

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Christian and the Community

Every man necessarily lives in two worlds. He lives within the four walls of the place that he calls home, and where his companions are the members of his own family. This is his private world. But equally a man has to go out of his house and home and has to live in a public world. He is not only a member of a family; he is also a member of a community, a state, a world. He is not only a private person; he is a public citizen.

A man's attitude to the world can take more than one form.

i. He can be totally immersed in the world. He can plunge into it and live as if there was no other world. His attitude may be: 'Eat, drink and enjoy yourself, for tomorrow we die.' 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,' as Herrick had it. Pile up kisses, as Catullus said, for when this world is done there remains nothing but a night which knows no ending and a sleep which knows no awakening.

But there is another way of being immersed in the world, and a commoner way than that. To be immersed in the world need not mean to be devoted to the pleasures of this world; it need not mean to eat and drink and be merry. There are many people who are immersed in this world in the sense that they are unaware that there is any other. They are not in the least immoral; they are not in the least dedicated to pleasure. They simply go in and out, and live decent respectable lives, and never think of any other world or any other life. They are hardly aware that there is any such thing as religion, or any such place as the church. They are not in the least hostile to religion. They regard it—if they think of it at all—as something

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which is quite irrelevant, something of which they have no need at all. A. J. Gossip used to say: You've seen a little evangelical meeting going on down some cul-de-sac of a street, while the crowds stream past on the pavements of the main road with never a look and never a second glance and never a thought. That is what the church is to many people—perhaps now to the majority of people. To be immersed in the world is not by any means necessarily to be a pleasure-lover; it is simply to be unaware of any horizons beyond this life.

ii. A man can take the opposite course and completely renounce this world. There has always been a strain of so-called Christian thought which had no use for this world at all; and there always have been people who quite deliberately and as completely as possible divorced themselves from the world. Thomas à Kempis said that the greatest saints deliberately avoided the society of men and tried to live to God and with God alone. The third and the fourth centuries were the great days of the monks and the hermits, when they deliberately turned their backs on life and on men and went to live in the desert, if possible not even within sight of another hermit.

There was one hermit who for fifty years lived on the top of Mount Sinai. He would not even see travellers and pilgrims who had come specially to visit him. 'The man who is often visited by mortals', he said, 'cannot be visited by angels.' There was the famous St Simeon Stylites, known as the pillarman. He tried living in a cavern; he tried digging a grave and living in it with nothing but his head exposed. Finally, in AD 423, he built himself a pillar six feet high and began to live on the top of it. He never came down. For no less than thirty-seven years he lived on the top of his pillar, which was gradually heightened until it was sixty feet high. He was the first of many pillar-saints who chose this way of isolating themselves from the world. There were the people called the shut-ins, the *inclusi*. They chose a niche in some

monastery and literally got themselves bricked in, leaving only a narrow slit for the bare minimum of food and drink to be passed in to them. It is on record that one of them lived thus for twenty-five years. 'Are you alive?' someone asked through the narrow opening. 'I believe', he answered, 'that I am dead to the world.'

Men like these attempted to live as if the world did not exist. It was in many ways the most selfish of lives, for they were so concerned to save their own souls that they simply isolated themselves from all other men. They were, as it has been put, so heavenly-minded that they were no earthly use. Their renunciation was complete—and it was a caricature and parody of Christianity.

iii. So then there are people who are immersed in the world, and there are people who in the name of Christianity have renounced the world and who have as far as possible severed all connection with the world. From the point of view of the Christian ethic neither immersion in the world nor isolation from the world can be right. Jesus was quite clear that his men were not of this world (John 17.14,16). So much so were they not of this world that he warned them that the world would hate them as it had hated him (John 15.18,19; 17.14). It is therefore clear that no follower of Jesus can be immersed in the world. On the other hand, Jesus was equally clear that God loved the world (John 3.16). He did not pray that his men should be taken out of the world but that they should be kept from the evil of the world (John 17.15). And in the end he deliberately and of set purpose sent them out into the world (John 17.18).

The Christian must have an attitude to the world which combines involvement and detachment. This is not so unusual as it sounds. I think it would be true to say that this combination of involvement and detachment is characteristic of the work of many people, for instance, of the minister and of the doctor. Of course minister and doctor must be deeply involved, deeply identified with the people whom they wish to

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help. But they must at the same time be able to stand back and to view the facts in such a way that their judgment is not clouded by too much sentiment and too much softness. Sometimes it is necessary to be stern in order to be merciful and to be hard in order to be kind.

This involvement and detachment are characteristic of the Christian's attitude to the world. He is involved in the world and its life as Jesus was; but at the same time to him the world is not everything. It is the threshold to a larger and a wider life which begins when this life ends. In the world he lives, and lives to the full, but always with the conviction that it is something beyond this world which in the end gives this world its value and its significance.

