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Writings on God and History

Volume One



M. C. Smit

Writings on God and History

*Edited by Harry Van Dyke
Translated by Herbert Donald Morton*

Volume One
Selected Studies
(1951-1980)

**Wedge Publishing Foundation
Jordan Station, Ontario, Canada**

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Smit, M.C., 1911-1981

Writings on God and History, Volume One, Selected Studies (1951-1980)

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Cover illustration: Gustave Doré (1832-1883), *Jacob wrestling with the angel* (detail).

Book and cover design by Rachelle Longtin.

ISBN 0-88906-018-5
Printed in Canada

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Foreword

MEIJER CORNELIS SMIT (1911-1981) was born on a farm near Haastrecht, a modest village in the dairy heartland of central Holland. The home he grew up in was Calvinist in religion and Kuyperian in outlook, hence permeated with a biblical piety and a kind of cultural progressiveness; parents and grandparents, he fondly remembered, fostered an awareness of one's historical heritage and providential calling. Meijer learned to milk cows, handle the punt, stack hay, groom horses. However, his only real passion was books, so he was elated when given permission to continue his education. For six years he attended the City Gymnasium of Gouda, an hour's cycling away, while on Saturday afternoons the headmaster of the local Christian school tutored him in church history, Reformed doctrine, and Neo-calvinist social and political thought.

Toward the end of these years, an article in the Anti-Revolutionary daily *De Standaard* caught his attention and fired his imagination: it was written by Professor D.H.T. Vollenhoven of the Free University in Amsterdam and it argued that higher education was a challenging field for Christian service, not merely in the form of Christian theological studies but in terms of Christian scholarship *tout court*. Thus when Meijer Smit matriculated in 1932 his choice of university was clear, if not his area of study. With two other students he rented rooms in Amsterdam and enrolled in the Faculty of Theology. But the following year saw him registered in the Faculties of Law and Letters as well. Mornings were spent attending a wide variety of lecture series. On late afternoons, his roommates would regularly find him standing behind a tall desk near the window, working his way methodically through a volume of the *Propyläen Weltgeschichte*. The oratorical society A.G.O.R.A. greeted in him a shy and pensive yet congenial new member.

Certain professors in particular attracted him. There was A. Anema for constitutional law, A.A. van Schelven for the history of Calvinism, and A. Goslinga for modern history. He developed a distaste, however, for the dogmatics of Valentine Hepp, whose

elaborate syllabi, full of the minutest distinctions, finally kept Smit from taking the examination for candidacy in theology. Much loved, by contrast, were the classes with Herman Dooyeweerd, who taught philosophy of law but allowed himself many excursions into general philosophy. Before long, Meijer was caught up in the young, vigorous movement for the development and dissemination of a distinctively Reformational school of philosophy; he participated in the summer camps at Lunteren and devoured the publications by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. Throughout these formative years he also made a habit of attending the Sunday worship services and Wednesday evening Bible classes led by *Dominee* S.G. de Graaf, the well-known preacher whose critical and radical expositions (reminiscent yet independent of Barth) carried a distinctively covenantal, theocentric thrust.

At the end of the 1930's, Meijer Smit passed the examinations for candidacy in Law and in Letters (the latter *cum laude*). The German occupation interrupted his formal education, but in 1946 he sat for the qualifying examination in History (again sustained *cum laude*), whereupon he accepted a position in The Hague as librarian with the Kuyper Institute, the historico-political research center of the Anti-Revolutionary Party.

In preparation for an academic career, he now began to work on his doctoral dissertation. The choice of topic had come about indirectly. During the war years, when he had lived at home again, he had renewed his acquaintance with the principal of a local preparatory seminary, a Franciscan father with whom he had many amicable discussions especially about a growing body of Roman Catholic literature on the nature of history and historical study. One day it flashed in upon him that this new and exciting intellectual current was the very thing he had been looking for as a subject for his dissertation since it would not only engage his interest in the problems of Christian faith as applied to learning but at the same time offer him a splendid opportunity, for purposes of comparison and critique, to try his hand at articulating a Reformational view of history. Charting both frontiers, the dissertation, entitled *The Relation between Christianity and History in the Present-day Roman Catholic Conception of History*, was completed and successfully defended on February 17, 1950. The work instantly established Dr. Smit's academic credentials, but it was to be some years before a coveted chair at his alma mater became vacant.

September 27, 1955 was a memorable day in the life of the 43-year old scholar, when he inaugurated his teaching career at the Free University with a bold oration on "the divine mystery in history." The stirring address was also a programmatic statement. Eagerly he set to work. Medieval History and Theory of History comprised his dual teaching assignment. The first year set the pattern for the next quarter century: the lectures in history centered on topics rich in metahistorical implications; the lectures in theory drew heavily on current debates among practicing historians. Invariably they would be based on a rapidly mushrooming personal filing system for which he methodically gleaned and processed scores of professional journals in history, philosophy, theology and archeology, published in Dutch, German, English, French, and Italian.¹ While thus appearing obsessed with breadth, he also insisted on depth and imposed upon himself the highest demands of original reflection. A perfectionist by temperament, he ended by publishing little. As he once explained, he preferred to "work through his students."²

Smit never married. He made his home in Aerdenhout, a quiet town near Haarlem, close to the train station, from where he commuted to Amsterdam, always working as he travelled. For recreation he cycled through the dunes, daily except Sundays. There was a restlessness about him; he walked with rapid steps and seemed to be forever going somewhere. Yet he could also ignore the clock and be a gracious, relaxed host. He was genuinely interested in the people he met, in their lives, their experiences, their joys and sorrows. Though an informed observer of national politics and international affairs, the everyday concerns of the local community held an almost equal fascination for him. A man of books, he never owned a radio or television set, preferring to "read all about it" in the dailies. His students remember him as a friendly and gentle man, unassuming, given to formality yet not aloof, a teacher who surprised them with personalized reading lists and many helpful suggestions. They were impressed by his erudition, his universal outlook and interests, and his pre-occupation with the mystery of history. The private seminars held in his study on Friday evenings were the favorite of many and were talked about for years afterwards.

The rest may be summed up in dates. In 1963 Professor Smit was cross-appointed in the Central Interfaculty or philosophy department, which he joined full-time in 1970, when his teaching

load was expanded with philosophical propaedeutics for all incoming students in both history and art history. His illness manifested itself in the fall of 1980 and after months of hospitalization he fell asleep in Christ on July 16, 1981.

THE STORY OF THE PREPARATION of this collection of writings by Meijer Cornelis Smit begins in October, 1979. At that time, almost three years before Professor Smit's expected retirement, a number of his colleagues, students and friends in the philosophy and history faculties of the Free University in Amsterdam conceived the idea of marking the occasion with the publication of an anthology of his writings in English translation. The idea led to the formation of a Committee who took up the task of preparing such a publication and who also are responsible for the final result.

The initiative enjoyed the full approval of Professor Smit himself, and he made an active contribution to its realization. We think we may say that what is presented here deviates in no essential respect, when viewed as a whole, from the plan that began to take shape in the discussions he had with our Committee.

Nevertheless, Professor Smit's illness and death in the summer of 1981 were a serious blow to the project, in more than one respect. In addition to occasioning a significant delay in publication, Professor Smit's passing away meant that a special contribution he had intended to write for it — an essay in which he would critically review his own intellectual development — now remained unwritten. The irreplaceable value that such an epilogue would have had is evident, particularly in view of the spareness of his literary output, in the last years of his life especially.

Nevertheless, the Committee looked for a possible replacement. We believe we have found something suitable in the commemorative address by one of Professor Smit's students, Jan Aertsen, delivered to the closing conference of the philosophy faculty in the spring of 1982.

From the outset the Committee focussed its attention on Smit as an academic scholar. In that role he was a thinker who struck out for paths of his own, through penetrating analysis of, and polemics with, the views of others. The selection from his writings presented here illustrates the breadth of his knowledge and interests and the evolution and transitions of his thought. His own approach centered

on the theme of God and history—the latter taken in the twofold sense of events and the discipline which studies events. It was certainly no coincidence that the relation between God and history formed the subject of the oration with which he accepted his university appointment in 1955. In the years that followed, he was to devote a large portion of his not inconsiderable powers of thought to thinking that relation through believingly; hence, his inaugural address has the ring of a manifesto.

In retrospect it can be said that Smit's distinctive approach first took form in his encounter with Roman Catholic thought. Yet it is typical of his originality that he did not pursue this encounter in terms of the themes he had inherited from the Reformational scholarly tradition in which he had been formed, namely scholasticism and metaphysics. His concern was with the modern Roman Catholic mind, the mind which has discovered history. His doctoral dissertation contains his report of this encounter, together with his attempt to formulate a response along the lines of the Reformational tradition. The dissertation, as it turned out, remained Professor Smit's only book-length publication. As a record of the development of his thought and as a statement of what would become the main theme of his scholarship, its integral republication as the second volume of our collection seems fully justified to us.

The teaching assignment that M.C. Smit accepted at the Free University in 1955 involved history itself (the medieval period) and thought about history (theory and philosophy of history). No accidental combination, the assignment corresponded to the appointee's own wishes: he publicly expressed the hope that it would enable him to demonstrate in practice the interrelationship between the scientific method of the discipline on the one hand and his view of life and history on the other.

Practically all the writings from the university period date from the years 1955 to 1970. It can be said that three of these (numbered 5, 6, and 7 here) are in the field of historical writing. They illustrate not only his breadth but especially his sustained endeavor to give concrete substance to the theme of the divine mystery in people's lives and its formative power for culture.

Certainly he entertained ideas of broader projects in this area. He toyed with the thought of writing a "history of the city," for example, and collected much material for such a study. The lecture presented here as number 7 provides an indication of the direction

he might have taken had he made any further forays into that field.

That there were none is due importantly, beyond any doubt, to the demands made on his energies by the problems of philosophy of history. Is the explanation for his decision of 1970 to exchange medieval history for medieval philosophy to be found in the conclusion that it was impossible for him to do justice concomitantly to both parts of his teaching assignment? However that may be, the questions of philosophy of history continued to absorb most of his attention.

Though steadfast in his basic conviction, Smit seemed unable to settle on very many final answers. The accent in the last decades of his life was entirely on seeking and inquiring. The writings in the field of philosophy of history which appear here have not, with one exception (number 12), been published before. Most of them are lectures that were given between 1962 and 1970 (numbers 8 to 13). The text from 1970 (number 14) was an internal paper intended as a *pièce de résistance* for a graduate seminar. It bears the fragmentary stamp of such texts while faithfully portraying the stage of his thought at the moment.

The writings presented here reflect the central questions that engaged him: the question of the influence of faith and worldview on the practice and appreciation of history; the question of the meaning of history as an answer to the a-historical-mindedness, or *Geschichtslosigkeit*, that distinguishes our culture; the meaning of time as a way of leaving the inexhaustible richness of historical reality intact, in our academic study of it, by relating historical reality in its diversity to its divine origin.

By seeking to comprehend historical reality within the framework of temporality and transcendental origin, Smit, for all the restlessness and hesitancy that characterize his thought, found a basic conviction which he held to the end of his life. He was unable either to elaborate this framework of thought in the broader sense or to make it operational. With the exception of the text of a presentation from 1980, an excerpt from which is included here as number 15, there is nothing to throw new light on his thought in the final years.

Despite the tragic element of the unuttered final word, the Committee are pleased to be able to present this selection from Professor Smit's scholarly work for the international public who have shown an interest in it. While Smit's work was not completed, it con-

tains ideas and motifs that must be of fundamental significance to anyone concerned with the problems of philosophy of history in our time.

THIS PUBLICATION WOULD not have been possible without the kind cooperation of a number of persons and organizations. The Committee wish to thank the Board of Directors of the Free University in Amsterdam for making the translation possible financially; Herbert Donald Morton, another of Professor Smit's students, for the translation; and John Hultink of Wedge Publishing Foundation for seeing the project into print.

THE COMMITTEE

Jan Aertsen
Jan Davidse, Chairman
Harry Van Dyke, Secretary
Sander Griffioen
Gerben Groenewoud
Jacob Klapwijk
Michiel van Os

Notes

1. The library and the literary remains of M.C. Smit are now lodged with the Institute for Christian Studies, 229 College Street, Toronto.
2. Until the dramatic increase in enrolment during the seventies, the average annual incoming class, in the history and philosophy departments combined, ranged between 12-15 students. Over the years, in addition to scores of *doctoraalscripties* (qualifying theses), the following doctoral dissertations were prepared under the supervision of Professor Smit: Eduard van den Brink, *Rooms of Katholiek; de opvattingen van Christopher Dawson over cultuur en religie* [Roman or Catholic? The views of Christopher Dawson concerning culture and religion] (Groningen: V.R.B. Drukkerijen, 1970); Sander Griffioen, *De Roos en het Kruis; de waardering van de eindigheid in het latere denken van Hegel* [The Rose and the Cross: The appreciation of finitude in the later thought of Hegel] (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1976); Jan Davidse, *Beda Venerabilis' interpretatie van de historische werkelijkheid* [The Venerable Bede's interpretation of historical reality] (Groningen: V.R.B. Drukkerijen, 1976); and Johannes Adrianus Aertsen, *Natura en Creatura; de denkweg van Thomas van Aquino* [*Natura and Creatura: The way of thought of Thomas Aquinas*], 2 vols. (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel, 1982), Eng. trans. by Herbert Donald Morton forthcoming from Brill, Leiden.

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The Crisis in Current Roman Catholic Thought [1951]

THERE IS A GENERAL FEELING that Roman Catholic theology and philosophy are basically unchanging quantities. No matter what theological or philosophical handbook one picks up, its content, it is generally thought, amounts always to the same thing; it is only in the form that one writer shows himself bolder and more original than another.

We strongly doubt the correctness of this notion. In any case, it is not applicable to current Roman Catholic thought. In many areas of theology and philosophy Catholic thinkers are looking for new avenues. Sometimes the new insights gained are so surprising that one wonders whether they still really fit into the framework of the Roman Catholic worldview. That tensions should appear is obvious. What is taking place involves more than mere resistance to a theory adhered to by a number of theologians. Rather, it is a reaction against a line that has been followed for centuries.

The impulse for renewal finds its strongest expression in the area of theology. In this regard people often think immediately and exclusively of the so-called New Theology. However, it should not be forgotten that prior even to the rise of this theology a strong, dynamic development was observable in Roman Catholic theology. The study of modern philosophical systems and of the early Church Fathers influenced Roman Catholic thought more profoundly than anyone at first had suspected. The result was twofold. Some remained faithful to Thomism and attempted to harmonize elements of modern thought with it. Others, by contrast, detached themselves from Scholasticism and either denied the possibility of a metaphysics which, insofar as the essentials are concerned, can be valid for all

times; or else found in the writings of the Fathers deeper and richer insights than those available in traditional philosophy. From these remarks it will already be clear that the current development of Roman Catholic thought is many-faceted. Even where the New Theology is concerned, we have to do not with one particular current but with a tentative convergence of often strongly divergent trends.

