¹ Baillie sums up the meaning and the function of the sacraments when he preaches that the "sacraments are, above all else, means of grace, channels and instruments of grace, and all that happens in and through them is wrought by 'the manifold grace of God'."²

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

Baillie preached surprisingly few sermons on the sacraments in the light of his expressed concern that the subject ought to be frequently dealt with in sermons when the sacraments were celebrated. "As regards the Lord's supper," he writes, "I have long been of the opinion that we ought at communion seasons to preach much more directly about the sacrament."³ And when he does preach

¹Supra, Chapter VI, "The Doctrine of Grace".

²"The Manifold Grace of God," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 160.

³"The Preaching of Christian Doctrine," The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 146. Among all the existing sermons, only eight deal explicitly with either Baptism or Holy Communion. This small number is partially explained by another sentence on the page just cited: "It has always been my own practice to speak a few words about its meaning as a part of the baptismal service every time I have baptized a child." It can be inferred that these "few words" were not a part of the sermon.

on the sacraments, his treatment is surprisingly limited in the light of the extensive discussion of the subject in his lectures and other writings.¹ This can be partly explained by the all important fact that the truth communicated by the sacraments is the same truth which is presented in all the other chapters of the "story with a plot". And also, an important reason for the sacraments (as we have just seen) is the fact that words alone can not adequately convey the meaning symbolized by Baptism and Holy Communion. Another reason for the disproportionately limited treatment of the subject in the sermons as compared with the writings is that the formal presentation of the subject is largely concerned with problems arising out of the divergent practices of different communions. Throughout the dissertation, it has

¹ "Baptism and Lectures on the Eucharist" (Book 15); "The Grace of God and the Sacramental Order" (Book 61); "The Justification of Infant Baptism", The Evangelical Quarterly, 15, No. 1 (January, 1943), pp. 21-31; "Notes and Lectures on the Sacraments" (Book 62); The Meaning of Holy Communion, (Glasgow: The Iona Community Publishing Department, n.d.); "Systematic Theology, Vol. II" (Book 9), 19 pages. The substance of all these presentations is covered by the lectures published in The Theology of the Sacraments.

been noted that Baillie rarely deals with theological controversy in the pulpit; he views the preacher's task as proclamation, not debate.

Baillie approaches his task in the lectures with the same question as that which he felt to be on the minds of his congregation; "Why should we have sacraments at all?" He finds the question a legitimate one to ask because some communities within the Church, such as the Society of Friends, have adopted a non-sacramental form of Christianity. So too, many other thinking people in the Church who can readily accept the more rational elements of public worship find it difficult to justify the perpetuation of "such non-rational practices as the sprinkling of water on the head of an unconscious child or the consuming of tiny quantities of bread and wine to the accompaniment of solemn words." Merely to say, "We do these things because our Lord has laid them upon us" is not enough for two reasons. On the one hand, scholarship has questioned "whether the words of command and institution of baptism and the Lord's supper are really authentic utterances of Jesus Himself," (although as we shall see, Baillie believes that a good case can be made for the indirect dominical institution of these two sacra-

ments). And on the other hand, "it is not our Christian duty to accept what Jesus instituted or what the New Testament bequeathed in a spirit of blind and unintelligent obedience."¹

Baillie offers a single sentence summary of the method to be used in answering the question. In the sentence he brings together the three parts of the answer as it was preached, viz. the human need for sacramental expression, the historical connections which determine and define the sacrament, and the function of the sacrament.

What is there in human nature and human needs and our human situation, what is there in the Christian faith, the Christian Gospel, the Christian salvation, what is there in the nature of divine grace and its ways of working, to demand this strange visible, tangible expression, in material things and perceptible action, which we call sacramental?²

This sentence is a concise statement in Baillie's own words of the theological method which has been implicit in his treatment of other doctrines. Rather than imposing an external authority on the problem at the outset, the method involves approaching the problem by an examination of human experience and needs. This is then correlated

¹The Theology of the Sacraments, pp. 41-42.

²Ibid., p. 42.

with the faith of the community which interprets its experience by drawing on the sources of its faith, historical sources (especially those dealing with Jesus Christ) which address contemporary experience with the demands of love.

Before exploring the human need, the historically determinative events, and the function of Baptism and Holy Communion, Baillie defines what is meant by "sacrament" in general. Material things and the natural world can and do point beyond themselves by carrying a message of God's purpose for men. (Noah's response to the rainbow is an example.) An examination of the natural universe does not prove the purpose of God in the sense of natural theology, but the faith, or the capacity for faith, created in man, can be awakened by natural elements. In the broadest sense of the term, any material thing which draws man out of himself toward others in love can be understood as a sacrament, because it speaks of God's purpose for men that they be reconciled to each other and to God (the two can never be separated). The natural world of material things is not sacramental in and of itself, but it can become so when it speaks to faith of the Creator's purpose and promise. This is the determining factor which renders the material sacramental. "It is only when God speaks and awakens human faith that the

natural object becomes sacramental."¹

Another way to put it is to say that the material becomes sacramental when it conveys spiritual meaning. Baillie reviews the New Testament usage of the word "spiritual" (pneumatikos), noting that it is not posed in antithesis to the bodily (somatikos) or the natural (physikos) and when the distinction is made between the "spiritual body" (soma pneumatikon) and the "natural body" (soma psychikon), the latter refers to the body as it is understood in the biological sense but not as a separate or mutually exclusive entity as opposed to the spiritual body. Pneumatikos is posed in opposition to sarkikos ("carnal" or "fleshly"), but it is important to understand that sarx does not mean "body" as opposed to "soul"; it means the whole of human nature and "especially in the Pauline writings its fallen human nature." There is nothing which sets the spiritual (pneumatikos) apart from the bodily (somatikos) or the natural (physikos) as such.

The spiritual means that higher realm which is the realm of God's action, that higher element in man which is distinguished from the merely natural biological element and which man does not possess at all except in his relationship to God.

¹Ibid., p. 47.

Baillie finds the idea of spiritual in the New Testament best explicated by the word "personal", that part of man which determines his true humanity. "No man is living his true life if he is not living as a real person, in personal communion with other persons, and above all in that basic personal relationship with God which we call religion," or better, faith.¹

The idea that the sacraments convey personal meaning is implicit in the sermons, because the function of the sacraments is presented as grace (God's personal influence) drawing men out of themselves into corporate fellowship. However, the illuminating interpretation of the New Testament usage of "spiritual" as meaning "personal" would have been a helpful insight to share with the congregation because the term "spiritual" often connotes a vague ethereal phenomenon to the contemporary mind, particularly as regards the benefits received in the sacraments.

A sacrament can then be defined as a material element which speaks to the faith of man concerning his personal relationship to God and fellowman. It is within the given order of human experience that man conveys expressions of personal concern by way of the material.

¹Ibid., pp. 48-49.

In this world it is impossible for a person to express himself at all except through the material-- words uttered by the tongue and throat and lips and heard by the ear; words written with ink on paper and perceived by the eye. And persons also communicate with each other by symbolic movements, smiles and gestures, handshakes, linking of arms, and embraces, not to speak of the sexual union of man and wife. . . . Moreover personal relationships may be expressed or created or strengthened also by material objects used as gifts which convey affection. . . . But further, personal relationships depend in a still more organic way on our living together in a material world. And this means living together in the most material sense, sharing the same house, the same room, the same table, the same meals. . . . In all ages the breaking of bread together, the sharing of a common cup, have had a profound spiritual significance, as a means and expression of community.¹

Personal relationships have a material basis, and as the Gospel message speaks of a particular kind of personal relationship it is only fitting that the Church recognize and make use of this basic form of communication as it tells its story and lives out its message. It is true that the sacraments speak of man's relationship to God, but this is never an isolated matter of an individual and God to the exclusion of fellowman. The sacraments of the Church speak of human relationship and "apart from their social and corporate aspect they cannot be understood at all."² Man uses the material to express the personal dimension of his life, especially regarding his

¹ Ibid., pp. 49-50.

² Ibid., p. 50.

relationships to others, i.e. the social and corporate dimension of experience. There is a genuine human need for sacramental expression.

It has been noted that words are, strictly speaking, material modes of expression and the Church makes considerable use of this means of communication as it bears witness to God's activity among men. But as men are not limited to words in their communication of personal truths, neither is the Church bound to limit itself to the Word alone.

The 'Word' is a metaphor of revelation through the sense of hearing, and as such it is a symbol, for all words are symbols. But we need also symbols that can be seen and touched and tasted; and so we have the water and the bread and the wine and the actions of the sacraments.¹

The Church, in celebrating the sacraments, meets and serves the human need to express and apprehend personal truths by means other than words alone.

But are the water, the bread and wine, and the accompanying actions of the sacraments merely arbitrary symbols? No, the matter and form of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are not arbitrary. They are defined by their connection with a specific historical event, and it is this event that determines the content

¹Ibid., p. 51.

of the message communicated. The event is the life and death of Jesus Christ, and the message communicated is specifically concerned with the kind of life which is God's purpose and promise for mankind demonstrated in and through what Jesus did and said.¹

The efficacy of the words of God's promise made known through the celebration of the sacraments does not depend on whether or not they are the ipsissima verba of Jesus, because "the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus not only when they were literally uttered by His lips but in a much more integral way."² The promises of God are revealed to men through all of Jesus' words and works; they are demonstrated by His life, a life in which the grace of God was perfectly active. "This question of the dominical institution of the sacraments is a little like the question of whether and when and in what sense Jesus 'founded' the Christian Church."³ In the deepest sense, the "dominical" origin does not depend on a few isolated texts. What is historically plain is that

the origins of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper do go back in one form or another not only to the very beginning of the primitive Church,⁴ but also right into the life and ministry of Jesus.

¹Ibid., p. 55. ²Ibid., p. 59.

³Ibid. Also supra, pp. 561-562.

⁴The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 60.

Even though the literal founding of the practice of Holy Communion, and particularly Baptism, by Jesus as imperative rituals for the Church may be questioned, it is clear that these sacraments have at least been indirectly dominically instituted.¹ "They are saved from all arbitrariness by a clear historical connection with the episode of the Word-made-flesh."²

Baillie presents the historical connection which defines the form, matter and meaning of Holy Communion by simply telling the story of Jesus "acting a parable" or using an "object lesson" in the sermons. The technical questions about the dominical institution and the textual problems are not raised. The important point which he emphasizes in the lectures is singled out in the sermons, viz. that the sacrament has a definite historical connec-

¹Regarding the Lord's supper Baillie writes, "There can be no question that in essence it goes back to what our Lord did with his disciples in the upper room on that night before His crucifixion, even though there is some uncertainty as to the exact words He used." Ibid. Regarding baptism Baillie notes the critical questions as to the historical authenticity of Mark 16:9-20 and Matthew 28:19 (the main passages which refer to a definite "institution"), but goes on to say "In every part of the New Testament it appears to be assumed that baptism was the universal and essential gate of entry into the Christian community." Ibid., p. 76. And "the connection of the ministry of Jesus with a baptismal rite of repentance and cleansing and initiation is quite plain; Ibid., p. 77.

²The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 60.

tion with the life of Jesus and it is this event that gives it its specific meaning. It is interesting to note that even this point (the specific historical connection) is not dealt with regarding baptism in the existing sermon manuscripts, however the meaning of baptism which he does present clearly reflects his understanding of the activity of grace in the Incarnation

One important theme not developed in the sermons but presented in the lectures, is the essential relationship of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to the understanding of the connection between the sacraments today and the historic person of Jesus.

This doctrine is wholly dependent on the fact of the historic incarnation of God on earth [i.e. Jesus Christ], but it is also wholly bound up with the idea that the incarnation did not go on forever, but came to an end, and that since then the divine Presence is with us in a new way through the Holy Spirit, working in the Church through Word and sacraments.