Now we turn directly to the New Testament, and we are at once faced with the fact that the New Testament expects, and indeed demands, that a man should be a good citizen. Jesus was ready and willing to pay the temple tax that any Jew had to pay (Matthew 17.24-27). He does not question the fact that a man has a duty to the Emperor as well as having a duty to God, and that both must be fulfilled (Matthew 22.15-22).

Paul was proud to be a Roman citizen, and had no hesitation in claiming his rights as a citizen (Acts 21.39; 22.25). He writes to the Romans about the relationship of the Christian to the state, and he is quite clear that the state is a divine institution and that it is a Christian duty to give obedience to it. The magistrate is God's servant, and if a man does the right thing he has nothing to fear; it is only the criminal and the wrongdoer who have anything of which to be afraid. The taxes of the state ought to be paid and the authority of the state ought to be respected as Paul sees it (Romans 13.1-7). It is the duty of the Christian to remember in his prayers those who are in charge of public affairs from the Emperor downwards (1 Timothy 2.2). Peter is equally sure of the duty of citizenship. 'Fear God,' he says, 'and honour the Emperor' (1 Peter 2.17).

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Then all of a sudden in the Book of the Revelation we get a thunderous volte-face, for in that book Rome is the great harlot, drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs (Revelation 17.1-7). The Roman Empire for the John of the Revelation has become the very essence and incarnation of devilish and Satanic power. What has happened? Why the difference?

In her great days, Roman justice and Roman impartiality were famous. The people whom Rome conquered were not resentful; they were grateful. The seas were cleared of pirates and the roads of brigands. A man might make his journeys in safety and live his life in peace, thanks to the *pax Romana*, the Roman peace. Quite spontaneously, men began to talk of Roma, the spirit of Rome, as something divine, and even as far back as the second century BC men were building temples for the worship of divine Rome. If things had stopped there, there might have been no great trouble. But it was the next step that made the difference. It is all very well to worship the spirit of Rome, but after all the spirit of Rome is an abstraction; and that abstraction is incarnated in the Emperor, and bit by bit the worship came to be transferred to the Emperor as the embodiment of Rome, and by the early days of the Christian era temples for the worship of Caesar the Emperor were quite common.

At first the Emperors really and truly did not want this. They were embarrassed with the whole business. But bit by bit the Roman state began to see a far-reaching use for this Caesar worship. The Roman Empire was a huge area stretching from the Danube to North Africa and from Britain to the Euphrates. It was very difficult to get some focus, some one thing, which would unify all the many tribes and nations in it. And suddenly the Roman government realised that they had just that in Caesar worship. We talk about the Crown being the one thing that holds the Commonwealth together; and it is just the same as if to unify the Commonwealth we set up a

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universal worship of the Queen. So the Roman government laid it down in the end that every citizen should once a year burn a pinch of incense to Caesar and say: Caesar is Lord; and then he would get a certificate to say that he had done so. Be fair to Rome. After a man had done this he could go off and worship any god or goddess he liked, so long as the worship did not affect public order or public decency. The worship of Caesar was a test of a man's political loyalty far more than of his religion. But the one thing that the Christians would not say was: Caesar is Lord. For them, Jesus Christ is Lord—and no one else. So persecution broke out and as William Watson the poet put it:

*So to the wild wolf hate were hurl'd
The panting, huddled flock whose crime was Christ.*

And this is where the Revelation comes in. In Paul's time there was nothing like this. By the time of the Revelation compulsory Caesar worship was on the way.

All this has to be said, for the point is that the Christian is the good citizen, and the Christian is the obedient citizen—but there are limits and beyond these limits he will not go. In the Christian life there is only one supreme loyalty; that loyalty is to Jesus Christ, and that loyalty takes precedence over loyalty to family, loyalty to state, and loyalty to everything else, and so there can come a time when the Christian duty is disobedience to the state, and the Christian must hold that when that time comes he must act on it. It may not come once in a lifetime; it may not come once in a century—but it can come—and that is something which we cannot forget.

Let us then look at the relationship between the church and the Christian, and the state. That relationship has in its time taken many forms.

i. Sometimes the church has dominated the state. One of the great figures of the early church was Ambrose the Bishop of Milan. He was a close friend of Theodosius the Roman Em-

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peror who was a Christian. Theodosius was a good and a generous man but he was cursed with a temper which at times made him act like a madman. There had been trouble in the city of Thessalonica, which resulted in the assassination of the governor. Theodosius reacted with violence. He waited until the people were gathered in the amphitheatre at the games; then he sent in his troops and 7,000 men, women and children were murdered where they stood. It was not long before the fiery tempered emperor repented of what he had done. He had in fact tried to cancel his order, but it was too late to do so. He came to Milan; he came to worship at the cathedral, for worship meant much to Theodosius; but Ambrose was standing at the cathedral door to bar his way. The bishop would not allow the emperor into the cathedral. For a year Theodosius had to do penance; for a year he was refused entry to the sacrament; and at the end of it he had to sit among the common penitents, and had even to lie prostrate in the dust before the cathedral door, before the bishop would accept him at all. There was a time when the Christian church could order the emperor of the world to lie prostrate in the dust.