It gradually became apparent that, with the purity of Roman Catholicism now beginning to be put at risk, the Pope would intervene, decisively and authoritatively, in the clash of opinions. In August, 1950 Pope Pius XII spoke clearly in the encyclical letter *Humani Generis*. The seriousness with which the Pope regarded the situation is evident from the heading "Concerning some false opinions which threaten to undermine the foundations of Catholic doctrine."

The encyclical contains too many elements for us to be able to deal with it here in its entirety. We want to focus our attention on a single aspect. The fundamental thrust of the encyclical is that the Pope rises expressly to the defense of the value of human reason. When we read that, it immediately calls to mind the whole question of Christian philosophy, which has caused so much turmoil in Roman Catholic circles in recent decades. Now, on the Roman Catholic view that question entails two problems, that of the value of faith for natural thought and that of the significance of reason for understanding Divine Revelation. The enduring value of reason for faith is the Pope's concern in *Humani Generis*.¹

What compelled the Pope, really, to put such a strong emphasis on the value of human thought? In order to answer this question we might say something about the problems that have engaged current Roman Catholic thought.

Traditional philosophy was reproached—especially after 1930—for aiming almost exclusively at grasping the abstract nature of things. If one wanted to know things thoroughly, one would have to meet and become familiar with them, it was now thought, in all their concreteness: then one would see that things are more than simple constancy, that things are part of a dynamic development. Dynamic development confronted theoretical thought so urgently that thinkers began to see it as the main problem of philosophy.

The renewed concern with concrete reality brought with it two benefits: for the first time, modern Roman Catholic thinkers truly

discovered something called history. True, this phenomenon was known earlier; but until now the historical had always been accorded a secondary place, at least in Scholasticism. Secondly, there was now a deeper realization that the supernatural was not merely a sector of reality but that it had also to be "inscribed" in that reality, where it specifically manifested itself in the dynamic development. It was still possible to speak of the nature of things, provided one kept in mind that their reality was not exhausted in their immutable essential structure.

This reorientation gave rise to an exceedingly interesting problem: Must the natural reason still be considered capable of reaching this concrete, dynamic, religious reality, or were there elements in it beyond the command of rational conceptualization? The answer that was forthcoming to this question was resonant with disdain for reason and contempt for the Scholastic way of thought. Roman Catholic thinkers not only depreciated reason but at the same time turned away from Thomistic philosophy as a philosophy of immutable essences and sought connections with more modern trends. They demanded attention for present-day philosophy which, more than the philosophy of the unmoved world-picture, was open to concrete existence and the dynamism of things. As they studied the Patristic Period and contrasted it to the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages, they came upon ideas more congenial to the modern mind. Thus a chasm opened up between modern Roman Catholic thought and traditional Scholastic approaches.

It is against this undisguised esteem for modern thought and for the Fathers at the expense of Thomas's philosophy of natural reason that the encyclical *Humani Generis* is directed. Is this perhaps because the Pope perceived in the disparagement of human reason a failure to do justice to the Image of God? Yes, that too. Still, the core of the encyclical is located elsewhere. To devalue natural reason is to attack the very foundations of the edifice of the Roman Catholic worldview. After all, the natural understanding has a most weighty function to fulfill with regard to faith. While remaining on a purely natural plane, man, in the Roman Catholic conception, is capable of demonstrating at least the existence of God and the credibility of Christian Revelation.² Does this mean that certain matters are just as accessible to reason as to faith? Not only that; something even more important is at issue: *faith receives guarantees and certainties via the proofs of natural reason "so that*

faith is not a purely irrational leap into the totally unknown." Reason reduces to a minimum the mystery that is the object of faith: whoever pulls the foundation of reason out from under faith sets faith atottering.

Matters being such, any disdain for reason could not be tolerated by the teaching authority of the Church. It is only surprising that the Pope did not speak out earlier and that he allowed the evident danger to remain unchallenged for so long.

Now it also will be clear to us why the Pope once again imposed the study of Thomas's philosophy. For unlike modern thought, Thomism does not halt at the subjective and relative, at the mutable and fleeting. Rather, in Thomism the human mind has taken the turn towards the absolute. Through it man is able to discover unchangeable truths. And thus the conditions are met whereby the Thomistic synthesis is capable of affording faith the assistance it so urgently needs: "[Thomas's] doctrine is *in harmony with divine revelation* and is most effective both for safeguarding the foundation of the faith and for reaping, safely and usefully, the fruits of sound progress."³

To the above we would add four critical observations.

1. If Roman Catholics have not been able to arrive at an intrinsically Christian philosophy, then the cause is to be found in this, that they have been unwilling to relinquish the autonomy of rational thought. From our expositions it will have become clear, however, that in terms of the Roman Catholic view a genuine Christian philosophy is impossible on another account as well, since a philosophy that worked with supratheoretical judgments—as intrinsically Christian thought always must—would precisely be unable, on that view, to offer faith the support it needs. Before Roman Catholicism can arrive at Christian philosophical thought in the strict sense, and before it can break with the autonomy of the natural realm, it will have to acquire a different view of faith: it will have to recognize that faith by itself is perfectly certain of God and His Revelation. The question at issue reveals once again how profound is the opposition Reformation-Catholicism and how it assumes the proportions, at least insofar as the so-called natural realm is concerned, of an antithesis.

2. The Pope says here—in keeping with the accepted Roman

Catholic conception—that Thomas's doctrine is in harmony with Divine Revelation. We are led to pose the following questions: By what standard must or can such a harmony be established? By a religious standard, perhaps? But in that case harmony is impossible, for how can the Divine Revelation in Jesus Christ ever harmonize with thought that is self-sufficient with respect to Him? Shall the standard then be of a natural-rational character? But, then, what can the autonomous reason say about the religious, which irrevocably and totally destroys all autonomy?

3. The encyclical opposes trends which not only are dangerous for Roman Catholic thought but which because of their affinity to modern secularized thought jeopardize the entire Christian worldview. At the same time, however, it cuts off a very promising development. For there is an unmistakable urge among various Roman Catholic writers to return to the Sources. By that they mean the Church Fathers in the first place, but let there be no mistake about it: on their own testimony they hope by this route to find their way back to the true Source, the Scriptures. Granted, the Pope does not radically condemn this undertaking; he even encourages people to continue along this path. However, between the Pope and the "advocates of novelty"⁴ whom he reproves there is a profound difference. Amongst the latter we clearly discern a yearning not to read the Fathers and the Bible this time in the light of Scholastic theology and philosophy. Has it not been stated recently by Jean Daniélou, whose mind has been formed entirely through the study of the Patristic writings, that the Scriptures must regain their central function in Christian thought and that theology has suffered from a progressive desiccation since the thirteenth century when its divorce from exegesis turned it into an autonomous science?

4. The contrast between Calvinist and Roman Catholic philosophy has been sharpened by the appearance of the encyclical *Humani Generis*. This is not because the encyclical contains any particularly new elements pertaining to the relation of faith and reason, of theology and philosophy, but because it emphatically directs Roman Catholic thought back to the Thomistic synthesis. We shall have to take into account that the teaching authority of the Roman church has spread its guardian wings over this synthesis and that in our critique of the idea of the autonomy of natural thought we are opposing that authority itself, unable as it is, precisely because of the Roman view of faith, to admit of any recognition of

the religious determinedness of theoretical thought. This encyclical compels us—and that is the gain it can bring us—to focus the conflict on the deepest point of disagreement between Reformation and Scholasticism.

Notes

1. [Cf. *Humani Generis* art. 29: "It is well known how highly the Church regards human reason, for it falls to reason to demonstrate with certainty the existence of God, personal and one; to prove beyond doubt from divine signs the very foundations of the Christian faith; to express properly the law which the Creator has imprinted in the hearts of men; and finally to attain to some notion, indeed a very fruitful notion, of mysteries."]
2. [See *ibid.*, art. 27, where the pope admonishes "certain of Our sons who . . . belittle the reasonable character of the credibility of Christian faith." Cf. also art. 2: ". . . human reason by its own natural force and light can arrive at a true and certain knowledge of the one personal God, who by His providence watches over and governs the world, and also of the natural law, which the Creator has written in our hearts, . . ."; and art. 4: God has given "many wonderful external signs which are sufficient to prove with certitude by the natural light of reason alone the divine origin of the Christian religion."]
3. *Ibid.*, art. 31; italics added, MCS.
4. *Ibid.*, art. 18: "rerum novarum studiosi."

Calvinism and Catholicism on Church and State¹

[1951]

EVEN LONG BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR there was a rapidly increasing interest [in the Netherlands and elsewhere] in the attitude of Roman Catholicism towards political liberties. At issue from the outset were in particular the freedoms of religion, of education, and of propaganda. Numerous factors can be adduced to account for this renewed interest. For some time the higher birthrate of the Roman Catholic part of the [Dutch] population had been a subject of attention. The development was all the more striking because since 1830 the number of Roman Catholics on a percentage basis had steadily declined until the upturn began in 1909.

In the second place, mention can be made of the obstacles placed in the way of Protestants in predominantly Roman Catholic countries such as Austria and Spain.

A third noteworthy factor would be the great flight made by Roman Catholic thought in philosophy and theology, and the powerful activity in the socio-economic and political areas. It became ever clearer that by the turn of the century a power had arisen that was fully up-to-date and conscious of its potential to become a decisive factor in the on-going scientific, social, and political struggle. Once it would gain the political dominance as a result of demographic and intellectual shifts, it had to be considered capable of immediately assuming leadership in public life in a manner that would be consistent with distinctly Roman Catholic principles.

Under these circumstances there arose in broad, non-Catholic circles a sense of concern, an often indefinable fear that no reassur-

ing statement could allay in view of the fact that actual practices in a number of predominantly Roman Catholic countries still resembled restrictions of religious liberty under Roman Catholic regimes in former times. The facts indicated that no radical break had been made with former ideas and conditions.

However topical the question of toleration in a Roman Catholic state might have become, there were too many resistances to be overcome to allow for a thoroughgoing dialogue about the matter between Protestants and Catholics prior to 1940. Only after the Second World War, when it became apparent that the resurgence of Rome's power had continued unabated, did people on both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic sides take up the question of toleration to any significant degree—to such a degree, in fact, that it became a favorite topic of discussion in the various 'centers for dialogue' where people of divergent convictions come together to gain a better understanding of one another's attitudes towards life.

However, despite all the opportunities and attempts to remove misunderstanding through friendly exchanges of thought, a basic distrust of Rome's stand on toleration has persisted. People on the Roman Catholic side have pointed out in vain that there is no reason to allow events of the past, when the context of action was entirely different, to obscure the outlook for the future. As an example of new historical possibilities, people point to Ireland, where in a predominantly Roman Catholic country Protestants enjoy complete freedom, politically and religiously, and are called upon to serve in the highest functions of the state. Attention is likewise called to the fact that the situation is changing theologically and philosophically as well: have not prominent Roman Catholic scholars—yes, and even the Pope himself—affirmed in recent times that every person has the right to living according to his or her own honest convictions?

For all that, both theory (in old encyclicals and in many a scholarly and popular treatise) and practice (in Spain, Colombia, etc.) pointed in another direction. The very fact that Rome appeared able to adopt two entirely different approaches, that of toleration and that of intolerance, fostered uncertainty about its ultimate position. It is accordingly understandable that when the Center for Political Education of the Dutch Catholic People's Party, on the occasion of the celebration of its 5th Anniversary, 2 September 1950, addressed itself to the subject "Catholicism,

Toleration, and Democracy," tremendous interest was immediately aroused. This was all the more the case when it became known that the fundamental principles of the question would be dealt with by the secretary of the Roman Catholic church province of the Netherlands, Dr. J.J. Loeff, who while he could not of course make official pronouncements could certainly speak with something more than the authority of a learned scholar.

The desired relaxation of tension has not been achieved. Far from ending the debate, Loeff's address itself has become a subject of controversy. On the Roman Catholic side people have left no doubt that Loeff reflects not *the* but *a* Roman Catholic viewpoint. For while his main principle is the traditional Roman Catholic one, he adds a second principle to it which, even though it is quite consonant with the Scholastic conception of politics and history, is by no means generally accepted by his co-religionists.

What is of interest in Loeff's presentation is that he manages, while upholding familiar Roman Catholic principles, to shed new light on the old problem of toleration. (The manner in which I shall discuss Loeff's ideas may seem to suggest he is the first to advance them. In reality they can be found earlier, at least to some extent, in the works of Roman Catholic writers abroad, especially in France.)²

Intolerant, but not to the ultimate degree

Loeff begins by posing the problem as follows. Every individual, and every community as well, is obligated to serve God according to the truth revealed by God himself in Jesus Christ (Loeff, 6). According to Roman Catholic conviction, this truth can be found pure and complete exclusively in the Roman Catholic Church. If Roman Catholics were to have the leadership in the State, then, assuming they did not waver before the consequences, this would lead necessarily to suppressing all other religions or to placing their adherents in an exceptional position. Furthermore, in civil society this would lead to an interpretation of civil liberties consonant with the Roman Catholic conception of Divine positive law and natural law.

With that, Loeff thinks he has posed the problem sharply and clearly, and he believes the ideas just described are accepted by Protestantism, given its confession concerning the calling of the

magistracy to remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship.³ And was it not Dr. Abraham Kuyper who said, "There is not a square inch of life of which Christ does not say, 'It is Mine' "?

The principle enunciated above Loeff calls the *totality principle*, "without, however"—he is quick to add—"attaching to it all the consequences of a totality principle." A remarkable restriction, the implications of which will become clear in what follows.

In his expositions of the toleration question, Loeff follows a method that is very often adopted in Roman Catholic treatises on the subject. A writer will begin by positing the totality principle, from which he then draws the conclusion that it entails intolerance towards dissidents; but he immediately goes on to assure the reader that religious liberty will not be threatened since other principles and practical considerations necessitate moderation. In this manner a contradiction is created between different principles; it is thus of great importance to acquire a proper understanding of the totality principle formulated above.