This excludes the superstition that Jesus Christ is actually or literally incarnate in the Church or the sacraments. In so doing it also excludes the idea that the grace of God perfectly demonstrated in Christ is exclusively

¹Ibid., p. 65.

and mechanistically transmitted to succeeding generations through an ecclesiastically defineable sacramental channel.¹ Christ is present with us in that the grace of God supremely manifest in Him (i.e. the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ) is present and active in us. Christ, Himself, is not literally incarnate in the Church or the sacraments. ("When St. Paul in First Corinthians speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ, he is using a figure of speech"; in Colossians and Ephesians the relationship of Christ to the Church is clearly metaphorical in that it is spoken of as the relationship of the head to the body.²) Christ is present with us in the Church by the Word and sacraments through the working of the Holy Spirit.³ The Holy Spirit is the epistemological dimension of grace by which men are made consciously aware of God's work through the Word and sacraments.⁴

¹This second point is touched upon in one sermon, supra, pp. 551-552.

²The Theology of the Sacraments, pp. 64-65.

³Ibid., pp. 66-67.

⁴Cf. supra, Chapter XI, "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit", n.b., p. 528.

It has been shown that the sacraments operate through faith, but this is not to say that the function of grace in the sacraments is purely dependent on a subjective attitude of the communicant, and certainly not upon the attitude or absence of attitude on the part of a baptized infant. In the lectures this theme (implicit in the sermons) is developed by way of an illustration (which I have quoted before to illustrate the activity of grace) and which might well have been used in the sermons to explain the function of the sacraments as means of grace.

Let us imagine the case of a small child, a little boy, entrusted to the care of a nursery governess. When she arrives the little fellow is taken into the room where she is, and left in her care. But she is strange to him, he does not trust her, but looks distantly at this strange woman from the opposite corner of the room. She knows that she cannot do anything with him until she has won his confidence. She knows she has to win it. The little boy cannot manufacture it, cannot make himself trust the governess. His faith in her is something which he cannot create--only she can create it. And she knows that she cannot create it by forcing it; she has to respect the personality of the child; and to try to take the citadel by storm would be worse than useless, and would produce fear and distrust instead of confidence.

She sets about her task gently, using various means--words, gestures, smiles, and perhaps gifts, all of which convey something of the kindness of her heart. Until at last the little fellow's mistrust

is melted away, she has won his confidence, and of his own free will he responds to her advances and crosses the floor to sit on her knee. Now that her graciousness, using all these means, has created his¹ faith, she can carry on the good work she has begun.

In the illustration, the words, gesture and gifts are analogous to the sacraments which function as means of awakening faith and trust, they are analogous to the sacraments as means of grace. In a real sense it is grace that creates faith, but it is the genuine response of faith through which grace works by means of the sacraments.

The nature of the function of grace in the sacraments as that which draws man out of himself to others in love toward God and fellowman is clearly emphasized in the sermons. It is this theme that takes a place of prominence as the concluding point in the classroom lectures on the doctrine. The function of the sacraments, Baillie teaches, "is to awaken our faith by taking us out of ourselves and fixing our minds on the objective, upon the Divine, upon God, His reality, His promise." And when we think of the human dimension of God's objective promise and purpose, we must not merely think of what we

¹The Theology of the Sacraments, pp. 53-54.
Also supra, pp. 403-404.

are doing in celebrating the sacraments but that it is God who is acting in and through us. He is giving, we are receiving. "All these human acts and responsibilities would be a weary and overburdening business unless we believed that God was present with us, acting through us, able and willing . . . exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."¹

The function of God's activity as that which draws us out of ourselves into a relationship with our fellows can be further seen in baptism. It is not the faith of an isolated individual through which grace is active. "Does this mean that the benefits of the sacrament come to the child in response to the faith of the parents and the Church? Yes, indeed; that is just what it means."² It is through the child's environment, his parents and those with whom he lives as he grows to maturity that the grace of God is mediated to him. The Holy Spirit works through the sacrament to make these people conscious, not only of their responsibility, but of what God is doing through them. Baptism marks the

¹"The Doctrine of the Sacraments" (Book 9), p.18.

²The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 83.

entry of the child into a community in which he will receive the benefits of grace through the love, nurture and admonition of the persons in that community. "Of course God is not bound by His sacraments, and He may in His grace use any environment," but the community which practices baptism bears witness to the fact that it understands and is consciously aware that God is and will be active in the environment in which the child will grow to manhood.¹

The function of the sacraments has an eschatological dimension in that it points toward the time when the glimpse of life as it should be, given by God through the Holy Spirit in the celebration of the sacraments, will be a fulfilled reality. This function addresses a genuine human need because the experience of estrangement from God and fellowman is all too real. "We have a certain sense of separation, our fellowship is never complete, or even our reconciliation with each other; and the same is true of our relationship to God." A function of the sacraments is to help us to look forward to the fulfillment

¹Ibid., pp. 85-86.

of God's promise of reconciliation which is addressed to all men.¹ (We shall turn to a fuller development of the content of the Christian hope in the next chapter.)

The present treatment of Baillie's teachings on the sacraments has not been an exhaustive exposition of his presentation in the lectures which are readily available in published form. Themes involving theological debate concerning divergent practices of differing communions were not dealt with in the sermons; some of these are discussed in the lectures. For example: Baillie does not quarrel with immersion, but finds that sprinkling is an adequate symbol because the "dying and rising with Christ, the cleansing, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are not three separate realities at all, but aspects of the same reality." It is all a function of grace in which "all these newnesses come together into one." It is not just a matter of cleansing and rising again; it is fundamentally a matter of receiving the grace whereby we are enabled to move forward in the life

¹Ibid., pp. 70-71, 102-107.

of faith.¹ Infant baptism is justified on grounds which are consistent with Baillie's emphasis that the Church cannot be limited to those who consciously adhere to institutional forms.

It is "God's will that children should have such an experience of His grace and love as befits their stage of growth; . . . therefore they should be regarded as part of the Church of Christ, the entrance to which is marked by the sacrament of baptism."²

One theme in the lectures which might have well been treated in the sermons is the sense in which the Eucharist is understood as a sacrifice. The word "sacrifice" appears five times in the "Order for the Celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion" in The Book of Common Order; in particular the phrase, "that we . . . may offer unto Thee a sacrifice in righteousness; through Jesus Christ our Lord."³ In spite of the divergent views among Catholic and Protestants as to what this means, it would be well to clarify the meaning of the term within the context of

¹Ibid., pp. 78-80.

²Ibid., p. 82.

³The Book of Common Order (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 117.

the service where the celebration occurs. In the lectures Baillie notes that a "directly sacrificial meaning" cannot be read into the New Testament words of the constitution. He writes: "I do not think we can safely build upon a sacrificial interpretation of the words 'Do this for my anamnēsis'."¹ The word anamnēsis did not refer to a memorial sacrifice, but to a very human act of recalling; not merely the remembering of a past incident either, but a recalling of its meaning and power into the present. But Baillie does maintain the legitimacy of the idea of offering in the Eucharist; offering in the sense of offering up our desires in prayer to God, the offering of praise and thanksgiving, and the offering of ourselves to God and the service of His Kingdom. And as Holy Communion involves the recalling of Christ and indeed the experience of receiving His grace, "we can only make an offering in union with Christ's sacrifice."² In the light of the eternal dimension of the atonement,³ it can be seen that we are

¹The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 112.

²Ibid., p. 116.

³Supra, Chapter VIII, "The Doctrine of the Atonement", n.b., p. 488.

united "by faith with His eternal sacrifice, that we may plead and receive its benefits and offer ourselves in prayer and praise to God."¹ Thus, although we are in no sense making a sacrifice of Christ all over again, there is the sense in which we participate in His sacrifice because His life and death constitute the definitive demonstration of the activity of grace experienced in and through the sacrament. It is in this sense that the term "sacrifice" in the liturgy is to be understood; the preacher might do well to explain this somewhat misleading word as it applies to the sacrament of Holy Communion.

This chapter has been addressed to the question "Why do we celebrate the sacraments?" The answer to the question cannot be taken for granted; the answer is one which must be offered by the preaching ministry of the Church. Baillie's answer to the question, particularly in the light of the challenge of non-sacramental Christianity, has been based on the needs and experience of persons within the Church who accept God's help through the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. He has not

¹The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 118.

presented an answer which makes the sacraments obligatory for all who would come to know the activity of grace in their lives. The celebration of the sacraments is not something which we must do; it is something which God has offered as a means to help us. Baillie's answer has centered on the thankful response of men and women who have found their needs best met by the sacraments, the thankful response of men and women who have found the activity of grace to be a more tangible reality in their lives in and through them.

This chapter has demonstrated the necessity of preaching on the sacraments in order that they will not become a mere ritual or empty habit. Preaching, which ought always to accompany the sacraments, could well afford to use this opportunity from time to time to preach directly on the sacraments. This chapter has illustrated the theological method which lies behind most of Baillie's preaching on doctrinal themes. His presentation does not seek to justify the sacraments on the basis of an external authority of Scripture or tradition. The presentation begins with an examination of the human need for sacramental modes of expression. These experiential factors are then correlated with the particular modes of sacramental expression which are most directly connected with

the historical events which definitively demonstrate the message which is to be communicated. It is then shown that the message becomes a demonstrably active reality in the faith-experience of men and women worshipping together in the celebration of the sacraments. Baillie's method of treating the sacraments is a good example of doctrine which is presented in a way that reflects and addresses human faith-experience.

CHAPTER XII

THE DOCTRINES OF IMMORTALITY AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The "story with a plot" draws to a close with its message of eternal life, life in the Kingdom of God. This chapter deals with matters which have happened, which are happening, and the hope of that which is to come. As in the case of the beginning of the story and the chapter about creation, this chapter deals with matters which are supra-historical. They involve every moment of history, yet they are matters which transcend history, therefore the language used will be symbolical. This raises the problem for the preacher which has arisen before; viz. the problem of presenting the supra-historical in terms which reflect and address human experience. The general problem is that of presenting the symbolic language of the Gospel in a manner which speaks from and to the experience of those gathered to hear the message proclaimed.

The doctrines are treated together in a single chapter because one leads directly into the other. Immortality has Christian significance only within the context of the community of the Kingdom of God. In the lectures this inseparable relationship is clear. Usually the presentation of one is interwoven with a presentation of the other. In the sermons, even though one may be abstracted for emphasis on a given Sunday morning, both are clearly implied in each case. The following reconstruction of the theological themes in the sermons will follow the flow of Baillie's systematic treatment from life eternal to life in the Kingdom of God.

THE DOCTRINE PREACHED

In one sermon, which emphasizes the doctrine of immortality, Baillie sets forth the questions which provide an outline for his method of presentation: "Let me break it up into two questions: Why do we believe in a future life? And: What do we believe about it?"¹ It is important to note that the first question

¹"The Christian Doctrines: (7) Immortality,"
2 Timothy 1:10 (617), 1933, p. 2.

is going to deal with the factors in human experience which give rise to belief in life after death. The question is raised by a genuine human experience which is the pastoral focus of Baillie's concern when preaching on the doctrine; the question is raised by death.

Nothing is more characteristic of our human situation than the brevity of life and the certainty of death. . . . If a man die shall he live again? Do I really believe in a life beyond the grave? And why?¹

Baillie does not approach the presentation of his faith in the assurance and hope of the Gospel by first calling down the authority of Scripture. There is a prior question which must be asked, even of the writers of the New Testament.

You may say that we believe in the future life because the New Testament teaches it. Yes, but how does the New Testament know? Those men who wrote the New Testament, those early followers of Christ, why did they believe in a life beyond?²

The first question is not "What do we believe?" but "Why?". What is there in human experience and what has happened in human history to give rise to faith in life eternal?

¹"Immortality," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 52.

²Ibid.