The same happened to Henry the Second after the murder of Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Becket had stood for the rights of the church. 'Who,' said Henry, 'will rid me of this turbulent priest?' Some of his courtiers took him at his word and murdered Becket in his own cathedral. The day came when Henry, clad in a hair-shirt, and living on bread and water, had to walk barefoot in the rain to the place where Becket had been murdered, and had to lie on the ground and be scourged by the bishop, the abbot and the priests, before he was received back into the church.

There have been times in history when the church dominated the state, and when kings and emperors bowed before an authority higher than their own. But these times are surely gone for ever, although we might argue that it was the church

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which even in our own day compelled the abdication of Edward the Eighth, because he wished to make queen a woman whom the church did not regard as a fit person to be queen of Britain. The church still has power, but not the utterly dominating power that once it had.

ii. There have been times when the church was utterly independent of the state, and when the church claimed that it was acting under an authority to which the state also was subject. This has been particularly the Scottish point of view. We see it fully displayed in John Knox's conflicts with Queen Mary. Mary resented his interference, but Knox's answer is: 'Outside the preaching place, Madam, I think few have occasion to be offended at me; and there, Madam, I am not master of myself, but must obey him who commands me to speak plain, and to flatter no flesh upon the face of the earth.' He is the bearer of a message from God and nothing and no one will stop him from delivering it. 'Yea, madam,' he says, 'it appertains to me to forewarn of such things as may hurt that commonwealth.' King and queen and commoner must listen to the conscience of the nation. The queen wept, but Knox makes answer: 'I must sustain your Majesty's tears, albeit unwillingly, rather than dare hurt my conscience, or betray my commonwealth through my silence.' The truth must be spoken. The Master of Maxwell warns him that, if he continues to oppose the queen, he will suffer for it. 'I understand not, Master, what you mean,' said Knox. 'I never made myself an adversary to the Queen's Majesty, except in the head of religion, and therein I think you will not desire me to bow.' When it comes to a message from God, come what may, that message must be given. One of the queen's councillors reminds him that he is not in the pulpit now but in the queen's presence. Knox thunders back: 'I am in the place where I am demanded of to speak the truth; and therefore I speak. The truth I speak, impugn it whoso list.' When the queen complains of the tone of his preaching, Knox tells her that as a man he may be no more than a worm, but

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he is a subject of this commonwealth, and God has given him an office which makes him 'a watchman over the realm and over the Kirk of God gathered in the same.' Here is the attitude that queen and commoner must listen to the word of God which must be spoken, and spoken without fear.

The classic expression of this is in the words of Andrew Melville to James the Sixth. The Commission of Assembly had appointed a deputation to visit the king at Falkland. There were James Melville, Patrick Galloway, James Nicolson and Andrew Melville. At first it was decided that James Melville should do the speaking, since he was likely to speak with a moderation to which the king might listen. But the king was 'crabbed and choleric' and Andrew Melville broke in. He caught the king by the sleeve, calling him 'God's silly vassal'. Then he said:

Sir, we will humbly reverence your Majesty always, namely in public, but since we have this occasion to be with your Majesty in private, and the truth is that you are brought into extreme danger of your life and crown, and with you the country and the Kirk of Christ is like to be wrecked, for not telling you the truth, and giving you a faithful counsel, we must discharge our duty therein, or else be traitors both to Christ and you! And, therefore, sir, as divers time before, so now again, I must tell you, there is two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland. There is Christ Jesus the King, and his kingdom the kirk, whose subject King James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom not a king nor a lord nor a head, but a member.

It was in the same tone that Melville had already spoken to the Regent, the Earl of Morton. Morton had complained that Scotland would have no peace while Melville was there and had threatened him with exile. Melville replied:

Tush, sir! Threaten your courtiers in that fashion. It is the same to me whether I rot in the air or in the ground. The earth is the Lord's; my fatherland is wherever well-doing is

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. . . Yet God be glorified, it will not lie in your power to hang nor exile his truth.