The totality principle contains two elements. In the first place the civil authority is dependent upon the Church with regard to knowledge of the general welfare, which the State has the specific task of promoting. True, the natural norms by which civil life must be guided are clear in themselves and knowable to the natural reason, but pronouncements by the teaching authority of the Church are still necessary since the natural understanding, while not darkened by the fall into sin, is nonetheless disturbed to such a degree by the revolt of the baser inclinations against reason that error is possible. The teaching authority of the Church must protect the civil authority against deviating from the natural order and at the same time enrich it with ideas which of themselves belong to the natural order but which the natural understanding is capable of discovering only by the rays of light that fall from the supernatural. Thus the Church is indispensable for knowledge of the State's purpose or end because the Church is entrusted with the pure interpretation of natural and revealed ethics.

Yet the Roman Catholic totality principle contains a second element that is closely related to the first. Although the end of the State is only of a natural and temporal character, the supernatural welfare of the subjects cannot be excluded from the concern of the civil authority. Now, if the immediate end of the State, the *temporal* welfare, is not fully and correctly knowable in a natural way, then

certainly the task of civil government as it pertains to the *supernatural* cannot be known without the help of the teaching authority of the Church. There is more at stake here, however, than correct knowledge of the task of the State. The civil community does not itself need to pursue a supernatural goal, it is true, but individual human beings do. The Government should support them in this, first in the negative sense of removing any obstacles to their pursuit, but also, and especially, by promoting all that might assist them in their quest for eternal salvation. In the encyclical *Immortale Dei* (dated 1 November 1885) Pope Leo XIII states that the weightiest contribution civil society can make to man's attainment of the highest and imperishable good is "to take care to preserve religion holy and inviolate, for the practice of religion binds man to God."⁴

From this statement the Pope then draws practical conclusions with regard to political liberties. Of prime interest to us is what he has to say about the freedom of education, since next to the freedom of worship this freedom is the most contested. We read then, in the encyclical *Libertas* (dated 20 June 1888) that clearly, insofar as freedom of education claims the right to teach whatever it pleases, without restriction, it is "fully in conflict with reason and tends only to sowing utter confusion in men's minds—a liberty which the State cannot grant without failing in its duty."⁵

When decisions of such great importance to man's eternal salvation are made in profane life, then the Church, on the Roman Catholic view, cannot be indifferent to what happens there. She has no direct jurisdiction over temporal affairs, it is true; yet in an indirect way she has a say, to the degree that there is some connection with grace. In this manner ecclesiastical authority can in principle be extended to all created things, since they are all, at some time or in some way, associated with grace or else can be an external condition for the attainment of supernatural welfare.⁶

From the above we can draw three conclusions, which I shall mention here and then have more to say about later, in my critical assessment. First, the totality principle, given the Roman Catholic interpretation, contains two elements which in their mutual coherence must lead to absolute intolerance towards non-Catholic religions and which cannot but threaten the religious liberty, in the larger sense, of dissenters. It is now quite clear to us—in the second place—that the Roman Catholic totality principle is not orientated to the basic religious relation between God and His world, but to the

Church. Whenever there is talk of a totality of some sort, the cardinal question is: What determines this totality? Now then, in this case that is not the Lordship of Christ over all things, but the Church of Rome as Christ's Mystical Body. This means—such is our third conclusion—that the Roman Catholic totality principle is in reality not totalist at all, nor can it be, since the natural life will continue to insist on a certain independence for itself vis-à-vis the overarching totality community, the Church. Now then, it is this autonomous natural order, which will never allow itself to be assimilated completely into the totality, that gives rise to the unremitting protests against the totalist claims of the supernatural order and that elicits the desire for moderation, the plea for toleration.

Toleration, but with reservations

To the extent that they consider our analysis of the totality principle correct, Roman Catholics will say that unless more is added, what we have here is an extremely one-sided presentation of their standpoint. For as a matter of fact, curiously enough, Roman Catholics espouse a totality principle “without, however, attaching to it all the consequences of a totality principle” (Loeff, 7).

The numerous reservations that are held with respect to any unlimited implementation of the totality principle can be divided into two groups—which have in common, however, that neither can any longer be harmonized with the totality principle itself and that both give the impression of opportunism, to say the least, in the delimitation of religious liberties. Opportunism and tactics are at their most blatant wherever *practical* considerations lead to a tolerant posture towards dissidents. Roman Catholics point out that, especially nowadays, the possibilities in any particular country of acting as one would like are limited by predictable international reactions and by prevailing ideas, all of which must be taken into account when the interests of the State are in the balance.

Of still greater importance is the following consideration. It is not to be expected that the rights of the minority will be restricted the moment Roman Catholics have the majority in any given country. Loeff puts the matter this way: “No Dutch Catholic believes for a moment that if they should ever have an absolute majority in the

Netherlands they would automatically proceed to apply this totality principle to every area of public life." He adds: "Even in case of a Catholic majority, the constitutionally guaranteed rights of religious denominations, in particular as regards the freedom of confession, proselytism and public worship, of association and assembly, of nurture and education, of social service programs, would be perfectly safe" (Loeff, 7).

Yet, however reassuring these words may sound, they will sooner augment than remove the distrust of those who hear such assurances from Roman Catholic spokesmen. For to say that a certain action would not follow "automatically" is to imply a reservation. And one finds a reservation of some sort or other in most Roman Catholic treatises on the question of toleration. Thus another writer, while defending freedom of education, hastens to add, "[The State] must . . . not only see to it that no views are proclaimed that conflict with the temporal general welfare, but the community would also suffer if young people were raised in an atmosphere of aloofness, misconception, and rancor. It must require an adequate education for all future citizens, even if religiously they belong to the dissidents. If a country has not only a Catholic foundation but also a traditional Catholic culture, then access to that culture must be opened to all citizens through the schools. Therefore a certain vigilance on the part of the State towards minority schools is reasonable."⁷

Practical considerations compelling moderation accordingly do not bring us any further, since time and again the possibility is left open of eventually restricting the promised freedom under certain circumstances. The question now is whether the principles underpinning toleration can furnish a solution.

We cannot delve deeply here into the many conceptions that exist on this point in Roman Catholic circles. Some have advocated toleration on the basis of the Divine commandment that we should love one another. Loeff points out the inadequacy of this view and argues that love of neighbor is always transcended by love of God and, moreover, that it is precisely love of one's neighbor that may require restricting his freedom. A second argument for toleration receives even less approval in Loeff's eyes, namely, that evil may be admitted entrance or be allowed to persist in order that a greater

evil may be prevented. Against this argument Loeff observes that when a Roman Catholic majority cooperates in, for example, granting a subsidy to non-Catholic private education, the question is surely no longer merely one of "toleration."

We shall give no further attention to these views. We must, however, take a closer look at two approaches that have come to dominate the discussions of the question of toleration in Roman Catholic circles.

The first of these goes back to the renowned French philosopher Jacques Maritain, who has exercised an influence on Roman Catholic thought in the twentieth century that would be difficult to exaggerate and who for a number of years after the Second World War was the French ambassador to the Vatican. It is especially through Maritain that Roman Catholicism has come to the realization that the Middle Ages are over, if not for good then at least for the foreseeable future. A new age has now dawned in history, the age of 'profane Christendom'. This period is distinguishable from the Middle Ages in that the religious unity has been lost. In the Middle Ages there was a unity of belief accompanied by a unity of outlook on life and the world. In an age when the civil community consisted almost exclusively of Christians, apostasy or heresy meant a disturbance of both the ecclesiastical and the public order; hence it was the inescapable duty of the State to take measures against heresy, precisely or partly because the unity of belief, the very foundation of medieval society, was under attack.

However, this state of affairs was terminated, Maritain goes on to say, at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of Modern Times by the Renaissance and the Reformation. At that time the unity of belief was fundamentally ruptured, and it became unthinkable for the State to suppress error since to have done so would have been to make life in society impossible.

There was more, however—and now we come to an essential point in Maritain's conceptions. When at the great turning point in European history modern man detached himself from the supernaturally ordered culture of the Middle Ages, he inflicted incalculable harm upon himself. Yet, at the same time he gained considerable benefit; for in turning aside from the supernatural, he began to look at himself, to study and inspect himself thoroughly, as it were, and so discovered himself. He now gained an awareness of

the infinite value of human personality. While this had not been entirely lacking in the Middle Ages, it had been overshadowed by ever so many other elements. Thus humanism, which put man at the center, acquired or rediscovered something that ought never again to be lost. And it is for this reason that the grand task facing the builders of the new Christian culture is to incorporate into the profane Christian society of the future the gain made by anthropocentric humanism.

Now then, recognition of the value of the individual human personality involves the right of every person to live according to his own convictions. Pope Pius XII became the voice of the ideas just sketched, which are shared by many leading figures in Roman Catholic circles, when in his Christmas message of 1942 he recognized the right of the private and public exercise of religion as a fundamental right of the human personality.

Loeff rejects Maritain's view, too, albeit he presents only a very short summary of it and does not mention Maritain by name. Maritain's criterion, Loeff feels, lacks clarity: respect for the human personality prohibits forcing a particular conviction on anyone—but does it also mean, he inquires, that everyone is to be left free to propagate his convictions?

By discarding one argument for toleration after another, Loeff has made room to advance a position of his own.

After rejecting the humanist doctrine of the will, he advances the Thomist doctrine of natural law as the point of departure for resolving the question of toleration. Whereas the natural law philosophers of modern times divorce the principles that are to guide civil authority from any higher order with its moral values and duties, making these principles instead entirely dependent on the human will, the Thomist approach, in contrast, holds that man has to discover these principles in the natural order, which is valid quite apart from the human will. It is man's task to glean from the natural order the ideas and principles in accordance with which institutions, including the State, are governed, and in this way to give the social order an "objective" existence.

At a certain moment in the history of a people, they will become aware that the existing legal norms are no longer suited to keeping the indulgence of freedom within bounds and that stronger restraints are called for. This leads to the discovery of the *idée gouvernementale*, that is, the idea of restraint, of order, to rescue

the ideal of freedom. Thus the matter is primarily one not of restraint as such but of *freedom in restraint*.

It is this *idée gouvernementale*, above all other factors, that led to the rise of the State (we anti-revolutionaries might prefer to say: of the modern state), a process that required centuries, that began in the Late Middle Ages, and that in fact is not yet finished. The process evolved in such a way that in a certain period circumstances invited, as it were, the formation of a modern state community, but the work could not be done in just any arbitrary fashion since the material from which the life of the State had to be constructed was derived from the natural order.

If for some time now we seem to have lost sight of the totality principle, that is only apparently so. For behind our discussion there is a particular question that demands our attention: What is the relation between the *idée gouvernementale* and the totality principle?

The legitimacy of a particular decision depends not on the number of votes but on the certainty that it conforms to the *idée gouvernementale as interpreted at a particular moment in a community*. Thus the *idée gouvernementale* is not a rigid quantity fixed once and for all time; its content, while remaining fundamentally bound to the natural order, changes with the development of the leading ideas in a particular national community. And in this way the possibility exists of connecting the totality principle and the *idée gouvernementale*: that principle obliges Roman Catholics to give the *idée gouvernementale* a Roman Catholic interpretation and a Roman Catholic content. Thus the totality principle is always valid, but the possibility of bringing it to expression in public decisions increases with the growth of the prestige and influence of Roman Catholics in public life.

Political intolerance unavoidable but in conformity with norms

Why such long expositions of what is apparently an irresolvable problem, some readers may well ask. Will we on our part ever be able to advance beyond Roman Catholic writers by asserting the totality principle on the one hand and urging moderation on the other lest fundamental human values be trampled underfoot?

Should we not show some restraint in our criticism of Roman Catholic ideas on toleration in view of the fact that Calvinists, too, have been known to be intolerant in the past and, above all, because they, too, are no strangers to the totality principle, which is a threat to the freedom of those of other persuasions? We cannot dismiss this difficult question merely by asserting that matters of religious or ethical good and evil are none of the state's business.

Roman Catholics are happy to start with the totality principle when debating with Calvinists. This is (seems!) a common starting point and an identical platform from which to carry on the discussion. Loeff, too, regards the totality principle as a point of agreement between Calvinists and Roman Catholics. We are surprised, however, to find that Loeff, who is trained not only in law but also in theology, places the Roman Catholic and the Calvinist totality principles simply side by side. We can think of an explanation for this incorrect view only when we recall that for a Roman Catholic, Church and Christ are identical (in saying this I do not lose sight of the fact that a Roman Catholic thinker would qualify his use of the term "identical"). That is so self-evident to a Roman Catholic that where Kuyper says, "There is not one square inch of life of which Christ does not say, 'It is Mine,' " he can simply read "the Church" instead of "Christ." And yet, the distinction between these two words expresses the deepest point of disagreement between Calvinism and Catholicism on the idea of toleration. In the reformational view there is an authentic totality principle, with Christ as its determining, direction-setting center. There is nothing in the created world that is withdrawn from His rule, and man, in subjection to God's commandments, has to bring to expression in the entire order of things the redemption won by Christ. Christ's work and rule are total and all-embracing, and there is no terrain that on the basis of some pretended autonomy can abridge Christ's absolute kingship. Because Calvinism confesses the religious nature of the whole of creation and can therefore acknowledge no autonomous, natural order—to which the state is supposed to belong—its totality idea is without reservation or restriction.

The Roman Catholic totality principle, in contrast, entails restrictions, as indeed it must in view of the fact that it finds its point of departure in the Church which, unlike religion, cannot *permeate* the whole of creation but can merely *overarch* it. The Church spreads her wings over natural life and allows it to carry on as such,

provided it does not come into conflict with the supernatural welfare of believers and provided it remains ultimately oriented to the spiritual order.

Nevertheless, we witness this remarkable phenomenon, that although Calvinism confesses the kingship of Christ over all creation in more absolute terms than Catholicism does, the latter is more suspect on the point of toleration than is the former. Many know intuitively, or on the basis of familiarity with the past, that Catholicism—although it recognizes a distinction between Church and State and will not confuse the supernatural and the natural—accepts no fundamental, immutable boundary between the Church and natural life. The moment the supernatural welfare requires it, ecclesiastical authority may step across the boundaries of the Church and, abetted or unabetted by the strong arm of Government, subordinate non-ecclesiastical life to itself. That the permissibility of religious liberties on the Roman Catholic view is dependent more on circumstances than on principles that fundamentally delimit Church and State we find tellingly illustrated in the encyclical *Libertas*. Here it is stated that if in view of extraordinary circumstances the Church acquiesces in certain modern liberties, then she does so “not because she prefers them in themselves but because she judges it expedient to permit them: and if ever happier times should arrive, she would certainly exercise her own liberty and by persuasion, exhortation and entreaty would zealously endeavor, as is her duty, to fulfill her God-given task, namely, of providing for the eternal salvation of mankind; one thing, however, would always be true: that the liberty which is claimed for all to do all things is not . . . of itself desirable, inasmuch as it is contrary to reason that error and truth should have equal rights.”⁸

From the preceding it will be clear, I think, that our view of the question of toleration and intolerance should be governed by two principles, which must not be applied except in close relation to one another, namely (a) the totality principle, and (b) the idea of the mutual irreducibility, on principle, of Church and State. On this basis we can now proceed to a further analysis of the problem of toleration.