Baillie clears the decks of possible misconceptions by briefly disposing of two approaches which are unsatisfactory. Spiritualism is one such approach. Baillie makes no final pronouncement about the factuality of "contact" with the dead through mediums, but he is quite skeptical. In any case the kind of knowledge that may be gained through spiritualism has nothing to do with real faith in immortality because it tells nothing of the purpose and quality of life after death. There is little point in "believing in a future life, any more than in believing in a present life, if that is all there is to it; and indeed not much comfort either. No the spiritualistic argument is not of much use to us." Philosophical speculations which argue from the immortality of the soul are not of much use either. Plato advanced such an argument and Baillie believes that behind his argument lies a profound faith in life eternal but he finds his reasons unsatisfactory on two counts. Plato's argument "suggests a cold naked disembodied spirit that goes journeying somewhere—that is all he seems to get at." But a mere existence of a soul or spirit disembodied from the rest of the human body and personality has little to say about the purpose of

the whole of human life and life eternal. And in the second place, "if we can't be sure of immortality without such a difficult philosophical argument, it is a sad business for the ordinary man who is not a philosopher and can't follow such arguments." No there is something more simple and direct within the experience of humanity which points us toward a deeper faith in eternal life.¹

Basically, faith in immortality is based on faith in God and His purpose for mankind. The purposes of God are not matters for literal proof; they are matters of faith. And this faith has a profound manifestation in the experience of men which points toward God's eternal care for his creatures.

What is it that brings home the reality of the future life to us more than anything else? I believe it is this: when some dear one, who was a fine and noble Christian is taken away by death. Then you feel quite sure of the life beyond. Then you feel something like this: That noble soul was God's work, refined and beautified by the grace of God through all the years of a Christian life here on earth. And now when death comes, is that the end? No, it couldn't be. That would make nonsense of the whole business. God wouldn't treat His children so. Nay, since we are sure of God, of His love, of His power, of His purpose, we are sure

¹"The Christian Doctrines: (7) Immortality," pp. 3-4.

also that those who live in Him can never really die; and that when death comes to them, it is but leading them to a richer and fuller life in God.

But faith in God's eternal care for those in whom His good purposes have begun here on earth is not wholly based on personal experience in the face of bereavement. This experience, itself, is informed and has for its supreme argument the historically documented faith-experience of men and women in the face of Jesus' death and resurrection. He died on the Cross, but He

couldn't possibly be destroyed by death. One of his early disciples said that "God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it". Whenever any of those early Christians thought of death, and the terror of it, and the dark uncertainty which lay behind--then they would think of Jesus Christ. That made all the difference. He had passed through death, and come through it, and He wasn't dead, He was alive, with a richer life than ever. And so they weren't afraid of death for themselves any longer.

¹ Ibid., p. 5. A similar treatment of these themes is found in "Immortality," To Whom Shall We Go?, pp. 52-58, however, the order of presentation in the manuscript quoted offers a better illustration of the principle worked out in Chapter III, "The Doctrine of Providence", which calls for the initial identification with human experience in order that the content of the doctrine subsequently informed by Scripture may be better recognized and understood.

² Ibid., p. 6.

Thus the answer to the first question, "Why do we believe in life eternal?" is given. The answer is based on personal experience, but experience which is informed and gains its definitive expression through the historical events surrounding Jesus' life, death and resurrection. In the truest sense, it is "an argument of faith in God through Jesus Christ".¹ We believe in life eternal "because through Jesus Christ we believe in God, who brought Jesus through death and who will bring us too."²

Having given a reason for faith in life eternal by answering the question "Why do we believe in immortality?", Baillie continues by dealing with the second question: "What do we believe about it?" There is much in this question which cannot be answered. Detailed descriptions and predictions of the kind of life involved have not been given us to know in precise literal terms. "What kind of resemblance will it have to the life we know in this world?" Baillie preaches; "I can't answer. We don't know." Only a general statement of faith which is based on what we have seen of God's

¹"Immortality", To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 58.

²"The Christian Doctrines: (7) Immortality,"
p. 7.

activity among men can be made: "By faith we are sure that it will all be in God's hands and that what God is ultimately leading us to is that perfect blessedness which is life in Him." But many questions, often based on a prosaically literal interpretation of the New Testament's supra-historical symbols about life after death, simply cannot be answered.¹

Baillie offers some of the interpretations of the New Testament which have been given. For example, what can be said about the idea of Hell?

What exactly will happen to those who don't inherit eternal life? Again, I can't altogether answer. Some Christians think the New Testament indicates that those who are lost will simply go out of existence altogether, perish completely. Others venture to hope that, through God's indefatigable grace and mercy, all souls may eventually inherit eternal life.²

In dealing with this theme, Baillie only advances the tentative theories of conditional immortality and the hope of universalism. At no point in his preaching does he even use the symbolic language frequently associated with hell, e.g. "eternal fire", "eternal punishment", etc. (cf. Matthew 25:41, 46 et. al.). Neither does he relate the symbolic language about hell to human

¹Ibid., pp. 7-8.

²Ibid., p. 8.

experiences such as the experience of separation from God, alienation, estrangement etc. These have been treated within the context of the love of God under the heading of His wrath or judgment. There judgment was treated less as an eschatological event than a present experience.¹ Baillie's emphasis in preaching on eternal life is clearly an emphasis on the hope which springs from faith in God. Another sermon on eternal life concludes with these words:

We are blind and ignorant children of a day, and about that future life beyond the grave we know very little. Perhaps I should say we know nothing at all about it. But "we know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep what we have committed to him against that day".²

We know virtually nothing about life after death except that which we have come to know of God's work and purpose in human life, particularly in Jesus Christ. And this offers faith some insight. That which has been committed to God in this world is not simply a disembodied soul or spirit. It is the whole body, the whole person. Christianity has always spoken of the "resurrection of the body." This conveys symbolically the truth

¹Supra, pp. 180-81.

²"Though our outward man perish," 2 Corinthians 4:16 (338), n.d., p. 14.

that we are and will be reconciled to Him with all that we have committed to Him. The shape and form of this body and the environment in which it will live can only be spoken of in the language of images and pictures. All we can say is that

whatever is necessary for the full rich blessed life . . . beyond the grave, that God will give to those who have found their life in Him. . . . We have to use pictorial ways of talking about it--gates of pearl and streets of gold, and white raiment and palms of victory; but we know that these are only pictures; and the reality is far better than anything we can imagine.

We can only speak about the future dimension of eternal life in symbols. But these symbols are related to the present experience of God's work and purpose and pre-eminently to the life of Jesus Christ among men.

Eternal life is not just a matter of the future. "We know God through Jesus Christ and that is enough. 'This is eternal life', says John, 'to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent'. That is eternal life, whether in this world or the next."²

Temporal, historically defineable life is but part of life eternal. The major thrust of Baillie's sermons in

¹"The Christian Doctrines: (7) Immortality," p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 10.

so far as they seek to offer assurance of the Gospel's answer to the question "What is eternal life?" is that what is done through faith in God in this life must be seen in an eternal perspective. All that is done in love for Him and fellowman can never be wasted for these things are part of God's eternal purpose for mankind. The doctrine of immortality not only reflects human experience, it also addresses it with a message of assurance and purpose and hope.

From the foregoing it can be seen that eternal life encompasses and transcends past, present and future history. It can also be seen that a primary characteristic of that life, in so far as we can know anything about it, involves living in love toward God and fellowman; it involves life in community. The words which the Church has traditionally used to speak of that life in community are the "Kingdom of God"; eternal life is life in the Kingdom of God. Baillie introduces this theme in preaching by noting its central place in the preaching and teaching of Jesus. Jesus spoke of it "in one parable after another", He spoke of the Kingdom "more than anything else. One might almost

say it was the centre of his message. But, Baillie goes on to ask, "what did it signify?"¹

To say that Jesus meant just a "blessed place into which we may hope to enter after we leave this mortal life behind," a future resting place called Heaven, "is rather too simple. Jesus meant much more than that."

For example, Jesus spoke of the Kingdom as a thing that was going to come: not just a place, awaiting us individually in the future when we die, but something which was approaching, or growing up, or developing or spreading—not only in some distant region beyond the skies, but also apparently here on earth in the midst of human life. "Thy kingdom come", he taught his disciples to pray, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". You see the Kingdom seemed to have as much to do with earth as with heaven. It is not just the heaven that awaits us as our reward when we die,² that is not the thing we are above all to seek.

The Kingdom, the kind of life in fellowship with God and man which we are to seek first, is something which Jesus spoke of as a coming reality in this world.

But can the Kingdom be interpreted to mean solely the "cause of human progress"? This has been an appealing idea to Christians, particularly in the

¹"The Kingdom of Heaven is like . . .,"
Matthew 13:44 (368), 1925-31, p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 3.

recent past. Up to a point this has been a wholesome thing. It has been a healthy corrective to emphasize that "the Christian life is not just a matter of saving one's soul, but of serving the Kingdom, and helping to set it up on earth among our fellow creatures--a noble conception. . . . But that is also too simple an answer." Jesus certainly didn't mean just that. His emphasis was not upon what man could do to bring about the Kingdom but upon "the Kingdom as a gift of God." The teaching of Jesus was not only a call to service, it was also a Gospel message. It was the good news of hope and assurance that through the service of men God would bring about the Kingdom. Its coming depends on God, for it is His gift.¹

But if the Kingdom is something which is coming in this world and if it is something which God will do, does this mean that it will be a cataclysmic intervention in history by God? Was Jesus talking about "the millenium"? It is true that Jesus did speak of the Kingdom as something which was immanent. "He used to say it was coming, was at hand. But then he also used to speak sometimes as if it had already begun to come,

¹Ibid., pp. 5-7.

as if whenever he did a kind act of help or healing, God's Kingdom was there." No, the language of the New Testament cannot be interpreted as giving an idea of the Kingdom which is simply a coming intervention of God in human history and the advent of a supernatural order of things on earth. The Kingdom of God of which Jesus spoke is something which is coming, a gift from God, and also something which has already begun to come.

Jesus taught about the Kingdom in all these ways, ways which seem to be saying different things about the relationship of the Kingdom to temporal history. His message of the Kingdom encompassed all human imagination about time and temporal events, and it went beyond. There always seemed to be a vibrant tension in the way He taught the relationship of the Kingdom to heaven on the one hand, and to earth on the other. Temporal experience and eternal life are inseparably wed in the New Testament understanding of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is

the whole of that deep hidden splendid reality which underlies what we see with our eyes and touch with our hands. It means that infinite unseen beauty and perfection and love and harmony for which we strive and yet in which we rest; eternal and yet also temporal; lying in the ideal future and yet¹ also in the present, and from eternity to eternity.

¹Ibid., p. 10.

Thus, although the "Kingdom of God" is a supra-historical symbol which points toward an eternal community, it touches history at every moment. It is from our experience of its past and present reality that its challenge and hope take meaning. We know that eternal life, be it now or beyond the grave, means the challenge of "loosing our lives to save them, dying to our petty selves, renouncing all our self-centred narrowness."¹ And even though it is all too plain that the Kingdom has not been fulfilled in the world in which we live, we have the living hope that what God is doing in and through us is not wasted but will be brought to perfection. We live in that hope because we have seen this promised purpose of God for all men brought to perfection in Jesus Christ. It is a hope based on what has happened, it is a hope for the present, it is the hope for eternity.

THE DOCTRINES PREACHED AND THE DOCTRINES
TAUGHT

The language used to speak of life beyond the grave and the fulfillment of the Kingdom is symbolical

¹ Ibid., p. 11.

in the sense that it speaks of a supra-historical realm. The symbols are woven into pictures and images which are mythological because while they convey a vital message of assurance and hope, they do not claim to be literal predictions of that which lies beyond. The problem for preaching lies in the necessity of showing that this supra-historical language does in fact reflect and address human historical experience. Baillie has done this in the sermons by showing that the supra-historical realm described in the mythological language of bodily resurrection into the full life of perfect communion with God and man touches historical experience at every point. It is not a wholly other realm of which we can only speak on the basis of blind credulity in external sources; it is a realm of which we can speak because our symbolic language gains its content and meaning from the experience of bereavement and the conviction which arises from that experience, particularly in the historically documented conviction of those who were confronted by the death of Jesus.