Here in the Scottish tradition is the complete independence of the church. It is not rebellion or revolution; it comes from the highest kind of loyalty, but it comes from the conviction that the differences are gone when men stand in the presence of God, and that God's man must speak no matter who is listening. King, queen and commoner are all subjects of God.

iii. There have been times when the church surrendered to the state and became subservient to the state. There is extant one extraordinary letter from Thomas Coke, John Wesley's right-hand man, written to the then Home Secretary Henry Dundas. The date is 8th November 1798. There was trouble in the Channel Islands. France was threatening invasion, and the able-bodied male population had been ordered to engage on military exercises on Sundays. Certain of the Methodists refused to exercise on Sundays; they were quite willing to do double time throughout the week but not—in their opinion—to desecrate the Sunday. Thomas Coke had many friends in high places, and he is writing to try to avert a bill which would institute real persecution against those who refused to exercise. He has no use at all for Democrats. 'When a considerable number of Democrats had crept in among us, to the number of about 5,000, I was a principal means of their being entirely excluded from our Society.' He has still less use for pacifists. 'The preamble of the Law, I think, says that some have refused to bear arms at all. I have heard of only one in Jersey who answered this description; and he has been already banished from the Island. We plead not for such. We look upon them at best to be poor Fanatics or arrant Cowards, and have no objection to their Banishment. They have no right to the protection of the Laws, who will not themselves be ready to protect those laws when in danger.' And then Coke astonishingly finishes: 'I can truly say, Sir, that though I very much love our Society, I love my King and Country

better' (John Vickers, *Thomas Coke, Apostle of Methodism*, p. 224).

A subservient church is a national disaster. It was said of Ambrose that he was 'the personified conscience of all that was best in the Roman Empire'. 'Who', he said to Theodosius, 'will dare to tell you the truth, if a priest does not dare?' The nation which has no independent church has lost its conscience.

iv. There have been times when the state refused the church any say at all in the affairs of the state, because the state held that such things were none of the church's business. When Hitler came to power, at first he did not threaten the church as such, but he took good care that no real Christian ever held any power. He deliberately got rid of them, for he openly admitted that he wanted no one in his government who knew any other loyalty than loyalty to the state.

When Niemöller, the great independent Christian, went to Hitler and told Hitler that he was troubled about the future of Germany, Hitler replied bleakly: 'Let that be my concern.' Goebbels, the notorious minister of propaganda, said to the church at large: 'Churchmen dabbling in politics should take note that their only task is to prepare for the world hereafter.' He had no objections to preachers being concerned with heaven so long as they left Germany alone.

Article 88 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China states: 'Citizens . . . of China enjoy freedom of religious belief.' That means exactly what it says. There is no freedom to meet, to worship, to preach, to attempt to initiate any activity or to criticise any policy. So long as belief remains a purely internal thing which has no effect on conduct or relationships with other people or relationships with the state, there is freedom of *belief*. But if belief threatens to become action, then it is quickly strangled (Richard C. Bush Jr, *Religion in Communist China*, pp. 15-22).

In Victorian days Lord Melbourne made his famous state-

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ment that religion is an excellent thing, so long as it does not interfere with a man's private life. And the totalitarian states have no objection to religion so long as religion keeps its mouth shut about earth and confines itself to dreams of heaven—and that, of course, reduces the church to a status of sheer irrelevancy.

v. Lastly, we must look at the relationship of church and state in the thought of Martin Luther, for it could well be said that no view has had more influence on history, even in our time, and no view has been more mistaken. We may find Luther's view in two places. In the one place he divides people into two groups; in the other he divides life into two areas.

We may begin with his treatise on *Secular Authority; to what extent it should be obeyed*, which was addressed to John, Duke of Saxony, in 1523 (Volume 3 in the Philadelphia Edition of the Works of Luther, pp. 228 *et seq.*; given most conveniently in E. G. Rupp and Benjamin Drewery, *Martin Luther*, pp. 107-112). This divides people into two groups. There are those who are true believers, and who belong to the Kingdom of God, and those who are not believers and who belong to the kingdom of the world. If all men were true Christians, no king, lord, sword or law would be necessary. They would do everything the law demands and more. On the other hand there are those who do not accept Jesus Christ and his way. 'The unrighteous do nothing that the law demands, therefore they need the law to instruct, constrain and compel them to do good.' So for those who are not Christ's, 'God has provided . . . a different government outside the Christian estate and God's kingdom, and has subjected them to the sword, so that, even though they would do so, they cannot follow their wickedness, and that, if they do, they may not do it without fear nor in peace and prosperity.'