Apparently the points of departure of reformational Christianity and Roman Catholicism alike lead, along similar paths, to

political intolerance towards dissidents. After all, Calvinists profess themselves to be called, in the administration of the state, to follow the will of God as it is made known in His revelation. And on the Roman Catholic view, "not only the individual but also every human community and thus certainly the state [is] obligated to serve God according to the religion revealed by God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ" (Loeff, 6).

This implies that whenever either Calvinists or Roman Catholics control public affairs and can build upon the convictions of the subjects, they will positivize principles that will be experienced by non-Christians and by Christians who do not share their convictions as a power alien to themselves. Here, beyond doubt, is an intolerant element in the administration of the state! As long, at least, as the citizenry is divided along lines of principle.

We can and must go farther. It is not only those who in public administration are guided by the revealed will of God or who are self-consciously dependent on the religion confessed by the church who will be intolerant in some measure towards those of other persuasions; those, too, who acknowledge no Divine will or at least regard it as unknowable for civil life will likewise obligate their believing or dissident subjects to be guided by norms which the latter experience as in conflict with their convictions. Modern man does not like to be thought intolerant. Perhaps that is why people in the humanist camp are so blind to the element of intolerance in every public administration and generally notice it in, or in any case impute it to, the opposition alone. How often have the parties of the left⁹ not dreaded limitations on the exercise of their freedom at the hands of a Christian administration while remaining almost blissfully unaware that if it were up to them to decide, the Christian life would be permitted to unfold only on a limited terrain!

Nevertheless, there are factors that have a moderating influence on political intolerance. In certain cases differences of political philosophy will not lead to divergent policies. It is also possible that a group of a particular persuasion will no longer oppose a particular development to which it initially offered (vigorous) resistance because it comes to the realization that the trend is irreversible anyway and ultimately concludes that there is something good in the results achieved—indeed, something that is in harmony with its own principles. I have in mind the evolution of Liberalism in the struggle for Christian schools.¹⁰

While political intolerance may thus be tempered to some extent, it will be clear from the brief remarks we have just made that the governance of a population lacking religious unity will unavoidably be attended by a certain measure of intolerance.

Must we conclude from the above that because political intolerance is unavoidable it makes no difference at all for political toleration *which* view of life and the world people hold?

By no means! For while we asserted that the Divine ordinance for the life of the state necessarily entails some form of political intolerance, we shall now defend with equal vigor the idea that this intolerance is restricted by a fixed, inviolable boundary. Here the difference between Calvinism and Roman Catholicism on the matter of toleration comes to a head!

We must begin by distinguishing between two elements. On the one hand, there is the calling of Government to provide public justice for *believers and unbelievers, Christians and non-Christians*. Government's primary task is to afford legal protection to all its subjects irrespective of their religious persuasion. The issue is, purely and simply, that Government create room for human life as such, in order to preserve it. On the other hand, Government must be guided by what God requires of it.

The first element contains the guarantee of religious liberty for the subjects; the second brings with it the intolerance inherent in all public administrations of religiously mixed populations. These two elements are not contradictory; rather, they are intrinsically related in such a way that the second is the norm for the first: in providing legal protection to human life, Government must let itself be led by the Divine will.

The Roman Catholic principle leads to entirely different consequences, however, since it inserts the *Church* between God's commandments and the civil community.

The Church is entitled to exercise discipline over her members and, when their conduct shows them to have no part in Christ, to excommunicate them if need be. Ecclesiastical discipline is determined by the fact that the Church ought to be a community of belief in Jesus Christ. Whereas the State must embrace believers and unbelievers alike, the Church, in contrast, may finally be forced to expel the latter if they persist in their unbelief. Thus the position of

the Church towards her members is fundamentally different from the position of the State towards its subjects. This fundamental difference in position reflects the fundamental difference in nature and essence that obtains between Church and State.

Roman Catholicism has turned a blind eye to this difference for centuries and remains congenitally hostile to it to this day. It may offer assurances just as often as it likes that ecclesiastical and civil power have well-defined limits (as in the encyclical *Immortale Dei*, art. 13); still, in virtue of its totality principle, it repeatedly takes norms that are of fundamental importance to the life of Christ's Church on earth and proceeds to extend them to civil life. When the State is made serviceable to the attainment of supernatural welfare to such a degree that it has not only—negatively—to remove obstacles, whereby the Church (in keeping with I Timothy 2:2) acquires room for her work in obedience to Christ's commission, but has also—positively—to promote everything that might help man to attain the spiritual order, and when as a result the Church is granted indirect authority over everything that disposes people towards grace, then the Church has long since overstepped her bounds and is engaged in imposing restrictions on the religious freedom of dissidents via the civil authority that far exceed what I have called the "unavoidable" measure of intolerance. The intolerance many fear from Rome arises from this, that in virtue of the Roman Catholic totality principle, a structure is ascribed to the State that is essentially foreign to it, and a mandate is given to the State that belongs to the Church alone. In this way the Church, via the strong arm of Government, can exercise a form of coercion to which she was never called (see Zechariah 4:6: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts") and for which she was never given the instruments by her King, Jesus Christ.

The incorrectness of the totality principle as interpreted by Roman Catholicism is obvious from the fact that it conflicts with other elementary principles: the commandment to love one's neighbor, the recognition of the dignity of the human personality, and so forth. In Roman Catholic circles people sometimes sense that they have a problem here. For example, Professor A.G.M. van Melsen speaks of reconciling two "almost contradictory principles."¹¹

People might conclude that where toleration is concerned, two contradictory principles are a better starting point than a totality principle alone. Yet, we must not underestimate the potentially

grave consequences of a merely external reconciliation. However well intentioned, Maritain's school remains unable to get beyond making the idea of toleration dependent on the tension between two mutually exclusive principles. Ultimately, all depends on how this tension will be resolved when Roman Catholicism gains the majority in any given country: which will predominate, the value of the individual human personality, or the medieval conception of the relation of Church and State? In the matter of toleration, Maritain leaves us in uncertainty and apprehension.

Despite all this, it is Loeff's standpoint that I regard as the more dangerous. Admittedly, the religious liberty of non-Catholics will not be curtailed the very moment Roman Catholics have gained the majority. Nevertheless, the totality principle is intended to penetrate the *idée gouvernementale* and to determine its content, not suddenly or unexpectedly, but in the long run. Suppose the *idée gouvernementale*, having that principle as its content, shall have become the leading idea in the civil community; what guarantees will then be left for the preservation of the liberties of those of other persuasions? Ultimately, it does not make a great deal of difference whether religious liberty succumbs to democratic decisions based on fifty percent plus one or to internal developments within the *idée gouvernementale*.

Many futile attempts have been undertaken by Roman Catholics to allay Protestant fears. Loeff's effort, too, was bound not to succeed. His views contain too many elements that nourish rather than moderate our apprehensions.

Notes

1. A critical appraisal occasioned by J.J. Loeff's address, entitled *Katholicisme, verdraagzaamheid en democratie naar Nederlandse verhoudingen* [Catholicism, toleration, and democracy in the Dutch context]. The Hague: Centrum voor Staatkundige Vorming [of the Catholic People's Party (KVP)], 1950. 22 pages.

[The present article is a translation of "Rooms-Katholicisme en verdraagzaamheid" [Roman Catholicism and toleration], *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatkunde* 21 (1951): 245-57.]

2. The pamphlet in which Dr. Loeff's address has been published also contains the paper given by Professor L.G.J. Verberne on the historical aspects of toleration. We shall not enter into his discussion here, since his historical sketch is too beautiful for us to want to spoil the impression of the whole by critiquing some of its details.

3. [The allusion is to the Belgic Confession of 1561, one of the doctrinal standards of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands to this day. Article 36, on Civil Government, reads in part: "Their office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also to protect the sacred ministry, and thus remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, that the kingdom of the antichrist may thus be destroyed and the kingdom of Christ promoted." The words here italicized were retracted in 1905 by the Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*; however, the *Hervormde Kerk*, the older and much larger denomination, has never removed them. — Ed.]
4. *Immortale Dei*, art. 6.
5. *Libertas*, art. 24.
6. On the totality principle see: (1) F.J.F.M. Duynstee. *Het glazen huis* [The glass house]. 2nd ed. The Hague, 1946; (2) C.F. Pauwels. "Godsdienstvrijheid en gewetensvrijheid" [Freedom of worship and freedom of conscience]. *Het Schild* 26 (1948-49): 145-53; (3) P. Ploumen. *De Katholieke levensopvatting: het burgerschap van twee rijken* [The Catholic view of life: Citizenship in two kingdoms]. 's Hertogenbosch, 1937; (4) V. Cremers. *Kerk en Staat* [Church and State]. Antwerp and Amsterdam, 1927.
7. Pauwels (see n. 6), p. 149.
8. *Libertas*, art. 34.
9. [The reference is to the "non-confessional" parties of conservatives, liberals, and socialists. — Ed.]
10. [In the schools question—equal rights for public and private education—Dutch Liberalism evolved from a position of absolute intolerance in the 1840's to a markedly liberal policy after 1910. — Ed.]
11. A.G.M. van Melsen, "Reflecties van een 20e eeuwse Nederlandse Katholiek over de tolerantie" [Reflections of a 20th-century Dutch Catholic on toleration], *Wending* 4 (1949): 246-47.

Nationalism and Catholicism

[1955]

ANYONE WHO OCCUPIES himself for any length of time with the study of a historical phenomenon is likely to have the surprising experience that deeper knowledge of that phenomenon does not lead initially to clearer insight but instead to a confusing multiplicity of questions. Of course, such a result need not be surprising, since one of the foremost aims of scientific study is to gain a knowledge of things and of events in their many aspects. And with that, a rich source of problems is tapped: for the matter now becomes one of understanding these many aspects in their mutual relations and also of understanding the things and phenomena as such in their manifold connections. Undoubtedly there already exists in pre-scientific insight a surmise of the complexity of phenomena; the scientist, however, experiences it as an inner law of life that he not be satisfied with such a surmise but that he instead focus all attention on the apparently confusing multiplicity of patterns in which things occur.

Should anyone think this to be an exaggerated picture of the complex character of research into historical phenomena, then it will be enough to point out to him the divergent interpretations that have been given of nationalism: after years of study and discussion of the function of the state, language, race, et cetera, in the development of national consciousness, the extent to which language and nation, state and nation, et cetera, are interrelated remains an open question.

People have not always been conscious of the complexity of the concept 'nation'. To read Bossuet, for example, is to gain the impression that this concept is a rather straightforward affair. Especially

during the last hundred years, however, the conviction has grown that a multiplicity of factors have played a formative role in the evolution of nations. Above all, people have become conscious that in this whole process the function of worldviews—though at times latent—would be difficult to overestimate. Numerous intellectual currents can be identified that have been of such decisive importance that they form a basis for classifying various stages in the rise and flowering of national consciousness in Europe. In this regard it suffices to mention Romanticism.

When we reflect more deeply upon the eminent role played by such intellectual currents as Humanism, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Roman Catholicism, etc., then we are struck by the remarkable fact that they all contributed to the growth of national consciousness, each giving particular elements to the national idea, yet that they also all, each in its own way, reached beyond national particularities towards a universal community. Is this not one of the reasons why Romanticism continues to be of perennial interest? After many generations devoted to anything called “national” had allowed themselves to be guided by the ideas of Romanticism, it turned out that Romanticism was also amply suited to contributing to the ideological foundations in an age committed to the construction of *supranational* communities. Humanism, Enlightenment, Romanticism, etc., have all been retired without their having arrived at an inner reconciliation of the national and the universal.

Roman Catholicism too has known, and still knows, this tension. And here especially we must inquire into its origin. Is it perhaps already implicit in Christianity? But the Scriptures know nothing of this tension. Is it then to be attributed, so our line of questioning continues, to a confluence of Christianity with originally non-Christian currents? Still another possibility is that the conflict of the national with the supranational finds its origin not in some particular worldview but in the national itself. We will not be able to go into these problems extensively within the limited framework of this essay, but we shall have to keep them very much in mind.

A great deal has been published on the Roman Catholic side about the national idea, but very little attention has been paid as yet to one aspect, namely, to the relation between Catholicism and nationalism in its historical dynamics. To mention one example, there

is still no thorough study of the role played by genuine Catholicism in the development of national consciousness under French absolutism: in Bossuet and the eighteenth-century Catholic philosophers of history who came after him and depended upon him there is interesting material to be found in this regard; however, it has been left unexamined thus far.

Given such a state of affairs, it is not possible to trace the importance of Roman Catholicism for nationalism in a few broad lines. We have to restrict ourselves to touching on the Roman Catholic influence in a few phases of the history of the development of nationalism in Western Europe.

Nationalism really first gains capital importance in European history when the states form themselves into historical entities. This happens in a long process that varies from country to country but that almost everywhere receives powerful impulses from Humanism.

Humanism acquired great significance for the formative process of the modern nations not least through its extraordinary esteem for history. For the nations did not acquire form only in that a state became unified under able rulers or in that religious, cultural, and economic elements within a certain territory were focussed on the political center of the evolving national entity. The course of development of national consciousness reveals clearly that however powerful and wise a ruler may have been and however favorable to national unification the geographical location may have been, there was still always something artificial about the young nation if the many elements of which it was constructed were not melted together by the binding power of history: the national unity could be formed or deepened by prolonged dwelling together, but also by communally invoking a distant—sometimes mythical—shared past. In the Renaissance and in the immediately preceding period which resists precise delimitation, the modern nation evolving around the ruler acquires its initial form and is then integrated into a national entity by religious and other factors. But in Humanism there were powers that could bring this development to completion, at least provisionally: it was especially the Humanists who harked back to some earlier "national" greatness or who provided the often still shaky political entity with a historical basis. In the dim past, it was thought, the ideals had already once been exemplified; all that was necessary was their rebirth or revival. The conceptions of the Humanists about the historical background of

the nation are often divergent: in many instances there was agreement between the stories from different countries while the conceptions within any one country could differ strongly. Yet almost all of them had the same tendency: to promote national unity and glory.