The importance for preaching of placing the historical experience of men within the context of supra-historical eternity as an integrally related part can be seen by critically examining alternative views which

have held currency in the minds of ordinary church members and theologians as they interpret the New Testament without due reference to the whole range of genuine human experience which is reflected therein. Baillie introduces a lecture entitled "What is the Kingdom of God" by noting the confusion which results from viewing the New Testament passages about the Kingdom as simply being either historical predictions or supra-historical events which are totally removed from temporal experience. When we read about the Kingdom of God in the New Testament does it refer to "something present or something future, something visible or something invisible? Did its 'coming' mean something gradual or something sudden and conclusive?" Some passages speak of "heaven as the abode of God and the future abode of redeemed men," others can be taken to mean the "sum of all good causes on earth." Sometimes it means "the gradual triumph of God's good cause through the ages," but at other times it can be taken to mean "simply 'the end of the world'."¹

These matters have not merely been a cause for confusion among ordinary church members who read the

¹"Eschatology: The Kingdom of God and the Christian Hope" (dossier), p. 2.

Bible. In recent decades they have been the focus of considerable theological controversy. Baillie sketches the development of eschatology since the turn of the century to illustrate this point. Harnack's lectures entitled What Is Christianity gave expression to a dominant view at the beginning of this century which held

that the Kingdom of God in the New Testament must be understood in a moral and spiritual sense as the reign of God which spreads gradually from soul to soul and from age to age, transfusing and improving human society in this world.¹

Albert Schweitzer's The Quest of the Historical Jesus fell like a bombshell on the theological world a few years later in 1906. Baillie summarizes the view put forward toward the end of that book as follows:

When Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God and taught men to expect and to pray for its coming, He did not mean anything like a moral and spiritual movement in men's hearts, or a process of religious and social advance, moving on in gradual stages, with the help of good men. He meant an entirely transcendent and supernatural order of things which would come breaking in with cataclysmic suddenness, like a thief in the night, like the lightning, like the flood in the days of Noah, when men were least expecting it; and it would transform everything, it would be the end of the present order of things altogether. The Kingdom was not something that men could build, or even help to set up or bring in. It was entirely the work and gift of God. Man could

¹ Ibid., p. 3. Cf. Adolf Harnack, What Is Christianity?, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (London: Williams & Norgate, 1912), p. 57.

only watch and pray, and in God's appointed time He would intervene and set up His Kingdom.

One of the things which Schweitzer did was to bring to the fore the influence of the apocalyptic movement in Jewish literature on Jesus' thought. This is a valuable tool in helping us to understand parts of the New Testament witness and the language used to describe the Kingdom. Schweitzer's extreme emphasis upon the apocalyptic character of the Kingdom in Jesus' teaching was understood by Schweitzer himself to be a kind of reductio ad absurdum of the attempt to reconstruct a Jesus of history as the sole focus of faith. Nevertheless the effect of his eschatological interpretation of Jesus' mission, although considerably modified by scholars who followed him, had a profound influence on the whole course of theological thought.

Already two radically divergent facets of the New Testament message can be seen. Harnack placed his emphasis on the temporal side of Jesus' message, and Schweitzer placed full weight on the supra-historical symbols to the exclusion of their relationship to temporal history, (other than marking its end).

¹ Ibid., p. 4. Cf. Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. W. Montgomery (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910), pp. 350 ff.

The controversy raged on and Baillie's next example is Karl Barth.

According to Barth, everything in Christian theology should be understood in the light of the fact that we Christians in the world, whether in this century or any other, are living "between the times". We are living in the interim period between the ascension of Christ and His Parousia, and that determines everything. Christianity is not a system of timeless truths about a spiritual Kingdom which goes forward gradually and invisibly in all ages in human history. It is a message about a Divine incursion into human history. In one sense this decisive thing has already taken place: it took place with the coming of Christ and above all with His crucifixion. It was made plain in His resurrection and the glorious forty days that followed. But that was not a final manifestation, for it was withdrawn at what we call the Ascension, and the final consummation still lies beyond, in what we call the Second Coming of Christ. Meanwhile, we who are Christians, in the interim period, have a foot in both worlds. We are living by faith in the new era of God's kingdom, and yet we are also living in the old age of the sinful fallen world with which Christ has done away.

Clearly Barth's emphasis is dependent upon the eschatological framework of thought. For him the symbolic language about the supra-historical dimension of the Kingdom is taken to mean literal events in future history. For him too resurrection and ascension are taken to mean

¹ Ibid., pp. 7-8. Cf. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, I, 2, trans. G. T. Thomson, Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), pp. 413, 693.

literal events in history.

C. H. Dodd has also taken the eschatological dimension of Jesus' teaching with the utmost seriousness, but in his case the emphasis fell on the "realized" character of the Kingdom in and through what Jesus initiated by His life and work. For Dodd the symbolic language which speaks of the future coming of the Kingdom

is not to be understood as something that would happen at a future date in the historical order, but rather as something beyond history altogether, something supra-historical which can only be symbolized in the future tense, but which is really supra-temporal, eternal, in the heavenly realm, and which broke into history in Jesus Christ. . . . In the temporal sense there is no interim period, and no waiting for a future event, for the New Age is here and we are living in it.¹

Oscar Cullmann has carried the debate a step further. His important book Christ and Time has placed the idea of time itself at the forefront of New Testament interpretation. He writes that the New Testament authors spoke of what was, what is, and what is to come with primary reference to temporal categories of past, present and future time, not different realms of reality.

¹ Ibid., pp. 9-10. Cf. C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), pp. 79 ff.

In Biblical thought, eternity is not set in antithesis to time. Eternity in the Bible means endless time. And all that is written about the Kingdom is to be understood in terms of temporal history and time as we know it. He disagrees with Schweitzer in that he holds that the decisive thing in the New Testament witness to Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom is not the expectation of an immanent future event, but the fact that it has already come through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. However he also differs with Dodd in believing there is still a future consummation which is not supra-historical but a future event in temporal history. Baillie believes that Cullmann "takes time too seriously or at least too onesidedly."¹

Baillie also criticizes Cullmann in a way which reflects his criticism of the other theologians whose emphases we have just traced. Baillie writes: "He seems to me to force the New Testament material too neatly into a single clear-cut scheme." Although there is much truth to be gained from the various emphases of these men, Baillie's own approach to the Scriptures

¹ Ibid., pp. 11-12. Cf. Oscar Cullmann Christ and Time, trans. Floyd V. Filson (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1962), pp. 37 ff., 140.

(in which he does not expect to find ready made doctrine) lends itself to a broader understanding of the many strains of thought which are brought together in the New Testament. Speaking about the Biblical witness to the Kingdom and fixed interpretations of its message, Baillie says: "In reality there is far less uniformity, far more variety, in the various parts of the New Testament, and also perhaps a more imaginative and less dogmatic approach, with more loose ends and unanswered questions." With regard to time and eternity, he notes that in the Johannine literature as well as in Hebrews, eternity is more than a mere quantitative extension of time, it has a more qualitative meaning.¹

As for the nature of the language used to speak of the "Last Things", Baillie re-affirms the necessity of appreciating the symbolic pictures of the New Testament writers for what they are. He writes:

I do not see how we can dispense with the idea that somehow the beginning and ending of the "sacred story" are outside historical time altogether, and can only be described "mythically".²

Historical time is part of eternity; both are involved in the "sacred story" which runs from "eternity through time and history into eternity".³ We can speak of that

¹Ibid., p. 13.

²Ibid.

³"The Christian Doctrine of Last Things: Part I - Individual Eschatology" (Book 11), p. 1.

part of eternity and that part of the story which lies beyond human history only because events have happened in the historical part of eternity which point beyond to God's purpose and will for His creation. We speak of eternal life and life in the Kingdom on the basis of what God has given us to know in human experience of that life. All our words about that life can be measured and determined by a concrete event in historical time, viz. the life and death of Jesus Christ and the conviction of His full and perfect "bodily resurrection" and "ascension to reign at the right hand of God".

The above excursion into theological controversy has served to show the relationship and importance of Baillie's method of approaching the doctrines of Immortality and the Kingdom of God as compared with various leading theologians who have dealt with the problem. The fruits of their scholarship play a part in his own approach, but perhaps the over-riding concern which dominates his method is the necessity of preaching doctrine which reflects human experience because the New Testament witness arose out of such experience and also because the doctrines are intimately related to the lives of those to whom he preaches. The supra-historical

symbols which are used to describe God's purpose reflect and address genuine human history and experience.

Baillie introduces his lectures on Immortality with the same question that introduced his sermons on the doctrine. He tells his students that "the best approach to the subject will be, not to begin by asking what precisely we believe in detail about the life beyond, but begin by asking why we believe in it at all."¹ He goes on to point out that the assertion that the Bible and the Church teach the doctrine is not enough; a prior question must be asked even of the writers of the New Testament. The themes covered in the lectures parallel the themes presented in the sermons: the two unsatisfactory approaches of philosophical argument² and spiritualism; the basis in experience which comes with the death of a loved one and the argu-

¹"The Christian Doctrine of Last Things: Part I - Individual Eschatology" (Book 11), p. 1.

²A brief discussion of the Platonic argument from the immortality of the soul contrasted with the New Testament faith in eternal life is presented in published form in, "What is Living and What is Dead in Christianity," Out of Nazareth, pp. 149-150.

ment from faith in God's purpose to eternal life; the experience of the followers of Jesus after His death which becomes the decisive argument for all future faith in immortality.¹

Baillie's sparse treatment of hell in the sermons has been noted.² Two points in the lectures explain why this theme plays such a small part in his preaching on "Last Things". Hell and judgment are viewed as present realities of experience.

Hell is pictured in the Book of Revelation as a lake of fire, but doubtless thoughtful people always knew that that was a pictorial representation. . . . But, making allowance for that, can we doubt that there is reality in the conception? If this life is a matter of tremendous issues, if to glorify and enjoy God is the purpose of our existence, then what worse hell could there be than to miss God, to be without His righteousness and love, to be a sinner . . . to be thereby shut out from God's presence and fellowship. That is hell--where ever or however it may be experienced.

¹"The Christian Doctrine of Last Things: Part I - Individual Eschatology," pp. 1-40. Many of these themes also appear in "Eschatology: The Kingdom of God and the Christian Hope," pp. 15-45.

²Supra, pp. 618-19.

³"The Christian Doctrine of Last Things: Part I - Individual Eschatology," pp. 35-36.

True, the present is part of eternity and hell is part of our present experience, but hell is not part of the Christian hope. It is not an inference about the purpose of God for life beyond the grave which can legitimately be drawn on the basis of faith in God. Baillie writes that hell, in the sense of a future fate for sinful man,

seems to be a kind of negative inference, or opposite inference--not a thing directly apprehended by faith, but an apparently logical consequence, which goes beyond the content of faith itself. A man may know by faith that he is saved--but not that he is lost.

Hell as the future eternal punishment of sinful man is not an idea which is based on faith in God's purpose for mankind, therefore, it is not properly included in the Christian message concerning life beyond the grave.

Baillie writes:

The Christian doctrine of election on its positive side has a great depth of truth, because it stands for the Christian man's conviction that it was not he that chose God but God that chose him and chose him not for any good in him, but through sheer grace and mercy. But we have no right to pass from that positive conviction to the negative doctrine that God from all eternity has left some men outside his purpose of love; and that their final tragic destiny is thus sealed before ever they are born. That is a quite intolerable doctrine.²

¹ Ibid., p. 30.

² "Eschatology: The Kingdom of God and the Christian Hope," p. 35.

Although there are many points at which it is impossible to be dogmatic about eternal life, one point is clear; the idea of definite future punishment for some can never be affirmed by a preacher whose message is based on faith in God and the hope he has which is based on what he knows of God's work among men. And short of this, even conjectures or negative inferences concerning the future existence of those who appear to reject the message of the Gospel in this life are not properly a part of Christian preaching. Punishment and judgment are part of the story which the preacher must tell, but they are themes which speak of what is happening in the present life of men and women who chose to cut themselves off from the love of God and their fellowmen. They are not part of the Christian message concerning God's future purpose for all men.