It is impossible to try to rule the world by the gospel and its love. If anyone tried to do so, 'he would loose the bands and chains of the wild and savage beasts, and let them tear and

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mangle everyone.' Before you can apply the Christian way to everyone, everyone must be a Christian—and to make everyone Christian is something that you will never accomplish. To attempt to govern the world by the gospel would be to act like a shepherd who put into the one fold wolves, lions, eagles and sheep all together, and told them to help themselves. The result would be chaos. Christians as Christians need no law, but the non-Christian does. Therefore the sword is necessary. 'Because the sword is a very great benefit and necessary to the whole world, to preserve peace, to punish sin and to prevent evil, he (the Christian) submits most willingly to the rule of the sword, pays tax, honours those in authority, serves, helps, and does all he can to further the government, that it may be sustained and held in honour and fear.' The Christian is therefore under obligation to serve and to cherish the sword of government, just as he serves and cherishes any other of the divinely given institutions of life, such as matrimony or husbandry. 'There must be those who arrest, accuse, slay and destroy the wicked, and protect, acquit, defend and save the good.'

So then it is Luther's argument that so long as there are two kinds of people—those in and those not in the kingdom of God—it is impossible to arrange society on the principles of Christian love. There must be law and force; there must be the sword of the magistrate. And in order to see that there is safety and good order the Christian is bound to respect and honour and, if he is qualified, to serve the state. 'Therefore, should you see that there is a lack of hangmen, beadles, judges, lords or princes, and find that you are qualified, you should offer your services and seek the place, in order that necessary government may by no means be despised and become inefficient or perish.' Quite simply, Luther is saying that you cannot govern an unchristian world by Christian love, and in such a world you have to use the sword and all that the sword stands for against the wicked man.

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The second passage is much more far-reaching. It is contained in Luther's sermons on the Sermon on the Mount (*Luther's Works*, the American Edition, vol. 21, pp. 106-115). This is from a sermon on Matthew 5.38-42, where Jesus teaches us to abandon the principle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and tells us not to resist evil, but to turn the other cheek, to give the cloak as well as the coat, and to go not one mile but two.

In this sermon Luther's point is that the Christian lives in two spheres. In this passage, Luther says, Jesus is teaching how the individual Christian must live *personally*. As a Christian individual, apart from his official position, Christians 'should not desire revenge at all. They should have the attitude that, if someone hits them on one cheek, they are ready, if need be, to turn the other cheek to him as well, restraining the vindictiveness not only of their fist but also of their heart, their thoughts, and all their powers as well.' The Sermon on the Mount is for the Christian as a person and as an individual.

But the Christian is not only an individual person; he is a *person in relationship*; and here the situation is very different. Luther's point of view is so important that we must allow him to speak for himself, and we must quote him at length:

There is no getting around it, a Christian has to be a secular person of some sort. As regards his own person, according to his life as a Christian, he is in subjection to no one but Christ, without any obligation to the emperor or to any other man. But at least outwardly, according to his body and property, he is related by subjection and obligation to the emperor, inasmuch as he occupies some office or station in life or has a house and a home, a wife and children; for all these are things which pertain to the emperor. Here he must necessarily do what he is told and what this outward life requires. If he has a house or a wife or children or servants, and refuses to support them, or, if need be, to

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protect them, he does wrong. It will not do for him to declare that he is a Christian and therefore has to forsake or relinquish everything. But he must be told: 'Now you are under the emperor's control. Here your name is not "Christian", but "father" or "lord" or "prince". According to your own person, you are a Christian; but in relation to your servant you are a different person and you are obliged to protect him.'

You see, now we are talking about a Christian-in-relation; not about his being a Christian, but about this life and his obligation in it to some other person, whether under him or over him or even alongside him, like a lord or a lady, a wife or children or neighbours, whom he is obliged, if possible, to defend, guard and protect. Here it would be a mistake to teach: 'Turn the other cheek, and throw your cloak away with your coat.' That would be ridiculous, like the case of the crazy saint who let the lice nibble at him and refused to kill any of them on account of this text, maintaining that he had to suffer and could not resist evil.

And then there comes the passage which is the crux of the whole matter:

Do you want to know what your duty is as a prince or a judge or a lord or a lady, with people under you? You do not have to ask Christ about your duty. Ask the imperial or the territorial law. It will soon tell you your duty toward your inferiors as their protector. It gives you both the power and the might to punish within the limits of your authority and commission not as a Christian but as an imperial subject.

Luther then quotes the case of those who were called to arms by infidel emperors,

In all good conscience they slashed and killed, and in this respect there was no difference between Christians and heathen. Yet they did not sin against this text. For they

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were not doing this as Christians, for their own persons, but as obedient members and subjects, under obligation to a secular person and authority.