Among the creators of these fantastical and speculative theories there were also Roman Catholic writers. Together with those of other persuasions, they enhanced national consciousness in Western Europe and are co-responsible for the excessive notions then already in vogue with respect to national greatness. There is something surprising in this course of development in view of the fact that the Roman Catholic church, in virtue of its essential structure and its historical roots in the medieval supranational culture, should be little favorably disposed towards any cultural and political differences that derived from national antitheses and were often divisive in their effect on the unity of the church. Thus Carlton J.H. Hayes is quite correct when he says that the Pope and the bishops recognized the principle of nationality and made concessions to it, but that as the builders of an international, if not a cosmopolitan, culture they "vigorously withstood anything which might savour of nationalism."¹

The Catholic founders and rulers of national states and their lackeys were often scarcely conscious of this serious conflict between the national and the universal. It is instructive to consult the theologians and philosophers of the time. Among the philosophers, the Spanish scholastic Suarez († 1617) took a lively interest in the question. Among the theologians, it is Bossuet who invites attention. In his *Politique tirée des propres Paroles de l'Ecriture Sainte* he devotes extensive attention to the concept 'nation' and related problems. To our mind, his views still lack a certain desirable complexity. Like so many writers before and after him in the modern period, Bossuet fails almost entirely to appreciate that the concepts 'nation' and 'fatherland' confront human thought with problems that are perhaps irresolvable. Bossuet sees no serious difficulties here. True, the rise of a nation depends on meeting certain conditions, but these are fulfilled as a matter of course. This impression is fostered especially by an—all too—abundant use of "proof texts" from the Bible.

According to Bossuet human society is divided as the result of two causes: human passion, on the one hand; and the various nations, which as it happens were necessary given the increased

number of people, on the other hand. The fragmentation, which was unavoidable even apart from sin, was effected by the confusion of tongues at Babel, which befell people as a punishment for their pride. And then it seems, Bossuet continues, that those who possessed greater conformity in language were led to choose the same area of habitation—"to which kinship also contributed a great deal."² Lo! the various factors required to form a nation worked felicitously together.

Yet all this is still not sufficient, as Bossuet well appreciates: there are still the human passions, which tear society apart. There is but one power that can avert this, the authority of a strong government:³ in the will of the prince converges the will of all and so the forces of the nation meet in one person, thereby strengthening the hand of all. In a variation of "*l'état c'est moi*," Bossuet can say that the fatherland is the prince: "The whole state is in the person of the prince. In him resides the power, in him resides the will, of all the people."⁴

It is God, Bossuet continues, who placed us in a particular nation, but it is also God who bound us to all people in a single universal society, who caused all people to be brought forth from one, and who set all people the same goal, namely Himself [cf. Acts 17:26-27]. The bounds that God determined are therefore not intended to bring division but to enable people to help one another.⁵ There is no conflict between the love of man and the love of country. If one must love all men, it follows *a fortiori* that he must love his fellow-citizens—because all his love for self, for family, and for friends combines in the love of country; therefore banish sowers of division.⁶

In Bossuet's conceptions we encounter various elements that are the common property of the genuine Roman Catholic national idea.

Two elements are the most characteristic for Bossuet. Although the nation, as he sees it, rests upon strong pillars, it still needs the state—and the state in its absolute form at that—to hold it permanently together: here the national idea is joined to the state absolutism of Bossuet's master, Louis XIV. On this score Bossuet had many followers but also drew sharp criticism from fellow Catholics.⁷

But there is still another accent that makes Bossuet so interesting to us: as a philosopher of history he was the "philosopher of Providence," and he provides us with a beautiful, worked-out sample of that in his national idea. It is God who guides the entire

process of the forming of nations, it is God who overrules human actions and passions to establish the many conditions for the rise and survival of nations, and it is God who causes everyone to be born in his own country.

Bossuet's doctrine of the origin of the nations in God's providential decree finds its complement in the perspective he develops, especially in the *Histoire des variations des églises protestantes*, according to which the decline of the church must necessarily entail the decline of the state as its consequence.

To understand how profoundly the two ideas thus sketched were rooted in Roman Catholic thought before and after Bossuet, it is instructive to read with an open mind the still too little studied writings of his adherents from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: to an even stronger degree than in Bossuet, if that is possible, all so-called secondary causes are relegated to the background in favor of the Providence of God as the all-determining factor in the whole of human history. Charles Rollin († 1741) and René Louis d'Argenson († 1757) are the most important figures here.

Yet there is still another line running through the eighteenth-century Roman Catholic conception of history and the state: it, too, finds a starting point in the Christian worldview, but it is so overshadowed by the ideology of the Enlightenment that its Christian origin is largely lost to view. It was Jean-Baptiste du Bos († 1742) in whom the transition was effected from the Christian but unproblematical ideas of Bossuet to the Enlightenment. Du Bos differed from Bossuet precisely with regard to the two aspects that were characteristic of the latter's approach. This did not mean that Du Bos did not remain Catholic; he was sometimes fiercely so, and he remained hostile to Protestantism. But while Bossuet and his followers endeavored to view things in the light of religion, Du Bos detached them from the integral supernatural order and considered primarily their dependence on external circumstances. With that, the climate was created for a drastic change of perspective within eighteenth-century French Catholicism: following in the footsteps of Du Bos, people no longer regarded the flowering of the nation as something dependent upon the maintenance of the Catholic religion but rather as something dependent on various non-religious factors—factors which, as it appeared, were favorable precisely to the Protestants.

The Enlightenment, because of its cosmopolitan character, seemed to promise little good for the national consciousness; and yet it powerfully stimulated the growth of nationalism in Europe, and it provided France with an important part of her national ideology. The inner connection that arose between the cosmopolitan and national elements in the rationalist and empiricist thought of the eighteenth century was possible because the national idea had already been detached from the religious order: Bossuet and his more intimate adherents had proceeded on the basis of the assumption that that nation was a man's fatherland that God had assigned him, even if it was an inferior one; but the Enlightenment reversed that: one could call a country (read: state) his fatherland only when it made its citizens happy, in the Enlightenment sense of guaranteeing freedom and equality.

These notions concerning fatherland and nation did not arise from Christianity—or if they did, it was by way of the long course of secularization—yet they found a sympathetic audience amongst many in Roman Catholic circles, not least amongst the clergy. A. Aulard provides striking examples in his *Le patriotisme français de la Renaissance à la Révolution*.⁸ The patriotism of the clergy bore all the trademarks of Enlightenment ideas but at the same time retained the connection with the Christian religion. One of the most interesting illustrations of the synthesis I have just sketched is provided by the speech delivered by Dom Ferlus, a Benedictine of Saint Maur, in the assembly of the Estates of Languedoc on the eve of the Revolution, which he published under the telling title, *Le patriotisme chrétien*.⁹ Ferlus is of such interest to our subject because he turns against the philosophers and pins his hope on religion. For all that, his ideas about the *patrie* are no less revolutionary. Originally, Ferlus argues, people lived as one family, ruled by a *patriotisme divin*, but in a process of increasing pride, egoism, and division, people were gripped by a *patriotisme humain* that shattered even time-honored religion into a plurality of cults.¹⁰ But it is in the *patriotisme chrétien* that people recover the original *patriotisme divin*: it is religion which restores to people, or at least to a portion of mankind, the *patrie* by bestowing liberty and happiness upon them. Ferlus makes clear the sense in which he takes religion, freedom, and happiness when he writes: "The Christian religion did not impose duties on man that were alien to him. The Gospel is but the sublime commentary of natural law"¹¹

Aulard believes Ferlus's patriotism to be "after the manner of Bossuet and Fenelon."¹² In the light of the development in religious and national consciousness within French Catholicism described above, this construction is untenable.

Bossuet, however, continued to have his followers. We would again mention Rollin and d'Argenson. But now we add to these another name, that of Jean George Le Franc de Pompignan, Bishop of Le Puy, who in 1763 published his famous *Instruction pastorale sur la prétendue philosophie des incrédules modernes*.¹³ No more than Bossuet does Le Franc de Pompignan see a contradiction between everyone's having been created of one blood and their being bound to each other in one love to one end, and the attachment to the fatherland. Love of country is but one of the many forms of love; it is rooted in a special attachment, in virtue of which we will love our fellow citizens "by preference above all other men."¹⁴ In his ongoing polemic with "le citoyen de Genève" (Rousseau), the Bishop of Le Puy seizes upon the deepest difference that divides them: a person's fatherland is not the country that gives him the highest happiness but rather the country in which Providence places him.¹⁵

When one studies the history of the national idea—and I have in mind here its Catholic form in particular—he is struck by the dominating place of God's Providential decree. This belief however does not reappear in every new phase without modification: time and again it incorporates new elements and becomes itself a formative power in the historical phenomena. If in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries people regarded the action of God pertaining to the origin of the nation and the state as an overpowering *intervention*, as a calling into being, then after Romanticism they perceive divine Providence as permeating and becoming visible in the great *flux* of history. The Romantics and those who followed in their train, the champions of organic conceptions, drew near in silent awe to history, to the market places of the past, also to its precious product, the nation: for in order to be a nation, a folk community surely must have its origin in a region of mystery and in a distant past. Romanticism, however, bore within itself many a contradictory notion: at the very moment when Romanticism, bewitched by the profound language of the flux of history, threatened to be swept

away in the current, it would break the spell and revolt against all tradition in order to enter upon a vast, unknown world. The Romantics were never able to overcome the polarity in their attitude toward history. Closely related is their ambivalence toward nation, fatherland, and folk community: everything in them draws them, on the one hand, towards the security of the nation, and on the other hand, towards the universal world. Romano Guardini has said of the true Romantic that no one experiences as much homesickness as he; he is the "Wanderer who yearns for home," but no sooner has he arrived there than everything about it seems too restricted, and he wants to go away again. What he seeks but does not find in family, folk, and nation is unity—not the unity of many elements consigned to each other or held together by merely external connections, but a unity in which the manifold, infinitely varied shapes know themselves safe with each other through their common origin in a mysterious primordial ground. He seeks the wide world that would be entirely "inner," the limits of distances which guarantee at once full freedom of movement and intimate security.¹⁶ Thus the Romantic will seek the nation and at the same time flee it for the European community and the universal world; he can be fanatical about Germany and at the same time, or in the next moment, be mindful of his vocation vis-à-vis Europe.

This inner ambivalence or dichotomy in the historical and national consciousness of Romanticism was not abolished in its symbiosis with Roman Catholicism. Did not many of its Catholic representatives, such as Friedrich Schlegel, Adam Müller, Joseph Görres, and others, contribute importantly to shaping the abiding sentimental values of the impressionable new youth of German nationalism? To be sure, the European idea, the notion of a Christendom transcending national boundaries, remained alive in all of them; many a Romantic, especially in his later years, was disposed to give it priority: Friedrich Schlegel dreamed of a "collegially interwoven unity"¹⁷ of a free European "association of nations" encompassing all nations and states, and Joseph Görres dreamed of an "organically articulated" Europe in which each nation would represent a particular class.¹⁸ And still, the polar contradiction between the national-individual and the universal remained, reconciled only in *appearance*: it is one nation—one's own nation—that forms a bridge between the two: the destiny of Europe depends on Germany;¹⁹ through the nature of the German folk, which strives for

knowledge and justice, Europe acquires firmness and strength;²⁰ the German folk is the organ of history.²¹

For Romanticism, the nation and humanity were co-original, which explains why the doctrine of the *Volksgeist* that had already appeared in early Romanticism under Herder's influence was not able exclusively to gain the upper hand at that time. Matters began to change, however, with the rise of the Historical Schools, since there the connection with the universal weakened as time went by. Yet this brought to the fore an irresolvable problem that had remained partially hidden in genuine Romanticism as a result of its universalizing of the national idea; if the history of every separate nation must be explained on the basis of some permanently unchanging national *Volksgeist*, how is it possible to account for the alien elements that a folk assimilated and that it even accorded decisive importance? Because he accepted this heritage of Romanticism and the Historical Schools, the Roman Catholic historian Johannes Janssen was unable, in his *Deutsche Geschichte*, to deal satisfactorily with the influence of other cultures on German culture: thus he attributed signs of decline in German history at least in part to foreign influences, particularly to the reception of Roman law.

The Roman Catholic national idea was more varied in the nineteenth century than we have indicated thus far. There were writers in whom the national idea was relegated entirely to the background in favor of universalism, be it in the ecclesiastical or in the European sense. There were also those who based their hope for the salvation of the Occident on another nation than their own: Ernst von Lasaulx († 1861), for example, in his work of 1856, *Neuer Versuch einer alten auf die Wahrheit der Tatsachen gegründeten Philosophie der Geschichte*, which is being read avidly again today, looked to the Slavs, not to the Germans, for the healing of Europe.²²

Yet there is still another, even more obvious sense in which the national idea varies from one Catholic thinker to another, namely, according to their respective nations. Among the most interesting clashes in this regard is the one between the Romantic Joseph Görres and the Traditionalist Joseph de Maistre. When they criticize each other and Görres defends the idea of the German Reich against De

Maistre's attacks, then that is partly a result of the fact that they are of different nationalities and accordingly have different histories in their backgrounds. De Maistre finds his ideal in a particular system from the past and tries to restore it as something absolute: the magnificent phase in French history, he believes, came under the absolutism of Louis XIV. It so happens that for the Romantics everything that is absolute is not organic and bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction;²³ therefore they cannot strive for the restoration of a historical period elevated to an absolute norm. In the national idea of Romanticism, history has an original function as organic historical becoming, but in De Maistre it primarily serves only those who are seeking an absolute norm. This is not the only thing De Maistre has to say about the relation between the nation and history: the true "moral unity" of the nation, which is indeed present in principle at its inception, still has need of the stamp of historical evolution.

If a serious difference of viewpoint persists between the Romantics and De Maistre with regard to the forming of nations, there is a strong agreement on a number of points between the latter and his co-religionist, Bossuet. Although De Maistre regarded the rise of nations as somewhat more complex than Bossuet did, we find in him the same sense of the perfect naturalness of it all: the Creator has made the boundaries of the nations clearly visible on earth, so one sees each folk seek out and occupy its appointed space or *réceptacle*. And in this "receptacle" the unity that is already implicitly present expresses itself in the course of history in the *unité morale*. "This unity manifests itself above all in language."²⁴

Yet there is still another, weightier point where De Maistre approaches Bossuet; that is in the predominantly statist feature of his nationalism: it is in sovereignty that the nation finds its well-knit unity and center. A strong *raison nationale* must be formed, for this alone will guarantee national greatness; and it is the state's task to clear away all obstacles to the forming of the *âme nationale*. If the state is negligent in this regard, an individualistic and revolutionary spirit will undermine the foundations of state and nation. De Maistre reproaches the successors of Louis XIV for having given the Protestants free rein and thus having helped prepare the French Revolution.²⁵

De Maistre senses no conflict with freedom here since sovereignty and nation are equally original and natural, and since only the

upholding of the *ordre intérieur*—in De Maistre's sense—can guarantee the happiness and greatness of the people.