Without making any dogmatic statements Baillie advances the tentative theories of conditional immortality and universal restoration which are mentioned in the sermons. He points out the New Testament basis for each and briefly traces the development of these themes in the history of Christian thought.¹ But, as in the

¹Ibid., pp. 26-42.

sermons, he teaches that these involve "questions which we cannot answer." However, there is something that can be said about life beyond the grave, that is "that when a man dies in Christ, he passes into the blessed community of heaven."¹ Life eternal can be defined as life in the Kingdom of God.

Baillie's treatment of the doctrine of the Kingdom of God reflects the same emphasis we have seen in the sermons. The language used to describe life in the Kingdom, (life which is life saved from self-centeredness into community, life which involves not just a disembodied spirit but the whole "body" in a relationship of reconciliation to God and fellowman), is largely symbolic because it deals with supra-historical realities. But these supra-historical realities touch historical experience, and it is from our experience of life together, lived in love, that we speak of the Kingdom. Faith that this kind of life is God's eternal purpose for mankind gives us the reason for the hope that is in us; it is a hope based on faith-experience. "There is a positive relation between the Kingdom of God which

¹Ibid., p. 44.

lies beyond history and the faithful endeavours of God's servants toward the realization of it on earth in the historical order."¹ The good that we do is not our doing but the grace of God working in us. It is His work and He will preserve all which we have committed to Him. Even the smallest "efforts in His service, which do not seem to make any difference amid the clash of cosmic forces, become abundantly worthwhile."²

Thus life in this world takes on an eternal dimension and all that we do in love for God and those with whom we live becomes part of God's work and purpose; we become participants in the "story with a plot". The plot of the story is God's work of reconciling the world to Himself. Men have told the story in different ways, but there is a distinctively Christian summary of that story which speaks of what men have experienced in human history about the way in which God has made His power, presence and love known to us. It is to that summary of Christian doctrine that we now turn, the summary statement which says that it is all of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

¹Ibid., pp. 57-58.

²Ibid., p. 60.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

The first place an individual encounters the doctrine of the Trinity is, in all probability, in the liturgy of the worship service. The opening hymn of praise on a given Sunday morning might well be:

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, Holy, Holy, merciful and mighty,¹
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Here the doctrine is met in hymnody which, in some respects, is the best place to meet it. Music and poetry carry with them an inherent guard against literalization and over-systematization. In hymnody the Trinity can remain a mystery, yet a mystery which can be sung about to the glory of God,

Such is the mind of man that he is not satisfied to speak of God exclusively in terms of mystery. As the liturgy of the worship service continues, constant refer-

¹Reginald Heber in The Church Hymnary (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), Hymn No. 1.

ences to the Trinity keep appearing in prose. "Blessed be Thou, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God,"¹ so goes an address to the Diety in prayer. The recitation of the creed places in the mouth of every member of the congregation the affirmation of belief in "God the Father Almighty . . . Jesus Christ his only Son . . . (and) the Holy Ghost." The service ends with the benediction ". . . and the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be amongst you and remain with you always. Amen."² The Christian worship of God is permeated with words which speak of the object of worship in trinitarian terms.

Upon closer examination, one who finds himself within the Reformed tradition will see the doctrine laid out in more formal theological language in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. More familiar to laymen than the Longer Catechism or the Westminster Confession of Faith, this catechism, approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1648, "became at once the most popular and widely used Catechism in Scotland as in England, and has been more influential than

¹The Book of Common Order, p. 11.

²Ibid., p. 17.

any other document in shaping religious thought and temperament in Scotland ever since."¹ In answer to question five, "Are there more Gods than one?", we read, "There is but One only, the living and true God." The next question is, "How many persons are there in the Godhead?" The answer is given, "There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one God the same in substance, equal in power and glory."² With the words "three persons" and "one substance" we are thrust headlong into the controversies which have surrounded this central doctrine of the Christian Church for the past nineteen centuries. From the time of Christ, Christians have talked about their faith using the language of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit when referring to the object and source of their faith. The Church has used the doctrine of the Trinity defensively throughout its history in order to preserve the tension between the ultimate mystery of God and the need to describe the economy of the Godhead in its relationship to the Church.

¹ Thomas P. Torrance, The School of Faith, (London: James Clark & Co. Ltd., 1959), p. 261.

² Ibid., p. 263.

Theological definitions of the Trinity are absent from Scripture, although the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are mentioned, (e.g. Matthew 28:19) and their unity is implicit, particularly in John 14:11 ff. and in I Corinthians 12:4-6. The Biblical writers were content to speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the one Godhead in declarative terms and it remained for the Church in succeeding years to attempt explanations and defenses for this paradoxical declaration.

Theologically, the doctrine of the Trinity has been a defensive necessity in order that the Church might preserve the truth of the mystery of God, the ultimate inability of man to contain God within rational definitions, while at the same time describing its own historical experience of One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Controversy has shrouded the history of this doctrine. The battlefields of Nicea and Constantinople have left the Church scarred to this day. Although the schism between the Eastern Church and the West resulted from a broad base of historical and political factors, as Steven Runciman ably argues,¹ the differences have

¹Stephen Runciman, The Eastern Schism (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

to a large extent remained defined in the theological language of this doctrine.

With its controversial history and its apparent incomprehensibility to the rational scientific mind, what place does the doctrine of the Trinity have in the preaching ministry of the church today? The problem which confronts the preacher is the problem of presenting a sensible reason for the faith of the Church which is expressed in the language of "One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit", without appearing to compromise or minimize the ultimate mystery of the God about Whom he speaks. To put it another way, the preacher must give a reason for the faith of the Church, without denying the ultimate inadequacy of all human language about God and His work.

The Doctrine Preached

Baillie's presentation of the doctrine in the sermons reflects the method of approach which has been illustrated through the foregoing examination of his preaching; it is a method which starts from faith-experience and returns to faith-experience; it is a

method which seeks to first reflect faith-experience of men and women in order that the message of the doctrine can truly address them as they seek to live out their faith, enabled by the grace of God. Baillie's presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity can be seen under three headings; (1) an explanation of the necessity of the doctrine based on the way in which it arose during the course of human faith-experience, (2) an illumination of the importance and meaning of its mystery, and (3) the demonstration of the difference it makes to contemporary faith-experience.

The necessity of the doctrine arises from the fact of the historical experience of those whose lives had been profoundly influenced by the events surrounding and following the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Men whose memories stretched back through the years and centuries preceeding these events began to see their experience of what they had called "God" vastly illuminated and clarified. It was this new historical experience which the Church sought to describe in some sort of human language.

The primary legacy which the New Testament world owed to the Old Testament was the concept of God in monotheistic terms. "The whole of the Old Testament may be

regarded as an epitome of how Israel slowly learnt her lesson that God is One."¹ The language about God cast in monotheistic terms rang true in the ears of men whose allegiances were torn between a multiplicity of deities. Concerning polytheism the prophets told the listening world, "All that is based on a lie, and a tragic lie which destroys justice and truth and trust among men and turns the universe into a chaos of conflicting forces and claims."² With the fundamental concept of the unity of God, why did the Christian world find it necessary to elaborate their description of God in trinitarian terms? The answer to this question rests in the fact of historical circumstance. The language which men used to tell about their experience of God as One was fundamental, but something happened which made this description inadequate.

The life of the man Jesus made a profound impact upon a small group of men who had known him for only a few years. These men found a new dimension in their understanding of God through this man. In some way God was in this man as he had never been present in a man

¹From an illustrative example of how to preach on the doctrine of the Trinity in, "The Preaching of Christian Doctrine," The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 149.

²"The Doctrine of the Trinity," To Whom Shall We Go?, p. 74.

before. How was this new dimension to be described? Jesus could^{not} be identical with God, for Jesus was very much a man with a mind and body much as those around him. He talked about God in the third person and prayed to God. He suffered temptation and pain. He died. "Not one of these things could be said without qualification about God the Father Almighty."¹ On the other hand Jesus could not be thought of as a second God for then the truth that God is One would be violated. The possibility that Jesus was some sort of demi-god was also dismissed for then the full divinity and full humanity would be compromised and at best a mythological figure would evolve. But the man they knew as Jesus Christ was quite real and not simply mythological. Their experience of this man had to be put into some other words. Some "said that God became incarnate in Jesus; and yet somehow God did not become wholly, absolutely incarnate." Some spoke of Jesus as "the Word of God that became incarnate." Others recalled the words which Jesus had used to describe his relationship with God. He had spoken of God as his Father, so the language

¹ Ibid., p. 75.

of God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son came into the earliest Christian vocabulary. "Really they meant something they could not adequately put into words at all." The event of Jesus Christ was one of those things which, like the activity of God, can never be put precisely into human words. But this event and the realization that God was related to men through his active presence in Jesus Christ had to be put into words, so one of the ways men came to speak of this newly discovered dimension in the One God was to speak of God the Father and God the Son.¹

When Jesus died and was no longer physically present as a man among other men something else happened which made it necessary to find still another way of talking about God. The historic fact of Pentecost had to be described by those who came to experience God's presence in a manner which was even more intimate and powerful than that experienced by those who lived and worked and were healed by Jesus. The confidence that God was at work in the world in the same spirit of love as men had seen in the life of Jesus captured the lives of more and more people, many of whom had never seen

¹Ibid., p. 76.

Jesus. The event of Pentecost was remembered as a time when this became clear to the apostles. How were they to describe this new aspect of God's dealing with men? The words of the Old Testament once again rang true, for when a particular power attributed to God had become apparent in the lives of the leaders of Israel, it had been called the Spirit of the Lord. The prophet Joel had said that the day would come when this power would come into the lives of "all sorts of ordinary men and women."¹ This, the early Christians thought, must have been the day Joel was referring to, so they came to describe their newly discovered presence of God at work in their lives as the work of the Holy Spirit.

The necessity of the doctrine of the Trinity arises from the historical experience of men; an awakening to the truth of One God, their encounter with the man Jesus Christ, and their experience of His continued presence dramatically demonstrated at Pentecost. These historical circumstances had to be put into words, inadequate though words may be. The doctrine of the Trinity was a necessary summary statement of historical faith-experience for the Church which has to

¹Ibid., p. 78.

this day continued to sing "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end, Amen".

The meaning of the doctrine is at the same time obscured and illuminated by the rational impossibility of the "one in three" and "three in one" formula. The obscurity of the doctrine illustrates a cardinal characteristic of all doctrine. Theological formulations, no matter how elaborate, are but the language used by men to describe their understanding of God and their relationship to Him. And God, even by human definition, is incomprehensible in His entirety. Baillie emphasized this fact and the importance of remembering this truth when he preached:

"Everything that we say or sing about God is but an attempt to put into our poor blundering human words something that can never be perfectly expressed in human words; stupendous divine realities too great to be grasped by human minds or comprehended in human categories. When we forget this, we are apt to become smug and self satisfied, narrow minded and intolerant, in our religious beliefs, as if we were in possession of the whole truth, and all other traditions must be wrong. We need to be reminded that God cannot be contained in any of our statements: He breaks through them all, and makes us think again."¹

¹"The Mystery of the Trinity," Out of Nazareth, p. 70.

The doctrine which the Church cherishes as the expression of its understanding of God as "one" and at the same time "three", is a prime example of the need to defend the truth that God can never be contained within the minds or words of men. The first meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity is its affirmation of the ultimate mystery of God.

But ultimate mystery does not mean total mystery for the doctrine is a description of the experience of the Church, an illuminating and concrete historical experience. The word "mystery" is never used in the New Testament to mean sheer mystery. Baillie aptly suggests its New Testament meaning in a sermon by saying:

"It always means a divine secret which it has pleased God to reveal to men; a secret so mysterious that we could never even begin to discover it for ourselves by a human search, if God had not taken the initiative and given us the clue. But He has done this in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit."¹

The importance of the ultimate mystery of God is complemented by the illuminating facts of the Church's historical experience of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Therefore the doctrine of the Trinity also has meaning where it reflects the experience of those who proclaim

¹Ibid., p. 72.

it. The doctrine has its proper place at the end of "the story with a plot" as a summation of the entire Gospel. Its meaning can only be understood as a summary statement of God's love at work in the world through Christ and the Holy Spirit, a summary statement of a truth which all the words ever written have never been able to fully grasp or describe. In this sense it can not be used as an apologetic defense of the faith of the Church for here the meaning is only valid to those who know the story and can use it as a summary description of their own experience.