So,

When a Christian goes to war or when he sits as a judge's bench, punishing his neighbour, or when he registers an official complaint, he is not doing this as a Christian, but as a soldier or a judge or a lawyer . . . A Christian should not resist any evil; but within the limits of his office, a secular person should oppose every evil. The head of a household should not put up with insubordination or bickering among his servants. A Christian should not sue anyone, but should surrender both his coat and his cloak when they are taken away from him; but a secular person should go to court if he can to protect and defend himself against some violence or outrage. In short the rule in the Kingdom of Christ is the toleration of everything, forgiveness, and the recompense of evil with good. On the other hand, in the realm of the emperor, there should be no tolerance shown to any injustice, but rather a defence against wrong and a punishment of it, and an effort to defend and maintain the right, according to what each one's office and station may require.

It is quite true that Luther does in the treatise—but not in the sermon—indicate that there are limits, and that the prince has no right to demand that which is wrong. But this is not the main impression which his teaching leaves. His teaching leaves the impression that in the secular realm the government is supreme, and that from it, and not from Christ, the Christian must take his duty. And it is this very fact which allowed Hitler to come to power and begat Belsen and Dachau.

The Lutheran church did not stand out, for it was conditioned to accept the civil power.

The whole thing is to be seen at its most terrible in Luther's attitude to the Peasants' Revolt in 1524-5. The peasants

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revolted. They had therefore in Luther's eyes broken the command of Jesus to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's (Matthew 22.21). They had broken the scriptural law regarding obedience to the state as Paul stated it in Romans 13. They have therefore, in Luther's words, 'forfeited body and soul, as faithless, perjured, lying, disobedient knaves and scoundrels are wont to do.' They are makers of sedition and therefore outside the law of God and the empire. In regard to any peasant, 'The first who can slay him is doing right and well . . . Therefore let everyone who can, smite, slay, and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel. It is just as when one must kill a mad dog.' They can be slaughtered without even a trial. 'Here there is no time for sleeping; no place for patience or mercy. It is the time of the sword, not the day of grace . . . Strange times, those, when a prince can win heaven with bloodshed, better than other men with prayer!'

It might not be too much to say that Luther's ethic of church and state was the greatest disaster in all the history of ethics, for it opened the way for a kind of Christianity which allowed the state to do terrible things, and in too many cases made no protest. It is impossible to divide life into spheres like that. A Christian is a Christian in any sphere of life, and in things sacred and things secular alike Jesus Christ is Lord for him.

It would not be right to leave the matter thus vague and abstract and generalised. We have to ask ourselves just where the Christian ethic may in fact have to show itself. I think that there are three areas in modern life where there is special need for Christian ethical witness.

i. The first is the area of *racialism*. There are certain simple facts which will show how real this problem is. There are one million coloured immigrants in Britain already. By 1980 the number will naturally increase to three million. There are something like 15,000 university students and 48,300 students

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from overseas in the technical colleges. Two per cent of the post-graduate students in the country are from overseas. At the present time 3 per cent of the school-leavers are coloured; by the mid-seventies that number will rise to 15 per cent. And now here is the really serious fact. Youth employment officers state that they have to spend as much time placing immigrant school-leavers in jobs as they have to spend searching for suitable jobs for handicapped children. It is almost as difficult for a coloured person to find work as it is for a handicapped person (R. H. Fuller and B. K. Rice, *Christianity and the Affluent Society*, p. 137). Fuller and Rice record a curious kind of parallel problem. In India today there are two million unemployed high-school graduates and 200,000 unemployed BA's. The racial problem is not something that can wait.

There is a very real sense in which the ancient world was a divided world. It was particularly so in two areas. The Jew was divided from the Gentile. To a Jew a Gentile child was unclean from birth. 'The daughter of an Israelite may not assist a Gentile woman in childbirth since she would be assisting to bring to birth a child for idolatry.' Even in the commonest things of life this appeared. A Gentile might not cut the hair of a Jew. A Jew could not eat bread baked by a Gentile or drink milk from a cow milked by a Gentile, unless a Jew was present at the milking. Suspicion of the Gentiles was acute. 'Cattle may not be left in the inns of the Gentiles since they are suspected of bestiality; nor may a woman remain alone with them since they are suspected of lewdness; nor may a man remain alone with them since they are suspected of shedding blood.' (The quotations are from the Mishnah tractate *Abodah Zarah* 2.1,2,6.)