Our description of the position taken on nationalism by Roman Catholicism since the end of the Middle Ages may display many lacunas, but a number of characteristics have now become emphatically visible. Modern nationalism has already passed through many phases and assumed numerous shapes, but every time again, Catholicism and nationalism have managed to come to terms. Viewed in the abstract, Catholicism and nationalism are not mutually exclusive, and it might have been possible for Catholicism to have rendered its assistance without inner conflicts. Yet, both the historical forms of their collaboration and the philosophical-theological justification of the national idea by Roman Catholic thinkers have always really had the character of a synthesis, which is to say of a matching together of elements which in essence do not match.

History is illustrative in this regard: Bossuet could not construct the unity of the nation without invoking the absolutism of the prince; in the eighteenth century the concept of nationhood acquired amongst many clergymen the utilitarian feature which also stamped "enlightened" philosophy; in the Romantic period the Roman Catholic national idea had to deal with all the tensions inherent in the Romantic view of life; and in the days of National Socialism, Catholic thinkers joined in professing the special talent of a particular race for Christianity. In short, we can pose the question whether there has ever been any form of nationalism to which a Roman Catholic thinker did not seek, and find, a way. This means that Roman Catholicism sustained serious damage during the centuries in which nationalism was a factor of the utmost importance.

Yet history tells not only of damage. There have been Roman Catholic thinkers who were aware of the menace of the virile national idea; but the spirit of the age was often too powerful for them. Nevertheless, the belief that it is God Himself who allots to everyone his fatherland and that God made all people of one flesh kept alive in them the consciousness that the nations are subject to divine norms and that their interdependence is a law of life.

If we now pose the question, following our cursory inquiry into the historical connections between Catholicism and national consciousness, whether we have succeeded in tracking down the *essential* relation between the two, our answer must be decidedly negative.

To be sure, the course of history, if our investigation had been deeper and broader, could have disclosed further indications about the place of the nation in the Roman Catholic worldview as a whole. Yet, indications and no more; for once we undertake to account for the significance the nation has in the order of things and in history, we are compelled to take the path of philosophical and theological reflection. Only in this way can the perspective already revealed to us be deepened.

One can approach the concept 'nation' from many angles, and the many Roman Catholic writers who have thought and written about the subject have done just that. In fact, some of them have selected the starting point for their conceptions in such a way that what is distinctive in Roman Catholic ideas about the forms of community found in human society is relegated entirely to the background. I shall devote no further attention to these writers.

Having introduced this restriction, we must now deal first with the question whether the Roman Catholic conceptions and representations of everything pertaining to 'nation' do, after all, have anything distinctive about them. And if this question must be answered in the affirmative, then another problem follows immediately upon it: does the quality that is distinctive serve at the same time as the aspect under which all elements contained in the concepts of 'nation', 'national consciousness', etc., can—yes, must—be viewed?

Such a unique point of departure is, indeed, present in the Roman Catholic worldview, and it can be located in the relation of the nation to man's ultimate destiny. We can also state the matter in other words: in the relation of the natural datum, the nation, to the supernatural order are implicit both the high value and the relative significance that genuine Roman Catholicism attributes to the nation and to national consciousness.

As we contemplate the richly unfolded life of men, we soon detect in it a multiplicity of communities. This communal life does not, on the Roman Catholic view, exist for itself; whatever group one takes, there is none that is an end in itself; rather, the end served

by all lies in the individual human personality. Wherever one looks in created reality he encounters the creaturely as a means for the attainment of man's destination. The human personality has been so created that without the things around it, including the forms of community in particular, it is unable to blossom and come to perfection. The matter is one of values that can never be realized by the individual acting alone, but only in community. Roman Catholics are so strongly convinced of the correctness of this view of earthly things as God-given means for achieving the ends of the human personality that even in the papal encyclicals no further evidence is adduced for it than an appeal to the words of Paul in I Corinthians 3:22-23, ". . . all are your's; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."²⁶ Thus we arrive both via natural reason and via revelation at the same basic idea: namely, that everything is ordained to the perfecting of the human personality.

Now then, among the means to achieving that, the nation occupies a leading place. For the nation is a good which—we shall return to this point later—is intimately associated with the human personality. If on the Roman Catholic view the nation is thus a good which fulfills an important function in the attaining of the individual human destination, then we must make some careful distinctions.

In the first place, the nation is a means to attaining man's *natural* end. Yet it also has a place in the ascent of human nature to its *supernatural* destination. Natural end and supernatural destination are intrinsically connected. The better natural perfection is realized in and through the national community, the better human personality can strive to achieve its supernatural destination, in view of the fact that while the well-being which individuals work together to secure in and through the national community is not the cause of grace, it nonetheless creates a disposition, a receptivity to grace. The highest law of man's natural life, of the natural communities, not least of the national community as well, is to order the natural functions and actions so conformably to man's nature that he places himself at the disposal of his supernatural destination.²⁷ And receptivity to the supernatural reaches full depth when human nature, precisely through the attainment of its natural ends, becomes the more aware of its own deficiency, its deep need, and its insatiable yearning for its final destination beyond the natural order.

In the ascent of the temporal order to the supernatural destina-

tion, the national community has an eminently religious significance. The nation itself belongs to the natural order and is thus not religious in essence, but it has a religious value nonetheless, since it is a means—and certainly not one of the least—to open man up to supernatural riches and since it affords him with the means in his efforts to reach his eternal destination.

In this yearning for the supernatural destination, the urge for natural perfection unleashes itself: from the desire to bring the things of this world to the perfection willed by God, there ripened precisely those periods of historical fruitfulness in which the supernatural and spiritual culture dominated.²⁸

By now the question will have occurred to us: Granted that the national communities are a God-given means to the attainment of man's supernatural destination, in what particular respect now is the nation so equipped? It is surprising that the certainty on the Roman Catholic side with which the nation is proclaimed to be such a means should be balanced by a lack of effort to determine in what respect the potentiality of human nature postulates life in the national community. One of the few to have concerned himself with this problem is the Dominican Father Hyacinthus Woroniecki²⁹ (Prince Adam Woroniecki), whose framing of the problem and whose insights have been adopted by his fellow Dominican, the well-known expert in international law, J.T. Delos.³⁰

The nation, Woroniecki argues, has to educate the citizenry for a fuller, more perfect life which, left to themselves, they would be powerless to achieve. Man does not have in his nature the perfectly established capability of governing his moral actions at all times: he must acquire it through the work of education. In this way the disposition will gradually grow that will enable him to perform the same actions with greater ease, competence and certainty: this great work is abetted by morals, habits, customs, etc. Well now, the nation is founded on this education for morality. The nation even takes precedence above the state, since it is the nation that gives internal unity to human society and in this way reinforces the moral powers of individuals; for morals contribute more to upholding the virtues than laws do. Nations are therefore more durable and of more importance to morals than states are. The national morality touches the human spirit more profoundly than do the laws of the state and consequently bear a more essential and immediate relation to man's ultimate destination.

Now that we have cast some light on various aspects of the religious value of the nation, we turn to the problem implicit in that peculiar relation of the national community, as a natural regime, to the supernatural.

Eugen Lemberg remarks in his *Geschichte des Nationalismus in Europa* (1950) that the birth of nationalism presupposed secularization, since national communities now began to form in which man's faculties no longer were devoted to a religious community as in the days when the Empire, through its orientation to the supernatural community of the Church, had itself acquired a religious character. The modern nation that was taking shape was disconnected from the transcendent. Nevertheless—still according to Lemberg—although to the perception of the European consciousness the rising national community was not religious in character, yet the national idea was invested with religious content in the course of its development because people came to regard the nations as created by God, inserted by Him into His world plan, and furnished with a specific mission.³¹

However many correct elements Lemberg's sketch may contain, it is not entirely acceptable because, to begin with, he neglects religion as a factor in national unification since the Reformation. Beyond that—to leave aside other objections that could be raised against his interpretation—Lemberg does not do justice to the unique place of Roman Catholicism in the rise of modern nationalism. Ordinarily, Roman Catholics regard the Renaissance and Reformation as decisive factors in the process of secularization since the Late Middle Ages. In doing so, they fail to recognize that this secularization received powerful impulses as early as the heyday of Scholasticism, when Christian thought entered into a more intimate union with non-Christian, mainly Greek thought. True, they acknowledge that Thomist thought—for it is that in particular which we have in view—represented an incision within the Middle Ages, but they would be reluctant to call the break of Thomist philosophy with Medieval Augustinian thought a form of secularization. After all, in Thomas the ordering of temporal life to the supernatural continued to be recognized, and was even essential! That it was essential is undoubtedly correct. For all that, it is here that the separation of the profane and transcendent worlds began—or con-

tinued in a more stringent form³²—with the secularization of the national communities as the result. In the centuries before Thomas, people had valued worldly life almost exclusively as the *means* for the supernatural; as a result, worldly life acquired a religious coloration, since it was enclosed on all sides by the relation to the religious even while in many respects it lacked religious value intrinsically.

With Thomas Aquinas all this changes: the temporal is no longer valued merely as a means for the supernatural but is also recognized for its own sake, independent of its relation to the religious. True, it remains ordered to the supernatural, but in such a way that it is granted its own, autonomous existence. An irresolvable dualism is introduced into the temporal—between being ordered to the spiritual, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, having independence, freedom, and autonomy over against the spiritual. This Scholastic doctrine would now come to dominate the Roman Catholic position on natural life. Once Thomas had recognized the intrinsic value of the profane, the way was free for a long process: a dichotomy of the natural and supernatural orders was taught with ever greater emphasis in the course of the following centuries, especially after the mid-sixteenth century; people tended in increasing measure to regard the profane as a self-contained, self-sufficient order. Yet the dualism within this order persisted, and with it vestiges of the Medieval view of the natural: never was the awareness lost in Roman Catholicism that the temporal, despite its autonomy, remained a stepping-stone to the supernatural and therefore continued to require the concern of the church. Especially in political theory did the inner contradiction between autonomy and orientation to the religious play a decisive role.

To what purpose this lengthy excursus? Only against this background does our thesis become plausible that the secularization of the rising national consciousness found fertile soil in the genesis of Roman Catholicism. Once the national communities had been recognized for their own sake and put on an independent footing, the modern national ideology was acceptable for Catholics, even though it rather quickly lost any connection to the transcendent. The way was now prepared for accepting association with the many forms of nationalism. Was not the nation a good to be highly esteemed? Yet, the truth of an observation once made by Father Daniélou is confirmed here: temporal values must be acknowledged in their significance, and the Christian may not withdraw himself

from them, but they do have a tendency to assert themselves absolutely.³³ Indeed, Roman Catholicism has not always managed to keep its distance when the nation presented itself as an absolute quantity or made excessive demands: there are numerous examples from the history of nationalism in which Catholics not only yielded to the spirit of their age but were active partners in overemphasizing the national community. Bossuet's glorification of absolutism—a necessary capstone of his national idea—is a frightful example of this.

Once the nation was recognized in Roman Catholicism in its own, independent value, there were still ways of ascribing religious meaning to it. Specifically, Romanticism brought the nation back into the religious sphere: the nation was brought into inner connection with divine Providence and furnished with a divine mission. Yet it should be noted that this did not impair its autonomy with respect to the supernatural order. Besides, the Romantics veiled it in a shroud of mystery. Its autonomy, far from being weakened, was accented, and the nationalism that took mystical forms no longer recognized any real limits. One of the most striking examples of mystical, over-exaggerated nationalism is afforded us in a leading figure of the Roman Catholic revival in Germany, K.J. Windischmann, who concludes his book, *Das Gericht des Herrn über Europa* (1814), a predominantly pessimistic view of the development of the Occident, by confessing his faith in Germany as the "predestined arbiter of Europe"; in the German spirit as Christ-bearer; and in the German character as the *logos spermatikos* for the healing of Europe.³⁴

The Roman Catholic view of the relation between the natural and supernatural orders likewise opened the possibility for a positive appreciation of the National Socialist revolution in 1933. Thus Karl Adam could at many points justify the breakthrough of "folkish" nationalism before the forum of the Roman Catholic worldview, although not without a certain qualification: nature and the supernatural presuppose each other, Catholicism protects the distinctive character of each folk and imbues it with the leaven of the Gospel, "the supernaturalism of the Church by definition determines the nationalism of her missions and her faithful."³⁵ The nature-grace doctrine here, too, leaves room for accepting an inner connection between the Germanic race and the Christian religion: the supernatural forces which God has placed in His Church have never come

to such a magnificent revelation and fulfillment as in the Christianization of the Germanic world.³⁶

We should not exaggerate the importance of Adam's view, however. A remarkable process has been underway within Roman Catholicism in recent decades that is characterized by a renewed attempt to see nature and the supernatural in a more intimate relationship. And on this basis the effort is being made to provide the national community with a deeper religious foundation, by esteeming it as a means in the process of the natural perfecting of human nature that causes it to orient itself all the more to its supernatural destination. We have seen that these ideas are interwoven in the very texture of the Roman Catholic worldview.

Now that we have analyzed the basic structure and thrust of the concept 'nation' as it is held in Roman Catholic circles, we want to turn our attention to the various elements contained in the good that the nation represents for man. In regard both to the nature of these elements and to their mutual interrelations there are serious differences of opinion amongst Roman Catholic writers: the conflict of opinions concerns primarily the problem of what elements are necessary determinants of the concept 'nation'. Yet even when one has taken a particular position on this matter, the question still remains which determinant should be given precedence. We can briefly summarize the controversy about these problems as follows: every social good that has ever served to bind people together into a nation is a starting point for a divergence of opinions. As the national bonding agent writers distinguish language, native soil, cultural and religious traditions, while likewise not denying the state a function in the growth of the nation.

In the light of the above it will not surprise anyone that we should go on to concentrate, for now, on the religious traditions. It would be unnecessary for us after all the things that have already been said to add anything more about the religious traditions, were it not for the fact that in them we confront the main problem of the Roman Catholic national idea. When the nation is a good that the individual cherishes for the sake of his own and others' temporal and eternal good, then the nation is somehow related to the moral law. For if the nation is to answer to its lofty purpose, it ought to be normed by moral principles. Yet the moral law necessarily presup-

poses God and God religion, for it is only in its association with religion that the moral law has full force. The result of this reasoning is that the national community needs religion. If the nation would flourish and achieve greatness, then people should conform to the moral law and respect religion. If one recalls that the Roman Catholic church is the consummate medium of religious life and the authentic interpreter of the moral law, then the central place which the church ought to occupy in national life, according to Catholic opinion, is clear forthwith. The religious divisions that have afflicted the nations now for centuries are a source of woe and constitute an obstacle on the path to national greatness, the source of which, after all, is national unity.