Out of the discussion of the meaning of the doctrine flows the matter of its contemporary relevance. The relevance of the doctrine is that it gives expression to the Church's experience of God's accessibility.

The One God of Israel was, to many, so omnipotent and incomprehensible that he seemed inaccessible. Never-the-less the Christian world found vivid and incontrovertible evidence that God was not inaccessible. It found that He was intimately related to humanity when they saw Him actively demonstrating His love for men in Jesus of Nazareth. When men today are somewhat dizzied

by the thoughts they have of God, when He seems irrelevant and removed from human affairs, when we are inclined to see the mystery of God and interpret it as an indication of His distance from the concrete affairs which consume our time and energy in this world, at that point we come back to the Gospel story "where we can hear Jesus speak, hear him speak to God and hear him speak to men. And we know at once that God is there."¹ The Church has come to speak of this intimate relationship or accessibility of God to man in terms of the relationship of Father to son. Hence, in the doctrine of the Trinity, the One God is spoken of as God the Father and God the Son, a description and affirmation of the experience of the accessibility of God to men in the concrete realm of human affairs.

But the realm of human affairs is not limited to the concrete and the tangible. The accessibility of God is not limited to the historical example of his concerned involvement with men in the life of Jesus Christ. The ongoing life of the Church and its members reflects the experience of still another manifestation of God's relationship to men. They sought to describe this inti-

¹Ibid., p. 74.

mate inner presence of God in their midst. The doctrine of the Trinity came to be the language of the Church when it spoke of the One God whose ever present relationship and power they called the Holy Spirit. Thus the doctrine is relevant as an expression of the Church's contemporary experience of God's accessibility within the subjective realm of human affairs, both individual and corporate.

The Doctrine Preached and the Doctrine Taught

Underlying Baillie's writings on the doctrine of the Trinity rests the conviction that the doctrine is a statement after the facts. It is a summary of Christian faith-experience. The doctrine is a poor introduction to the faith, for as such it would at best be viewed as a pure "given", a revelation in which man had no part. Baillie emphasizes its place in the life of each Christian and also its place in the worship of the Church. "To those who know and accept the whole Christian story, this doctrine is a symbolic epitome of the truth about God, and its constant use in our worship helps to secure that we are drawing near to God as He really is."¹

¹God Was In Christ, p. 156.

An examination of Baillie's lecture notes and formal writings on the doctrine of the Trinity show that he is concerned to preserve the tension between the mysterious and the understandable elements of the doctrine. Baillie's notes on Barth indicate an appreciation of the latter's treatment of the Trinity where it is taken to mean the paradoxical nature of God as revelation of the unrevealable.¹ Taking this paradox seriously, Baillie seeks to bring what knowledge we have of the Trinity into unity with our knowledge of what has happened in history. At this point he breaks with Barth's comment that the doctrine of the Trinity "did not arise out of the historical situations to which these [Biblical] texts belong."² As in the case of his sermons, Baillie's treatment of the doctrine in formal theology emphasizes the historical experience of the New Testament Church as the basis for the doctrine. "In the New Testament," he tells his students, "you do not get a fully fledged doctrine of the trinity, but only the materials."³ It was

¹Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, I, 1, trans. G. T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), pp. 431 ff.

²Ibid., p. 431.

³"The Doctrine of the Trinity" (dossier) p. 27.

these materials and the historical experience of the Church which made it necessary for the Church to express its understanding of God in the doctrine of the Trinity. It was also the ultimate mystery of God to which they bore witness through this doctrine. The sermons preserve the tension between these poles of mystery and history. The lectures do the same, however, here the traditional tendency to limit discussion about the Trinity to the incomprehensible mystery of the doctrine prompted Baillie to emphasize the concrete historical basis as he discusses the traditional, rationalist and historical views of the doctrine.

Traditional theology has placed the doctrine at the beginning of its systems. In the Westminster Confession it is preceded only by the chapter on Holy Scripture. The first of the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England is entitled, "Of Faith in the Holy Trinity." Behind this priority in sequence given to the doctrine lies the traditional theological position that this doctrine is a "given" of the Christian faith, a doctrine which is wholly revealed by God as opposed to any part played by man and his reason. The unfortunate dichotomy between reason and revelation in much traditional theology has given rise to the attribution of the

existence of God to reason, but the knowledge of God in terms of the Trinity solely to revelation. Thus as a pure "given", the doctrine is often placed before all else in reasoned systems of doctrine for in itself it was felt to have no relation to reason. Any sharp and absolute separation of revelation from reason and experience constitutes a false view of either element. "We must always be prepared to acknowledge in the religious realm a large element of mystery as the background to our little systems of belief." Yet on the otherhand, "no religious dogma can be simply and sheerly given--dictated, as it were, in definite human words in an audible voice, and taken down to be handed on in infallible scriptures. Certainly that is not how the doctrine of the trinity has come to us."¹ The doctrine of the Trinity may be viewed as revelation in a very real sense because it would never have evolved had it not been for the Incarnation, but it is not revelation when revelation is understood as "ready made dogma". The scholastic view of the doctrine as purely given is

¹Ibid., p. 5.

not sufficient, yet there is an important measure of truth here. There is much about God which will forever remain a mystery in the minds of men. Human reason, no matter how eloquently formulated, can never contain God within a theological system. The traditional view of the doctrine does contribute a valuable emphasis which found expression in both the sermons and the lectures, the truth of the ultimate mystery of God.

In the section of the lectures dealing with the rationalistic approach to the doctrine, the subject is treated in relation to comparative religions and the opinions of certain scholars in the field who attempt to demonstrate the universality of the "three" concept in the history of religious thought on the nature of God. Baillie discredits these views by showing that "three" is no more a universal number when it comes to speaking about God than are some other numbers. Even the attempt to read trinitarian thought into the Old Testament is seriously questioned for what the Old Testament refers to in describing God as Creator on the one hand and Wisdom, Spirit or Word on the other is at best an implicit binitarian idea. The attempt to find a basis for the doctrine in a study of comparative religions or in the history of philosophical thought is re-

jected in favor of finding its basis in the historical experience of the Church. The rationalistic approach to the doctrine is absent from sermons. Although this view is unsatisfactory, a measure of truth emerges from the fact that a language which describes God in trinitarian terms is not wholly foreign to the mind of man. To a limited extent this truth is implicit in the sermons where Baillie deals with the Old Testament origins of the idea of the Spirit of the Lord in Joel 2:28 as being a possible source for the use of the words "Holy Spirit" to describe the experience at Pentecost. In any case the rationalist's view reminds us that Christianity did not invent the language of the doctrine of the Trinity in an intellectual or historical vacuum. There had been echoes of world wide speculation which qualified stark monotheism without necessarily lapsing into polytheism.

But all this does not explain the emergence of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. There is some truth in the traditionalist's view and in the speculation of the rationalist, "but the main truth," Baillie taught, "is that the doctrine is based on history and experience."¹ The historical experience of Jesus Christ and

¹Ibid., p. 17.

of Pentecost gave rise to the necessity of speaking of God as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God. The presentation of this view in the lecture room closely parallels the sermons on the subject.

In the sermons there is no direct mention of the semantic controversies of the early fathers as they struggled to define the trinity. The development of the one ousia or substantia in the three hypostases or personae is left for the classroom. There the difficulties of these attempts to distinguish and define the essential nature of the Godhead in precise theological terminology is carefully outlined. The burden of Baillie's lecture at this point is devoted to pointing out that the word "person" used in the credal statements and the liturgy of the Church does not mean exactly what we mean by the words "person" or "personality" today. It is noted that from the time when Athanasius used the word perichoresis to emphasize the interpenetration of the Father and the Son, the Church has sought to define the inextricable inter-relationship of the "persons" in the trinity. Augustine's analogy of the Trinity as the relationship of Love between the Lover and the Loved is cited as a way of seeing the close relationship of the "persons". But any statement of this

relationship is inadequate and Augustine is again cited with appreciation where he writes, "We say three persons, not in order that such a statement may be made but in order to avoid saying nothing." (De Trinitate V, 14)¹ In this connection Baillie stresses the fact that the matter of doctrinal formulation is but a manner of speaking or a language used by the Church to put its faith into words which in the last analysis are inadequate descriptions of the whole truth. For support of this point he turns to Karl Barth where he writes, "It is something of a relief to find a man of Augustine's standing declare openly (De trin. V, 9; VII, 4) that to call the thing Person was a matter of necessitas or consuetudo loquendi. A really suitable concept for it simply does not exist."²

It is surprising to note that, in the classroom, Baillie defended the Church's usage of the word "person" in the doctrine in spite of its ambiguities and limitations. He did, however, caution against using "orthodox formulas too mechanically without asking what we mean

¹Quoted by Baillie, Ibid., p. 35.

²God Was in Christ, p. 135; Barth's statement is in Church Dogmatics, I, 1, p. 408.

by them."¹ It is reasonable to assume that he felt that the traditional use of the word "persons" in the doctrine was more detrimental than constructive in preaching on the Trinity, for there is no attempt to explain this word in any of his sermons on the doctrine. The semantic difficulties of the Church, as interesting as they are to the theologian and the historian, did not meet the criterion of reflecting historical human experience when it came to preaching on the doctrine of the Trinity.²

The closing paragraphs of the lecture return again to the earlier theme of the importance of the doctrine in preserving the mystery of God. Baillie quotes a sentence which concluded a book entitled Systematic Theology, written by one of his old and revered teachers, Wilhelm Herrmann.

"The doctrine of the trinity reminds us that we can only find eternal life in fellowship with God if He remains unsearchable to us--an eternal mystery. The way to the Christian religion is the unconditional will to truth or the submission to

¹"The Doctrine of the Trinity" (dossier), p. 44.

²c.f. "The Preaching of Christian Doctrine," The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 151.

the facts which we ourselves experience (that against all unreality and disingenuousness in theology). But its beginning and its end is, none the less, the humbling of men before the unsearchable. 'God dwelleth in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen nor can see.' (I Timothy 6:16)"¹

Baillie then tells his class that he used the very same idea when preaching on the Trinity. His text was "Without controversy great is the mystery of our religion," (I Timothy 3:16).² "That is in itself," he continues, "an important truth about our knowledge of God, our doctrines or dogmas of religion--that it is very near fragmentary and symbolic, and gives us but a tiny patch of light surrounded by ineffable mystery."³ Baillie concludes his lecture leaving no doubt in the mind of the student that he views the doctrine of the Trinity and all the other doctrines of the Church as but fragmentary and frail attempts to put into human language the experience of God's reconciling activity. Rather

¹ Wilhelm Herrmann, Systematic Theology, trans. N. Micklem and K. A. Saunders (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1927), p. 152. Quoted by Baillie in "The Doctrine of the Trinity," (dossier), p. 53.

² The text used for "The Mystery of the Trinity", pp. 69 ff.

³ "The Doctrine of the Trinity" (dossier), p. 53.

than retreating into the silence of despair in the face of this severely qualifying admission on the part of a preacher and theologian whose life was dedicated to the task of communicating the Gospel in just such human language, Baillie finds occasion for gratitude. "The reason for the gladness that we have as Christians is that through Christ and the Holy Spirit we know enough of God to enable us to trust even the utmost depths of the ineffable surrounding mystery of His being."¹ Even though we know that our words can never fully present the complete truth about God and the Gospel, the preacher can have confidence in the fact that men can know enough through human words which reflect genuine faith-experience to come to trust and give glory to God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

¹Ibid., pp. 53-54.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing examination of theological themes in preaching makes it possible to come to the following comprehensive conclusions about D. M. Baillie's position and his approach to the preaching of Christian doctrine.