There was the division between the Greek and the barbarian. Originally to the Greek the barbarian was a man who spoke another language, a man who unintelligibly said *bar bar*, barking like a dog, instead of speaking the beautiful and flexible Greek language. We twice get that meaning in the

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New Testament as the translation of the Authorised Version makes clear. In the First Letter to the Corinthians Paul is speaking about the gift of speaking with tongues and about its unintelligibility, and he says: "Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me" (1 Corinthians 14.11 AV). In the narrative of the shipwreck in Acts Luke tells how Paul and his party were shipwrecked on Malta and then goes on to say: "And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness" (Acts 28.2). A barbarian in Greek was often simply a man who spoke an unintelligible language. But the word came to indicate not simply a person who spoke a different language, but a person from an inferior culture. So Heraclitus can speak of people with 'barbarian souls'. The barbarian was different from the Greek. And so the great Greek writers like Plato, Demosthenes, Isocrates can use a series of phrases. They can say that the barbarians are 'foes by nature'; that they are 'natural and hereditary foes'; that they are foes 'by nature and tradition'; that between them and the Greek there is a 'perpetual and truceless warfare' (cf. T. J. Haarhoff, *The Stranger at the Gate*, pp. 8,13, 60,61,65,66). But there was another side to the Greek, and to the Roman. Terence, the Roman dramatist could say: 'I regard no human being as a stranger.' Diogenes could claim to be a citizen of the world. He may have invented the word *cosmopolitan*. Alexander the Great could talk of his desire to marry the East to the West, and to mingle as in one great loving-cup all the races of mankind.

In the ancient world there was division all right; there were cleavages; but there was no colour-bar as such. There were divisions of religion, of culture, of tradition; but the sheer contempt for a man as a human being, which is the basis of the colour-bar, was not there—and it is here today, and not only in South Africa.

The area of racial relationships is another area in which men have sown the wind and are reaping the whirlwind. Many

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years ago now an authoress called Janet Mitchell wrote a book which included an account of a visit to America. One of the high-lights of her tour was to be a visit to Paul Robeson, the great singer and actor, to whom she had an introduction. She was staying with friends in Chicago, and she was talking enthusiastically of her coming visit to Paul Robeson. She noticed that the atmosphere had become a little chilly. 'What's the matter?' she asked. Her friends answered: 'We wouldn't talk too much about visiting Paul Robeson, if we were you.' 'Why on earth shouldn't I talk about it?' Janet Mitchell said. 'He's one of the greatest singers and actors in the world.' 'That may be,' her host answered. 'But Paul Robeson's a nigger.' If you treat any man or any body of men like that, you are building up a store of trouble that is some day going to erupt—and it has erupted.

Somewhere I read the story of an artist who was commissioned to design a stained-glass window illustrating the children's hymn:

*Around the throne of God in heaven
Thousands of children stand,
Singing, Glory, glory, glory.*

The design was finished; the painting which had to serve as a pattern for the window was completed, and the committee in charge were to see it next day. That night the artist had a dream. He saw in the dream a stranger in his studio, and the stranger was working with brushes and palette at his picture. 'Stop!' he shouted. 'Stop! You'll spoil my picture!' The stranger turned. 'It is you,' he said, 'who have spoiled it.' 'I?' said the artist. 'I spoil my own picture?' 'Indeed you have,' said the stranger. 'How do you make that out?' said the artist. And the stranger answered: 'Who told you that the faces of all the children in heaven were white? Look! I am putting in the little black faces, and the brown ones and the yellow ones.' Morning came. The artist woke and rushed into his studio. The picture was as he had left it. He seized his

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brushes and paints and sketched in the faces of the children of every colour and of every nation. And when the committee saw it later in the morning, they said: 'Perfect! It's just what we wanted! It's God's family at home!' Who indeed said that the faces of all the children in God's family are white?

All this is true, but I do not think that it would be fair to leave things there like that. You cannot settle this matter on a wave of emotion; there is more to it than that. I can say in principle that racialism is entirely wrong, and that integration is entirely necessary, but I do not know how I might feel if I lived in a country in which the white population was in a tiny minority. But this we can say with certainty. There should and there must be equality of opportunity and equality of treatment for all. This might well mean that immigration into any country might need to be controlled, until the country can absorb the newcomers; until they can be properly housed; until there are decent jobs for them to do; and until they can be truly integrated into its education and its work and its life. But, if the principle is accepted that man as such is dear to God, the right way to treat him will soon be worked out.

ii. The second area in which the Christian must demonstrate the Christian ethic is in the area of *social conditions*, in the social environment in which he lives.

It is here that the church has much to live down. There is no doubt that for long the church was connected with the establishment and with the *status quo*. The church was held to be, and appeared to be, the supporter of things as they are. It had in the nineteenth century much to do with the upper and the middle classes, and little to do with the working man.

One of the most terrible things I ever read is in William Purcell's life of Studdert Kennedy. In the days of Kennedy's father, in the time of the industrial revolution, in the square of St Peter's church in Leeds, a poor wretched man publicly burned the Bible and the Prayer Book, because he felt that the church was more than anything else responsible for the conditions in which he had to live. It was at that time that a

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country farm-labourer was asked if he attended the Communion, and answered: 'No. That kind of thing is for the gentry'—and the tragedy is that it was very largely true, before John Wesley came.