When in its national unity and expression a people opens itself up, without reservation, to morality—as interpreted by Catholics—and to the Catholic faith, then its national heritage will eventually acquire a Catholic stamp.

Yet, a people can acquire a Catholic stamp via another, less conspicuous route, namely when in their national life they begin to recognize truths and to submit to norms that admittedly are as such not points of faith but that flow from natural reason: for example, when a people acknowledges God as the first Cause and final Goal. This truth, it is said, is not specifically Catholic but one that is knowable and acceptable to all.³⁷ When a people grants natural reason and its truths their proper place, it is still not thereby a Catholic nation; and yet it can become so, even while it remains in the natural order. For the natural truths may be present in the treasure-houses of human wisdom, but Catholic believers are indispensable for a clear knowledge of them. According to many Roman Catholic thinkers it is possible that all persons of good will will unite in a national entity on a purely natural basis, but Catholics should be allowed to take the lead since, living in the light of the supernatural, they are better equipped to discover the divine natural order.

This stage is not ideal: the purely natural order is only to be accepted as a period of transition to a culture in which the spiritual will have the lead. Cooperation with those of other persuasions can be a duty for the sake of advancing the national well-being, which derives its importance, after all, from its function of guiding people towards their eternal destination.

But it is precisely the place which the general welfare (*bonum*

commune) of the national community occupies in the intertwining of the natural and spiritual orders that drives people to transcend the association with "persons of good will" towards the supernatural fellowship of the church where are found the supernatural elements that can fulfill the needs of natural communities. No nation, no natural group whatever, can succeed without the divine things of the church.

But if the national good is so intimately associated with the treasures of the church, it becomes fully understandable why in Roman Catholic literature, including even the encyclicals, the key notion is constantly reasserted that the flourishing of nations depends on the church. Pope Leo XIII is forceful in expression when he opens the encyclical *Immortale Dei* (1885) with these words: "Indeed, wherever the Church has planted her feet she has at once transformed the face of things and ennobled people's manners with hitherto unknown virtues and a new civilization. All nations which have yielded to her sway have excelled in gentleness, a sense of justice and equity, and glorious deeds." Thus the church, so we read in the encyclical *Inscrutabili* (1878) is "the patroness, teacher, and mother of civilization."³⁸ Hungary, Portugal, and ever so many other nations are the historical proof that the church is a guarantee of national greatness.

Yes, the peoples are indebted to Christianity for their national existence. Prior to the coming of Christianity, according to Cardinal Faulhaber, the Germans, to the delight of their enemies, were divided, and no civilization could flourish amongst them, but Christianity hammered the many tribes into a nation, and a high level of culture was attained.³⁹ Faulhaber's view may seem overly simple, but it should not be overlooked that one encounters such notions repeatedly in writers, and that they are supported by papal pronouncements.⁴⁰

Just as automatically as a nation unfolds and elevates itself when its members confess the Catholic faith, so equally unconditionally are national unity and religious unity associated in the Roman Catholic mind. There is no national greatness without national unity, and there is no national unity without the religious unity of the nation: this, too, is a notion which has been the common property of Roman Catholicism ever since the Middle Ages.

Here we have arrived at one of the sources of severe criticism of the Reformation: its consequences were fatal, not only in the sense that here and there religion was subordinated to the national interest—one need only recall the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*, “as the religion of the prince, so the religion of the people”—but more specifically because in the face of religious fragmentation, national life could no longer achieve its concentration in the supernatural. Apostasy from the one universal church necessarily entailed fragmentation and upheaval as a result: it is an idea that gained dominance in the Roman Catholic worldview especially through Bossuet but that had already developed before him, in fact was implied by the Roman Catholic view of history from the outset. According to De Maistre it was the Cartesian and Protestant spirit of free inquiry that spawned the individualistic mind and so undermined the foundations of the state.⁴¹ With the Reformation, according to Johannes Janssen, began a period of rivalry between two mutually opposed religious ideas for the soul of the German folk: “From the rootstock of the Lutheran claims and demands arose the anarchy in the religious domain. And from this anarchy there followed—as amply set forth in my work—the moral degeneration of the nation.”⁴²

Not only did the Reformation lead to the undermining of national order and to the decline of morals; it inflicted even more serious damage upon the national communities. To understand well the importance of these consequences, it is necessary to view the development of national consciousness against the medieval background.

The Middle Ages have always remained the point of orientation for the Roman Catholic conception of history—the more so as the European world has become estranged from them. Even today, when many Roman Catholic thinkers have felt compelled to follow a new cultural ideal sharply distinguished from that of the Middle Ages, the old medieval world remains a highly desirable goal. What makes this world so extraordinarily fascinating is its close coherence and universality; in those days there was one mind that embraced both the supernatural and natural orders: the spiritual and the temporal were but two sides of a single all-controlling, universal coherence. There was differentiation, infinitely variegated, yet all things particular were integrated in the universal. True, the destination lay beyond history, but in the *ecclesia universalis*, the universal

church, the temporal was directed towards and bound up with the coming Kingdom of God. In the one church were two powers—*in ecclesia sunt duae potestates*—the spiritual and the worldly, with respect to which the leading role did fall to the former while only subordinate; temporal concerns were entrusted to the latter, but then in such a way that its task contributed to the building of the Kingdom of God on earth. Church and state were both universal in character and formed the one universal community of the Occident. The indispensable condition for this was the unity of belief and the unity of mind. Certainly there were differences in language, tribe, folk, and eventually even of nation, but these were just nuances within the universal culture. The many elements that would later converge in the national communities were already present, but were dispersed over the many communities within Western Christendom.

Now, when the Reformation and its accompanying trends detached themselves from the supernatural guidance of the church, that spiritual unity was necessarily forfeit, and with it the unity of the Occident. True, already prior to that the cleavages of differentiation between the various national groups had intensified, and as a result of sects and heresy stones had already long ago become dislodged from the edifice of medieval unity. But in its foundation it had remained unshaken. The common Christian faith was the strongest binding force of the Western universal community, and it was even capable of embracing the increasingly independence-minded nations. Yet, with the Reformation the Western nations' sense of solidarity, while it did not entirely vanish, was spiritually broken, and there was no longer any power capable of checking the "anarchy of nations." Now that the nations were no longer embedded in Christendom, the consciousness of their relativity with respect to mankind in general was lost.

To be sure, there are Roman Catholic writers who perceived profound religious forces at work in the Reformation (for example, Görres and Clemens Maria Hofbauer and numerous other modern thinkers), but in general the Reformation was regarded as the source of—or at least as a powerful impulse to—the secularization of the Occident. However, when the ideal of the Medieval Christian Occident was powerfully reawakened in Romanticism, people immediately linked it to the idea that the secularization and disintegration of the Occident were interrelated and were together related to

the Reformation. Adam Müller ascribed the demise of Christian Europe to the Reformation because it neglected the national-juridical or public-law character of religion.⁴³ The return to Medieval Christendom occurred in mystical forms in Adam Müller's thought: in Europe he recognized a new revelation of the Mystical Body of Christ.⁴⁴ In many Roman Catholic Romantics, the initial dialectic between national community and Occident issues ultimately in a clear preference for the latter.

It is noteworthy that when a pan-Christian entity proved unfeasible, a Western idea of limited scope arose: people conceived of a European entity as a Catholic community under papal leadership.⁴⁵

Have we now not become sidetracked by devoting so much attention to the Roman Catholic view of Protestantism as apostasy from the Occident, and have we not lost sight of the Catholic concept of nation? No, the fact that in Catholic quarters an inner connection is seen between secularization, the betrayal of the West, the anarchy of nations, and the Reformation must not lead us to forget that within Roman Catholicism there is a dialectic between the universal and the national-particular. One cannot surmount this tension by pointing to the Middle Ages in which it was possible for national differentiation to unfold within the unity of the Western world, for the various elements which are mutually interrelated in the modern nation had not yet all reached their crystallization point. Only after the nation, in the modern sense, has been formed can the problem of the relation between the universal and the national-particular be posed in all its sharpness.

Yet at the same time the possibility must be faced that the problem thus raised is irresolvable. Should one not give precedence to national entities in times when conditions are favorable for their unfolding and likewise pursue the ideal of the Occident or of a second Occident during periods in which history presses towards global or supranational communities? Or should one be reconciled to the impossibility of surmounting the dialectical solution of Romanticism? Or, perhaps, is there a way out in the collective conviction that every nation has a vocation, which elevates it to the rank of a "chosen People" but which at the same time causes it to seek the well-being of other peoples?⁴⁶

All these questions remain caught in the tension between the national and the universal. For that reason alone they are unable to

point us the way. We now pose a different question: Behind the relation of the national community to the supranational world is there not still another reality with respect to which both the former and the latter are relativized? Indeed, this question has never been far from the minds of Roman Catholic thinkers. They have believed that the absolute claims of the natural communities would lose their force only against the background of the church, not only in the sense that the presence of the universal order of the church has meant a limit for every natural community of whatever sort, but above all because to their mind the church seeks its reflection in temporal things and thus makes visible in the worldly forms the mark of relativity.

Notes

1. Carlton J.H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), p. 38.
2. J.B. Bossuet, *Politics Drawn from the Very Words of Holy Scripture* (1709), Bk. 1, art. ii.
3. For this point, too, Bossuet, *ibid.*, I, iii, appeals to numerous Scripture passages, *inter alia* Judges 17:6 ("In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes").
4. Bossuet, *Politics*, VI, i.
5. *Ibid.*, I, i, v.
6. *Ibid.*, I, vi.
7. Cf. Heinrich Albert Rommen, *Die Staatslehre der Franz Suarez, S.J.* (Munich, 1926), p. 268.
8. Alphonse Aulard, *Le patriotisme française de la Renaissance à la Révolution* (Paris, 1921), pp. 46-83.
9. Dom François Ferlus, D.B., *Le patriotisme chrétien; discours prêché aux Etats du Languedoc en 1787* (Montpellier, 1787). A few years afterwards Dom Ferlus played a role in the French Revolution.
10. Cf. Ferlus, *ibid.*, pp. 22, 23.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
12. A. Aulard, *Le patriotisme française*, p. 80.
13. Le Franc de Pompignan was one of the strongest antagonists of Voltaire and Rousseau. When the Revolution broke out, however, he allowed himself to be swept along: he became president of the National Assembly. He died the year after, in 1790.
14. J.G. Le Franc de Pompignan, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1855), col. 164.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Romano Guardini, "Erscheinung und Wesen der Romantik," in T. Steinbüchel, ed., *Romantik; ein Zyklus Tübinger Vorlesungen* (Tübingen and Stuttgart: R. Wunderlich, 1948), p. 242.
17. Friedrich von Schlegel, "Die Signatur des Zeitalters," *Concordia* (1820), as quoted in H. Finke, *Ueber Friedrich Schlegel* (1918), p. 61.

18. Joseph Görres, *Europa und die Revolution* (1821); in *Gesammelte Schriften* (pub. by the Görres Gesellschaft), vol. 12, p. 253.
19. Friedrich von Schlegel, *Ueber die neuere Geschichte* (1810); in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 11, p. 268.
20. K.J. Windischmann, *Das Gericht des Herrn über Europa* (Frankfurt am Main, 1814), p. 274; see also pp. 258ff.
21. Thus Görres, albeit not in his Catholic period; for details see W. Schellberg, *Joseph von Görres*, vol. 1 (1911), pp. viff.
22. Ernst von Lasaulx, *Neuer Versuch einer alten auf die Wahrheit der Tatsachen gegründeten Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. E. Thurnher (1952), p. 167.
23. Cf. Schlegel's work cited in note 17, pp. 51-54, as quoted in G. Salomon, *Das Mittelalter als Ideal der Romantik* (1922), p. 74.
24. Joseph de Maistre, *Etude sur la souveraineté* (1794-96), bk. 1, ch. 4; in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1 (1891), 325-26.
25. See his *Mémoire sur la liberté de l'enseignement public* (1810; vol. 8 in the *Oeuvres complètes*).
26. Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* [On atheistic communism], 1937, art. 30. [For the context, see the following extracts from articles 25-30, quoted from Joseph Husslein, ed., *Social Wellsprings*, vol. 2: *Eighteen Encyclicals of Social Reconstruction by Pope Pius XI* (Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1942), pp. 351-53:

We have exposed the errors and the violent, deceptive tactics of bolshevistic and atheistic Communism. It is now time, Venerable Brethren, to contrast with it the true notion, already familiar to you, of the *civitas humana*, or human society, as taught by reason and revelation through the mouth of the Church, *Magistra gentium*, Teacher of the nations.

Above all other reality there exists one Supreme Being: God, the omnipotent Creator of all things, the all-wise and just Judge of all men. The supreme reality, God, is the absolute condemnation of the impudent falsehoods of Communism

In the Encyclical on *Christian Education* We explained the fundamental doctrine concerning man as it may be gathered from reason and faith. Man has a spiritual and immortal soul. He is a person, marvelously endowed by his Creator with gifts of body and mind. He is a true "microcosm," as the ancients said, a world in miniature, with a value far surpassing that of the vast inanimate cosmos. God alone is his last end, in this life and the next. By sanctifying grace he is raised to the dignity of a son of God, and incorporated into the kingdom of God, in the Mystical Body of Christ. In consequence he has been endowed by God with many and varied prerogatives: the right to life, to bodily integrity, to the necessary means of existence; the right to tend toward his ultimate goal in the path marked out for him by God; the right of association and the right to possess and use property.

. . . In the plan of the Creator, society is a natural means which man can and must use to reach his destined end. *Society is for man and not vice versa*. This must not be understood in the sense of liberalistic individualism, which subordinates society to the selfish use of the individual; but only in the sense that *by means of an organic union with society and by mutual collaboration the attainment of earthly happiness is placed within the reach of all*. In a further sense, it is a society which affords the opportunities for the development of all the individual and social gifts bestowed on human nature. These natural gifts have a value surpassing the immediate interests of the moment, for in society they reflect the divine perfection, which would not be true were man to live alone

. . . Man cannot be exempted from his divinely imposed obligations toward

civil society, and the representatives of authority have the right to coerce him when he refuses without reason to do his duty. Society, on the other hand, cannot defraud man of his God-granted rights, the most important of which We have indicated above. Nor can society systematically void these rights by making their use impossible. *It is therefore according to the dictates of reason that ultimately all material things should be ordained to man as a person, that through his mediation they may find their way to the Creator.* In this wise we can apply to man, the human person, the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles who writes to the Corinthians on the Christian economy of salvation: "All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii, 23). While Communism impoverishes human personality by inverting the terms of the relation of man to society, to what lofty heights is man not elevated by reason and revelation!]