It is necessary that Christian doctrine be preached using terms which reflect and address the experience of the persons who gather to hear the message proclaimed. The language of preaching must address genuine questions which men and women have about their life together in order that the answer of the Gospel be understood. The doctrines themselves have arisen out of the need to put the human experience of God's reconciling work into words; the very source and content of the Christian message demand that it be shared, and that it be shared in experiential terms.

Furthermore, Christian doctrine, which is true to its sources, can be presented in a way which genuinely reflects and effectively addresses human experience. A pre-requisite for sound preaching is the knowledge of

the Biblical sources and the theology of the Biblical writers which lie behind the doctrines of the Church. But that is not enough for preaching. In a sense, the concluding sentences of Baillie's God Was In Christ mark the beginning and state the purpose of this thesis. Speaking of the contemporary climate of theological thought and the valuable contribution made by the renewed emphasis on Biblical studies, he writes:

There is a danger of thinking that exegesis is enough, that exegesis can do the whole work of theology; the danger of forgetting that after exegesis of the ancient texts has done its work, after we have laid bare the theology of the New Testament writers, we still have the task of re-interpreting what they say, translating their terms and categories into terms and categories that can communicate the living truth to modern men.

The task of preaching is not simply a matter of repeating what the Biblical writers have written. In our worship services there is a place for both the reading of Holy Scripture and preaching. Preaching involves communicating the living truth about God's work in the world to men and women in a way that can be understood within the context of their own experience. This task is thoroughly dependent upon sound exegesis and Biblical theology, but

¹ God Was In Christ, pp. 226-227.

it is a task which goes beyond both. Baillie's firm grounding in these pre-requisites for preaching has been amply documented in the examination of his lectures and formal writings. Before I summarize the way in which he built on these pre-requisites and offer a statement of the method behind his presentation of theological themes in preaching, it will be well to review the main points of Baillie's approach to theology examined in Part I of this thesis, and summarize the problems, themes, and conclusions presented in Part II.

A Review of Baillie's Approach to Theology

Baillie's formal re-statement of theological themes is, for the most part, parallel to the theology he preached. His theology is a theology for preaching. He views the theologian's task as one which is closely akin to that of the historian; both are committed to tell about events that have happened in human history; both are concerned to interpret the significance of these events. There are also things that happen among men which are not strictly historical in the sense that they are not limited to fixed times and places in history; they touch the experience of men and women at every moment

of history; they are supra-historical. The theologian is also committed to, and concerned to interpret the significance of these events.

The bases of a theology for preaching are faith and experience. Faith is an attitude of trust and commitment to the objective realities of human history (what has happened) and the objective demands of human experience (what is required of men who have been placed in a world where they live together). Faith is inextricably bound up with experience. The task of theology for preaching involves correlating what is believed about experience (e.g. God wills and enables men to live together in love) with experience itself (those instances where this happens). The content of a theology for preaching is based on events where faith and experience meet; it is based on faith-experience.

But faith itself is dependent on revelation; that is to say, when persons are confronted by an event which leads them to affirm that God is at work, there is revelation. Revelation is never simply the written word or the spoken word or an event in itself; revelation takes place in the encounter with an event, whether written about (as in the Bible), spoken about (as in preaching), or as it happens (particularly in the life

and death of Jesus Christ). A theology for preaching uses for its primary source material the words about particular events which have led men to the conviction that God was at work in the world. The content of statements based on faith-experience which are used in presenting Christian doctrine are, therefore, measured by the content of related statements about events recorded primarily in the Bible (it is the original written source), but also in the documented tradition of the Church and its preaching.

A Summary of Problems, Themes and Conclusions

The problem illustrated in Chapter I of Part II was the problem of seeking to answer genuine questions which arise out of human experience. Baillie finds his congregation less concerned about arguments as to whether God existed than with the question "Does belief in God matter?" This question arises because man, who is aware of basic moral responsibilities, is unable to forgive himself for his failure to live up to the demands of his own conscience. When the pursuit of moral achievement is conceived as an individual matter, dependent on the

self alone, it is paralyzed by the paradox of morality. The quest for goodness, based on the self, frustrates itself because it becomes nothing more than self improvement and not true love for others. Belief in God becomes important when He is seen to be the source of moral conviction and moral action. Then man becomes free from pre-occupation with self improvement; he becomes free to respond to the activity of God in him which demonstrates itself as self-less love for others for their own sake.

Men know of God's presence because they are not completely paralyzed by the guilt of moral failure; they know forgiveness which enables them to press on in their efforts to live in love with their fellowman. God's power is experienced in the confidence, courage and hope with which men do press on in spite of constant failure. The fundamental characteristic of God's activity is love. This is demonstrated by the fact that human love is always love given in response to love received, and, when confronted by the ultimate demand to love one's enemy, it is clear that this can only be possible for those who affirm that "We love, because He first loved us." It is paradoxical to realize that one's love for another is not really one's own, but love given in response (in the

last analysis it is the love of God which is at work). It is a paradox which reflects the genuine human experience of love.

Two conclusions about Baillie's position and presentation were drawn: (1) Paradox has a place in the preaching of Christian doctrine if it is paradox which is lived and actualized in faith-experience. (2) The distinguishing feature of the sermons on the doctrine of God was that they showed, not so much that God exists, or what He is, but what He does within the realm of human experience.

Chapter II illustrated the problem of preaching about the supra-historical dimensions of God's activity in terms which reflect and address historical experience. The doctrine of creation is not presented as an account of pre-historic origins, but as God's creative work is manifest in the natural order, particularly in creative personal relationships. Baillie's preaching about God's creative work in the world is confusingly complicated at one point by the introducing of the "paradox" of creatio ex nihilo. In the light of Baillie's own criteria this concept is not a true paradox admissible for preaching because it is not lived and actualized in faith-

experience. However, the rest of Baillie's preaching on the doctrine of creation shows that the supra-historical dimension of God's activity can be presented from the perspective of human experience because it touches historical experience at every point.

The importance of basing the preaching of Christian doctrine on authentic experience was demonstrated in Chapter III. Three sermons on the paradoxical experience that God's providential care works through suffering were examined. Only the sermon which takes the whole experience of suffering seriously addresses the sufferer with the enabling truth that God works for good through both aversion to pain as well as acceptance of it. Valid pastoral counsel is most clearly offered by preaching which is based on the authentic experience of the problem addressed.

The examination of the doctrine of man in Chapter IV illustrated the problem of presenting supra-historical myth in terms which reflect and address experience. The myth of man's creation in the image of God is presented by showing that there is in man a basic consciousness of the demands of love. The myth of the Fall is not presented as a statement about the pre-historic origins of evil which subsequently infected all mankind.

It is presented as the experiential fact of human self-centeredness which demonstrably runs counter to the demands of life together. Both of these myths refer directly to historical human experience and the truth intended by the doctrine can be presented from this perspective. The Biblical myths associated with the doctrine arose out of human experience and they are therefore admissible in preaching. However it is important that the myth be explicitly presented as myth and not as simple history.

Chapter V demonstrated that there is no Christian message about sin without the "good news" of forgiveness; the chapter illustrated the problem of presenting the reality and responsibility for sin and the liberating truth of forgiveness without compromising either side. The genuine awareness of responsibility for sin takes place only within the context of faith-experience because there sin is seen as sin against the love of God. And it is here that forgiveness comes through the experience of repentance. Sin is never preached about outside the context of faith-experience where forgiveness is possible. If it were, the anxiety and remorse which is stimulated is nothing more than a further demonstration of self-centeredness which is the essence of sin. This sort of

preaching also calls forth false penitence.

Chapter VI illustrated the necessity of presenting the meaning of a theological word (grace) in terms which reflect and address faith-experience in order to avoid all sorts of superstition and misconceptions. The problem is to preserve the tension between free will and the activity of grace. Baillie does this by presenting grace as a gracious personal influence, not as an impersonal force for good. Those who appreciate their responsibility for lovelessness as sin, greet the demonstration of love in their lives with the paradoxical conviction that it was not their own doing but the grace of God which was with them. This is a valid paradox for preaching because it is lived and actualized in faith-experience. Preaching on morality is always done within the context of grace because all moral acts are made possible by the grace of God. This central paradox of the Christian life also emphasizes the importance of preaching because even though the grace of God touches all men, it is important that they are shown (through preaching) that it is the grace of God which is at work in their lives in order that they may actively participate in God's reconciling work unfettered by the debilitating paradox of morality.

The paradox of grace leads to an understanding of the paradox of the Incarnation. The problem illustrated in Chapter VII was the problem of showing that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine in a way which actively reflects and addresses human experience. Baillie preaches that the men who knew and wrote about Jesus in the New Testament appreciated His complete humanity, yet were constrained to say that all He did and said was the achievement of God in Him. Two important conclusions about Baillie's position were drawn: (1) The paradox of the Incarnation is a valid theme for preaching because it marks the climax of a genuine, though fragmentary, paradox of human faith-experience. (2) This doctrine makes sense and truly addresses human experience because it is cast in terms of God's activity, (not substantive speculations about the nature of His being, divinity and humanity conceived as static quantities). This further strengthens the conclusion reached in Chapter I that Baillie's preaching concentrates on showing what God does, (not attempting to define what He is).

The problem of preaching on the Atonement, illustrated in Chapter VII, was the problem of preserving the tension between the gravity of sin and the costliness

of forgiveness on the one hand, and the victory of God's gracious love on the other. This chapter also demonstrated the importance of critically examining human experience to see where it accurately reflects the intended message of the doctrine preached. Costly forgiveness within the context of victorious love is reflected in the human experience of genuine reconciliation. The Cross addresses faith-experience by clearly showing the costliness of forgiveness and the victory of love thereby calling forth repentance in which reconciliation is experienced. The analogies associated with ransom theories and substitutionary theories do not reflect a genuine human experience of reconciliation, nor do they fairly represent the message of the doctrine. Baillie measures analogies used in preaching by the sources of the doctrine which reveal what God has actually done to reconcile the world to Himself within the context of historical experience.

Chapter IX showed the way in which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit provides continuity between the grace of God in Christ and the activity of His grace today. The Holy Spirit is the epistemological dimension of grace which makes it known to men today that it is the same grace active now that was active then. But Baillie's

preaching runs into difficulty because his theology of the Holy Spirit is not adequately integrated with all that he has said about grace. The result is confusion arising from inconsistency.

The doctrine of the Church examined in Chapter X is determinative for the whole "story with a plot" because it is here that the corporate nature of the experience which a theology for preaching is to reflect is explicitly set forth. The life of ^{the} church at Antioch demonstrates the universal thrust God's love revealed in Christ more adequately than does the life of the church at Jerusalem. Experiences documented in Scripture need to be critically examined in order to see where they accurately reflect the main thrust of the Gospel message. The kind of experience which Baillie's preaching reflects is the experience of life saved from self-centeredness and lived in love toward all men. The Church exists where ever, and in so far as, men live in love for one another. Consequently the boundaries of the Church cannot be limited by racial, national, institutional or historical boundaries. The sermons are addressed to the faith-experience of men and women regardless of these boundaries or any other boundaries which

isolate their experience of life in the Church from their experience of life together in the world. Baillie's preaching is criticized because he violates his own criterion at one point by implying that the boundaries of the Church are limited.

Baillie's position that it is important to preach explicitly on the meaning of the Sacraments was examined in Chapter XI. The sermons do not suggest external authority as the basis for the Church's practice. The matter is approached from the perspective of human needs and what happens within the context of human experience. Baptism and Holy Communion are not obligatory practices essential for salvation. They are gifts from God which meet genuine human needs. They are to be celebrated, not out of a sense of duty, but out of gratitude. Baillie preaches about the Sacraments in order to make this clear.

Preaching on the doctrine of immortality and the Kingdom of God confront the preacher once again with the problem of relating the supra-historical dimension of the Gospel to historical experience. When men encounter the experience of the death of a loved one, they are constrained to affirm that the good work which they have seen God begin in him is not lost, wasted or destroyed.