The social gospel is not an addendum to the gospel; it is the gospel. If we read the Gospels, it becomes clear that it was not what Jesus said about God that got him into trouble. What got him into trouble was his treatment of men and women, his way of being friendly with outcasts with whom no respectable Jew would have had anything to do. It has always been fairly safe to talk about God; it is when we start to talk about men that the trouble starts. And yet the fact remains that there is no conceivable way of proving that we love God other than by loving men. And there is no conceivable way of proving that we love men other than by doing something for those who most need help.

What then is the Christian duty now? The Christian duty depends on one principle which cannot be evaded. If we think that conditions should be changed, if we think that in any area of life conditions are not what they should be in a so-called Christian country, then there is only one way to alter them—through political action. There is no other possible way through which the change can be effected. And this leaves us facing the inevitable and inescapable conclusion—the Christian ought to be deeply involved in politics. He ought to be active in local government; he ought to be an active member of his trade union; he ought to be active and responsible in national politics. This is not to say that he is to be a member of any particular political party, for no party has a monopoly of what is right. The Christian should be in all parties, acting everywhere as the conscience of the community and the stimulus to action.

We often complain of the action of local government and of trade unions; it is a first principle that no man has a right to complain of the work of others, unless he is prepared to do it better himself. It is the simple fact that time and time again

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decisions are taken and issues are settled by a small and militant minority who are there, while the rest absent themselves and refuse to accept their responsibilities. We cannot complain, if we leave it to others to take the decision in which we should ourselves have shared. No leaven ever leavened any loaf unless it got inside it; and the Christian will never be the leaven of society until he is completely involved in it. Luther once said an extraordinary thing in his treatise *Concerning Christian Liberty*. He thinks of all that God has given him in Christ; and then he thinks of the obligation that this love and this generosity have laid upon the man who has accepted them, especially the obligation to be among men as one who serves, as Jesus was. Then he says: 'I will therefore give myself as a sort of Christ to my neighbour, as Christ has given himself to me; and will do nothing in this life except what I see will be needful, advantageous and wholesome for my neighbour, since by faith I should abound in all good things in Christ.' Here is the voice of the man who *must* give himself to the community. Every Christian ought to feel like that, and therefore every Christian ought to give himself to the service of the community in which he lives.

iii. The third area in which the Christian ethic is involved is the area of *war*.

In the ancient world war was a very gentlemanly engagement; it was fought by mercenaries, who had their rules and kept them. It is on record that during one campaign it was discovered that in a house between the armies there was a picture by Polygnotus, the greatest of the Greek artists. The war was suspended until the picture had been removed to a place of safety. But the very nature of war has changed. During the Spanish Civil War a journalist described a city street, bombed, littered with broken glass and all kinds of debris. Along the street came a little boy dragging a wheelless wooden engine at the end of a piece of string. There is a burst of fire and a scurry; and when the dust settles the boy is dead. That is war.

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But not even that is war today. That bears no relationship to the potential of modern warfare. Something happened at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, something after which the world can never be the same again. A method of fighting was discovered and used which could kill thousands, which could lay waste a city, and which could cause genetic damage to generations yet unborn. It is said—and it is unquestionably true—that this country and America and the Western democracies at least would never use the atomic bomb as an offensive weapon, and have it only as a defensive deterrent. But one thing is clear—it is not a deterrent, *unless in certain circumstances the nation possessing it is prepared to use it*. And this is exactly what I believe a Christian can never consent to do. I can in no circumstances conceive it to be in accord with Christian principles to use such methods.

If I am asked if I would defend my wife or my daughter or anyone else if I saw them attacked, the answer of course is, Yes. And the difference is this. In such a case I would be dealing with the person who was committing the assault. And there is no possible relationship between dealing with a criminal in the act of his crime and raining death and destruction over thousands of people completely indiscriminately, and so killing men, women and children, without distinction.

We are told that we must not kill. That commandment is not abrogated when the killing is not individual but mass murder. We are told that we must defend Christianity—or Western civilisation—as if they were the same thing—from forces which might destroy it. In the first place, I do not believe that Christianity can be destroyed. In its early days it survived the whole might of the Roman Empire and emerged. In the second place, if Christianity has to be defended by such means, then I for one would want nothing to do with it. It is impossible to defend the faith whose watchword is love and whose emblem is a man upon a cross, by a policy of destruction. I do not love my enemies when I drop a bomb on them. And—in the end—it may seem a naïve statement, and it

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may seem an oversimplification, but I cannot imagine Jesus in any circumstances pressing the switch which would release a bomb. I think that the time has come for the Christian and the church to say that they are finished with war.

The Christian both as a man and as a Christian must be involved in the community. It was never more difficult to be a Christian within the community than today—and it was never more necessary.