Once again the matter is approached from the perspective of what faith has seen and heard and experienced. The kind of life which characterizes immortality is explained in general terms on the basis of a wide variety of human experiences, past, present and a genuine hope in the future, which are brought together by the symbolic expression the "Kingdom of God". Baillie preaches that the Christian hope is based on what has already happened within the context of human faith-experience.

The examination of theological themes in preaching drew to a close with a doctrine which summarizes historical faith-experience in retrospect. The doctrine of the Trinity presented in Chapter XIII illustrated the problem of giving a sensible reason for the faith of the Church without denying the ultimate inadequacy of all human language about God and His work. No doctrines are sheer "given" truths; all necessitate the reasoned appraisal of historical experience. Even though all human words fall short of presenting the full significance and truth about God, yet men have been given to know enough about God's activity to be able to live in trust and gratitude toward Him.

The Theological Method Behind Baillie's
Preaching of Christian Doctrine

It is now my task to bring together the results of the research presented in Parts I and II into a concise statement of the method and criteria which lie behind Baillie's presentation of theological themes in preaching. As I have stated in the Preface, we are dealing with the presentation of Christian doctrine in preaching. Much of Baillie's preaching is devoted to other types of sermons (e.g. those which are predominantly "expository", "topical" etc.). The following theological method applies to those sermons and parts of sermons through which he sought to communicate the living truth to men and women within the framework of the major doctrines of the Church.

The pre-requisite for doctrinal preaching is, of course, a knowledge of what the doctrines are. The exegesis of relevant Scripture passages is a preliminary step; but the technical problems associated with formal exegesis do not belong in sermons when the terminology involved does not coincide with the linguistic frame of reference within which the men and women of the congregation normally describe their own experiences. The study of the traditional formulations of the Church and

contemporary systematic treatments of doctrine is also a preliminary step, but technical problems encountered here do not belong in sermons for the same reason. This is particularly true when the terminology reflects conceptual controversy. It is from these sources that Baillie learns what the doctrines are, and it is at this point that his task as a preacher begins.

Baillie does not treat doctrine as if it were an external authority to be presented directly from on high. When preaching on a particular doctrine, he first turns to the experience of the men and women to whom the message is being addressed in order to discern the way in which they respond to a particular event in their lives which the doctrine reflects. For example, the doctrine of creation might speak to the attitudes and actions of persons involved in a growing friendship, the doctrine of providence to a person who is trying to understand suffering, the doctrine of grace to a person who is struggling to live more selflessly for others, the doctrine of the Church to a person who is battling with the problem of racial or sectarian prejudice, the doctrines of immortality and the Kingdom of God to a person who has seen death close at hand or one who sees his efforts to love another as insignificant, frustrated

and meaningless. The questions he asks are: "What are the demands of experience in the situation under consideration?" and "Where in human experience have men and women lived effectively in the face of this situation?" The source material upon which the answer to these questions is based is either contemporary experience or documented accounts of past experience, especially the Biblical accounts of such experience.

Baillie then asks what men believe about experience. For example, what do men who persevere in selfless love toward others say about the reasons for their actions. In this case it can be seen that humble and selfless love elicits the faith that the credit does not rest within the self, if it did it would not be selfless love. This step involves an examination of what faith says in response to the objective realities of personal experience and the historical experience of others in similar situations. The resultant statement is a statement based on faith-experience.

At this point Baillie turns to the insight of those who have been able to give a reason for the faith which accompanies their experience. Within the community where the message is preached, men who have experienced

the demonstration of selfless love in their own lives have given the reason that it was the grace of God which was with them. This insight is called revelation; it points to the activity of God among men. The primary witness to such revelation is the Bible, in particular those portions which tell of God's activity perfectly demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus Christ. Baillie can now proclaim that the insight of faith describes something that has happened and that still happens in the lives of men and women. The insight arising out of faith-experience addresses human experience with the good news that it is God who is at work enabling men to live together in love. Baillie's doctrinal preaching seeks to reflect what actually happens among men in order that it can effectively address them with the truth that it is God who is active among them.

This theological method lies behind Baillie's presentation of theological themes in preaching. It is based on human faith-experience; the criterion by which all its statements are measured is the revelation of God's activity in Jesus Christ. Due to the fact that this method has arisen out of the examination of Baillie's sermons, it hardly needs to be said that most of his doctrinal preaching is approached in the way I have described.

But it has also been instructive to see where his preaching failed to reflect and address human experience.

Some Points Where the Preaching of Doctrine
Fails to Correspond with the Method.

The important part that paradox plays in Baillie's theological thought was discussed in Part I, Chapter V. Baillie teaches that the reason for paradox in theology is that all our statements about God are fragmentary since to objectify God is to falsify the nature of His activity by limiting it, and also that experience itself dictates the reality of paradox. The importance of this second reason became quite clear in Part II, Chapter I, where it was the examination of the human experience of love which demonstrated that it was paradoxical. (Ultimately, we love because He first loved us.) In Part II, Chapter II, it was shown that Baillie neglected the importance of the fact that genuine paradox must be lived and actualized in faith-experience. In preaching on creatio ex nihilo he made no reference to an experiential basis for this paradox, it was subsequently shown that this concept is not a true paradox by Baillie's own standards. Baillie made the error of lapsing into the use of a statement which he called "paradox" merely because coherent formulation of the concept breaks down;

this is obscurantism and a failure to measure paradox by the standard which Baillie himself adopts, i.e. that it be paradox which is lived and actualized in faith-experience. The confusion of the doctrine as it was preached was demonstrated. (Baillie's use of this concept is legitimate only as a defensive tool within the context of the conceptual arguments out of which it arose.) Baillie's failure to communicate Christian doctrine in preaching at this point was, at its root, the failure to make sure that doctrine preached genuinely reflects something that happens in human experience.

Under the heading of the doctrine of providence, three different presentations of the doctrine were examined in order to demonstrate the different responses to suffering suggested by each method of approaching the same doctrine. The sermon which approached the doctrine by taking a Biblical text as an external authority, with no reference to what actually happens when men suffer, falsified the message of the doctrine. Another sermon which abstracted two views about the nature of God's attitude toward suffering with little reference to what actually happens in human experience when men are in pain again falsified the meaning of the doctrine. The sermon

which began with an honest appraisal of the whole experience of suffering succeeded where the others failed.

Once again we can learn from Baillie's mistake the importance of presenting doctrines in Sermons from the perspective of genuine human experience.

The last point of criticism is one which, although it is only based on an implication on Baillie's part, is significant enough to warrant special treatment in the Conclusion. At one point in his sermons on the doctrine of the Church, Baillie implied the institutional limitation of the boundaries of the Church by the Word and the Sacraments. This implied limitation was inappropriate because the major emphasis throughout had been that salvation was the mark of the Church and that the saving activity of God's grace can never be limited. The contradictory implication stemmed from the fact that the statements of faith-experience about the Church (which have all too often been exclusivistic) were not measured by the criterion for all doctrine preached, viz. the activity of God in Christ. Had this been done, it would have been clear that the major thrust of the Gospel message about the kind of love revealed in Jesus Christ

is that it is universal and unlimited by any boundaries, institutional or otherwise. This is a daring Gospel and one which is at times uncomfortable to preach because we all like the security of high walls, but it is the message we have been called to proclaim. Faith-experience is always to be measured against the love of God demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus Christ, for there we have the one perfect revelation of God's work among men.

Three Notable Examples of Preaching which Correspond to the Method

The largest part of this thesis has been a demonstration of the way in which Baillie preaches Christian doctrine that reflects and addresses the faith-experience of the community gathered to hear the Christian message proclaimed. I have selected three of Baillie's presentations of Christian doctrine for special mention because each represents a special challenge to make a very "theological" doctrine come alive in the pulpit.

The treatment of the doctrine of the Incarnation is the first. Basing his presentation (in both sermons and lectures) on the experience of the paradox of grace, Baillie presents an interpretation of the Incarnation which truly addresses the faith-experience of Christians who

seek to understand what happened in the life of Christ in a way that relates it to their own lives. The key point to be appreciated is the way in which Baillie breaks free from the static terminology which has clouded the significance of a life lived which was fully human and fully divine. By speaking of God's Incarnation in Christ as the full activity of grace in Him, Baillie shows who Christ was in terms of what God does. The question that introduced our treatment of the doctrine preached is a question which shows that it makes a relatively small impact upon our life together to hear that God exists or that in Christ there somehow co-existed substantive divinity and substantive humanity. Dynamic experience cares little about these static quantities. Experience knows about what happens, what a man does. Experience wants to hear that it makes a difference to believe in God; it wants to know that there is a connection between what happened in Christ and what can happen in us. Men need to know that God was not merely present in Christ, but that he was doing something, viz., reconciling the world unto Himself.

A second notable example in Baillie's preaching on the Atonement. Breaking free from conceptions about supra-mundane transactions, he communicates the message

about what God has done by giving the historical reasons which answer the question "Why did Jesus die?" The religious leaders of His day plotted against Jesus because he accepted the unacceptable, because he loved sinners. Jesus Himself chose to die because He would not give up "the shocking habit of being a friend of publicans and sinners." It was the event of His death that revealed something to the faith-experience of those who saw Him die. They said, "'God must be like that'. Nay, they said even more. . . . As St. Paul put it, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself'."¹ And the Cross still demonstrates God's work today, for it calls men to repentance wherein lies reconciliation through forgiveness. This sermon is a vivid example of the approach from historical faith-experience, through revelation and back to faith-experience with a message.

The third example is the preaching on the doctrine of the Trinity. This is another very "theological" doctrine in the minds of many. It might well be asked, "What can the Trinity of the liturgy and the creeds have to do with genuine human experience?" Baillie approaches

¹ "Why did Jesus die?" To Whom Shall We Go?, pp. 127-128.

this doctrine quite unabashedly from the perspective of historical human experience. Through their experience of God's work, men came to speak of Him as One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through their experience, men came to realize that all their words are but frail attempts to describe the scope and depth of the love of God. Through their experience, men came to know that God was active among them in Jesus Christ; they also came to know that the same God remained with them through the work of the Holy Spirit. This was made dramatically apparent at Pentecost. The doctrine is not presented as a doctrine which demands blind credulity, it is presented as a doctrine which tells a story of events that have happened; a doctrine which tells what God does.

Some Areas for Future Study

The very purpose of theology is the articulation of the Christian faith in order that it can be effectively communicated. The moment of truth comes when a minister or theologian is confronted with the task of preaching Christian doctrine. For this reason the examination of sermons is a valid tool to be used in coming to grips with any theological system. It would be interesting and valuable to perform a thematic analysis of the sermons

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of many theologians; in particular it would be of great value to see how the theological themes in Karl Barth's preaching compare with his formal work.

I have been privileged to be the first to examine D. M. Baillie's manuscripts in detail; however, much is still to be learned about his thought. Two areas of interest to the practical theologian deserve special attention. Those who knew Donald Baillie are quick to recall the depth of his devotional sensitivity. Many remember his prayers with particular appreciation. He has left us several hundred manuscripts of prayers delivered on various occasions. The theology of prayer is also treated in some of his lectures and addresses. A fruitful area for research and inspiration awaits the person who dips into these sources in order to find the meaning of prayer for a man to whom it obviously meant so much.

Another area for further research lies in the critical examination of the basis for morality in Baillie's thought. There are many sources for this study. Baillie had the somewhat disarming habit of taking morality for granted, and it would be well to examine what he has to say about specific ethical questions. We have seen his

views on morality painted in bold strokes, but one may well be tempted to enquire about the implications of what he says in specific instances, in particular the Christian's attitude to war. (There are many war-dated sermons and articles on the subject.)

The most valuable lesson to be learned from the study of D. M. Baillie's work is the example of his attitude toward theology and preaching. It is one of genuine respect for the questioner coupled with a humble confidence in the answer of the Gospel. Above all he communicates through his writing and preaching the fact that these tasks are undertaken in a spirit of profound gratitude to God for being called by Him, "who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."



Eden Grove

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