27. Cf. John Joseph Wright, *National Patriotism in Papal Teaching* (Boston, 1942), p. 13.
28. Cf. Ludwig Lenhart, "Christentum und Germanentum im Werturteil der letzten Jahrhunderte," *Beiträge zur christlichen Philosophie* 1 (1947): 29f.
29. Hyacinthus Woroniecki, O.P., "Quaestio disputata de natione et statu civili," *Divus Thomas* (Freiburg) 29 (1926): 25ff.; see also his contribution to M. Vaussard, ed., *Enquête sur le nationalisme* (1924), pp. 286ff.
30. Joseph Thomas Delos, O.P., *La Société internationale et les principes du droit public*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1950), pp. 16ff.
31. Eugen Lemberg, *Geschichte des Nationalismus in Europa* (Stuttgart, 1950), pp. 77f.
32. We use this rather unclear formulation advisedly in order to draw attention to the fact how precarious it is, given our present understanding of the structure of the medieval world, to state when the process of secularization actually began.
33. Jean Daniélou, in *Etudes* 255 (1947): 135.
34. This excellent summary of Windischmann's final chapter (op. cit., pp. 258-354, on the "Healing Powers of Nature and of Grace in the German People") is found in Heinz Gollwitzer, *Europabild und Europagedanke, Beiträge zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1951), p. 200.
35. Karl Adam, "Deutsches Volkstum und katholisches Christentum." *Theologische Quartalschrift* 144 (1933):59.
36. *Ibid.*, 63.
37. C.P.M. Romme, *Nieuwe grondwetsartikelen* (Amsterdam, n.d.), p. 13; J.J. Wright (see n. 27), p. 89; cf. P. Chanson, "L'Oeuvre des quatres derniers pontificats sur le plan social," in *La continuité pontificale* (Paris, 1935), p. 96.
38. Encyclical *Immortale Dei* [On the Christian constitution of states], art. 1; encyclical *Inscrutabili* [On the evils affecting modern society], art. 5.
39. Michael von Faulhaber, *Christentum und Germanentum*; sermon on the feast of St. Sylvester, 31 Dec. 1933 (Munich, 1934), esp. p. 13.
40. Cf. the encyclical *Inscrutabili*, articles 7-10 [e.g., quoting from Etienne Gilson, ed., *The Church Speaks to the Modern World: The Social Teachings of Leo XIII* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954), pp. 281-83:

Again, if We consider the achievements of the see of Rome, what can be more wicked than to deny how much and how well the Roman bishops have served civilized society at large? . . . This apostolic chair it was that gathered and held together the crumbling remains of the old order of things; this was the kindly light by whose help the culture of Christian times shone far and wide; this was an anchor of safety in the fierce storms by which the human race has been con-

vulsed; this was the sacred bond of union that linked together nations distant in region and differing in character; in short, this was a common center from which was sought instruction in faith and religion, no less than guidance and advice for the maintenance of peace and the functions of practical life. In very truth it is the glory of the supreme Pontiffs that they have steadfastly set themselves up as a wall and a bulwark to save human society from falling back into its former superstition and barbarism Unquestionably to the Roman Pontiffs it is that Italy must own herself indebted for the substantial glory and majesty by which she has been preeminent amongst nations [By their] exertions or protection Italy has escaped unscathed from the utter destruction threatened by barbarians; has kept unimpaired her old faith, and amid the darkness and defilement of the ruder age, has cultivated and preserved in vigor the luster of science and the splendor of art. To this, furthermore, bears witness Our own fostering city, the home of the Popes, which, under their rule, reaped this special benefit, that it was not only the strong citadel of the faith, but also became the refuge of the liberal arts and the very abode of wisdom, winning for itself the admiration and respect of the whole world.]

41. See n. 25.
42. Johannes Janssen, *An meine Kritiker*, rev. ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1891), p. 181.
43. Adam Müller, *Elemente der Staatskunst* (Dresden, 1808-09), Lecture 10.
44. *Ibid.*, lectures 34 and 35.
45. *Inter alia* Adam Müller and Joseph de Maistre.
46. On this, see the important views expressed in a June 13, 1937 sermon given in Notre Dame Cathedral by Cardinal Pacelli (since then Pope Pius XII) on "The Christian Vocation of France."

The Divine Mystery in History

[1955]

*ESTEEMED DIRECTORS AND CURATORS of the Free University,
Madam and Gentlemen Professors, Lecturers and Instructors,
Ladies and Gentlemen of the Student Body, and all who honor me
with your presence here today, highly esteemed Audience:*

In this very place a little over five and a half years ago, I was asked by a learned opponent in the course of the public defense of my doctoral dissertation¹ whether I did not entangle myself in contradictions. I seemed to be rejecting every notion of a fragmentary, supernatural intervention of God in the natural course of events. At the same time, I ventured to assert in one of the obligatory theses appended to my dissertation: "Although Robert Fruin has proved that the tale of a miraculous ebb tide in 1672 is a legend and that the abnormally long ebb tide of August 2, 1673 had no influence on English invasion plans, this does not resolve the problem of whether the English decided against a landing in 1672 and 1673 as the result of 'supernatural' events."²

My reply to this objection was never completed, for I was cut off by the mace-bearer's "*Hora est!*" Now, however, after a long intermezzo, I should like to resume the debate about that contested thesis. Thus I ask you to consider for a few moments the problems pertaining to the Hand of God in history. Since the Hand of God is usually interpreted in too narrow a sense, however, I have formulated my subject more broadly and called it: The Divine Mystery in History.

It will perhaps not be superfluous to say at the outset that I do not use the word "mystery" in the sense now fashionable; I use it in the New Testament sense, fraught with the ineffable that is in God.

My choice of topic may seem questionable. For who, after all that has been written during so many centuries, could still hope to add anything worthwhile to this perplexing subject? Should we not rather be pleased that after centuries of fruitless debate about the demonstrability of God's Finger, people are now almost universally agreed that historical science (I restrict myself to that), including philosophy of history, must keep silence here? Is the question of God's Hand not a "religious" rather than a scientific or philosophical matter, whose mystery is best preserved precisely by keeping it within the sphere of faith? Would it accordingly not be better to reserve reflections on God's concrete agency in history for a meditation in the evening of one's life, when one may have acquired a wealth of experience through prolonged scientific labor and the insight may at last have registered that we should speak of the things of God only with the utmost reserve?

There is a compelling reason for me to address the issue at this time, however, as I undertake to give an account of the spirit in which I hope to carry out my assignment: every historian, whether he realizes it or not, encounters the divine mystery in history; although its full depth will always be ineffable, this mystery should descend into our knowledge and into our words.

It is just possible that there is an intrinsic necessity to take up precisely those problems that have resisted solution through the years, not in order to solve them completely or to deprive them of their mystery, but in order to fathom the depths to which they reach and reconnoiter the remote places where they turn up. Is that perhaps one of the reasons why in every age thinking and believing man applies himself to the question of God's Hand in history? There was a brief period, bounded roughly by the two world wars, in which people came to the conclusion, following many unsuccessful attempts definitely to identify God's Finger in history, that this cannot and should not be the historian's task since it is too high and too deep for him, and that he ought to confine himself instead to human relations. It is certainly striking that after a short period of such sober-minded insight a reaction has set in, not only among theologians—that would be understandable—but among philosophers and professional historians as well. I have in mind (leaving the foreign literature aside) the interesting discussions by G.C. Berkouwer and W. den Boer.³ It took courage—for a historian at least—to defend the so-called theocratic view; this is abundantly

clear from the sometimes violent criticism levelled against Den Boer's ideas. So there is nothing resembling a collective conviction; but there are signs — Den Boer's piece is one of them — of change. A look at the foreign literature would make that even clearer to us.

The old danger remains, however, that people will talk about God's Hand in history in terms of fragmentary divine acts rather than a sustained agency controlling and shaping the whole of history. Hence it is good to begin by considering the problems that have arisen in connection with God's guidance of world history.

From the outset until today, Christianity has had a strong sense of the close link between God and history. Of course, there have been important differences in the way people have conceived this link. In the Early and High Middle Ages, in the time of the Reformation, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in the nineteenth century as well — think only of Groen van Prinsterer — people had an eminently lively sense of direct divine action in history. In the Middle Ages until the heyday of Scholasticism, God was so much the focal point of historical sensibility that people really deemed every event an immediate act of God,⁴ so that history became a broken series of divine acts and their corollary, human acts directly linked to divine Providence. Far from being regarded as neutral, divine acts were considered bearers of God's justice. He chastened and He blessed. Prosperity indicated God's blessing and approval, while adversity, sickness, etc., were direct punishments for sin. God's Hand of retribution was especially visible in striking and surprising events. Now then, even in recent centuries, and for many Calvinists both before and after the French Revolution, prosperity as blessing, adversity as punishment, and the striking and surprising have persisted as the most salient elements of the conception of the Hand of God.

Undoubtedly, non-Christian religions, especially in Christian Antiquity and the Middle Ages, had a profound influence on these ideas. In the Germanic world, for example, the notion of immediate retribution in the human world by the gods was widespread; thus, famine led people to conclude that the divine force was no longer in the king. Here, however, we encounter an important difference from the common Christian view: in the Germanic world the persistent divine presence was couched in magical and mythical concep-

tions, so that the divine and human realms merged in the divine.

The Germanic world was not alone, however, in determining the medieval ideas. Medieval people also drew upon the Old Testament, or more precisely, upon certain portions of the Old Testament. Times without number they would appeal to Old Testament texts that directly link human deeds and divine judgments. In more recent centuries, too, the Old Testament has remained the principal source for the defense of fragmentary acts of direct divine retribution in history.

Side by side with the view I have just delineated, however, one encounters a distinct hesitancy to identify the Hand of God in such simple terms, even among those who otherwise have no qualms about interpreting reversals suffered by hostile forces as divine chastisement. Otto of Freising and Bernard of Clairvaux—surely not the least among those we could mention—at times experienced twinges of timidity in the face of the divine agency.

Yet such reserve was overshadowed time and again: in the light of the Old Testament many Christian writers found the purpose of the divine agency too plain to refrain from passing judgment.

Augustine, however, halted before the mystery of God in history. True, he often spoke of it in terms at odds with language that we would consider consistent with reverence before a mystery. His conception of history is decidedly theocentric. But what a profound difference there is between him and those who preceded him and followed him in holding this conception of history, as his models and his imitators! Augustine was aware of the limits of human knowledge and of the mystery in history precisely because he knew history has to do with God. He loved to quote texts from the Bible that refer to God's incomprehensibility. Augustine had a lofty view of the divine gift of happiness: God grants happiness only to the good, but because the good are indifferent to this world's goods, the happiness that possessions afford may fall to a person's lot (or not) without its being proof of divine approval, if only because perfect happiness is only attainable in the other world. In his fine study, *Die Hand Gottes in der Geschichte*, Heinz Müller correctly states that in Augustine happiness is not devalued but, on the contrary, "revalorized" (*aufgewertet*): happiness comes from God and, given the right spiritual attitude, returns to Him again.⁵ Not only is Augustine's conception richer in *content* when compared with the medieval and many modern, simplistic views; its *direction* is the one

in which I believe the solution to our problem will have to be sought. The striking thing about Augustine is that he was aware not only of the mystery in God Himself but also of the mystery in this world and the indissoluble connection between the two; that is, he knew that the mystery in history has its origin in the mystery of God.

The belief in the direct identifiability of God's Hand in history, however, became entangled in still other, no less serious difficulties. It is an undeniable fact that in the theology of history a sometimes scarcely concealed tension exists between the direct intervention of God in history and the mystery of the Incarnation. This seems rather odd, because God's coming in the flesh surely is the supreme instance of divine intervention. The early medieval view of history can help us to see where the difficulty lies. When a historical event is so heavily charged with divine judgment and when God Himself is the Sole Agent in history, Christ recedes into the background. Müller reports that in the sources he examined from the time of Salvianus to the days of the Investiture Controversy, little special mention is made of Christ.⁶ True, the mystery of Christ had not vanished, but the way to a clear view of the relation between this mystery and the divine agency had been cut off. Nor were medieval people the only ones who failed to overcome this difficulty. Bossuet and other modern writers also struggled with it.

A related problem is the following. People in the Early Middle Ages were only marginally prepared, if at all, to regard history as an indivisible whole. Otto of Freising is the one who took a decisive step towards apprehending the unity of history, and he was able to do so precisely because he related history to the Incarnation.⁷ No doubt this statement surprises you. Surely medieval historical thought was saturated with the idea of a single, universal history from Adam through Christ to the consummation of the ages? Indeed, but the medieval histories were often nothing more than a stringing together of facts; the very thing they lacked was insight into the interconnectedness of the facts, and into the intrinsic relatedness of historical events to Creation and Redemption. The acts of God—their immediate cause and operation aside—were commonly rehearsed in a disconnected way; the *perspective* of the one, total history was missing. What linked them was the constant presence of God in history.

We are confronted here by an aporia in the idea of God's direct agency in history, an aporia that is not restricted to medieval conceptions alone. How is it possible to uphold the idea of the unity of history if historical events are to be attributed entirely or in part to direct acts of God? One can argue that this unity is given with God Himself, since the very existence of world history, which is to say the reality of interconnections between the historical facts, is possible solely because all historical facts stand in relation to the One God. That the unity of history rests ultimately in God is clear, but how are we to understand the inner coherence of concrete events in the world? The usual solution is to approach the unity of world history with intramundane or worldly (*innerweltliche*) concepts—while the connections between the striking and surprising acts of God remain an unsolvable and often even unperceived problem.

However interesting all these different aspects of the subject may be, they do not form the heart of our discussion: the heart of it is to be found in the relation of divine Providence to the divine world-order. Many are immediately disposed to speak of continuity and harmony in this regard, so perhaps many an eyebrow will be raised when I say that from the earliest Christian times onward a latent or open tension, not to speak of a contradiction, existed between the two concepts. Again, to illustrate this I would refer to the Middle Ages. It is possible, of course, to equate the idea of the divine world-order with that of the Providence of God; but if the latter idea is taken to mean God's acting apart from the mediated agency of the world order—the immediate manifestation and assertion of His will in history—then it is clear that in the Middle Ages this idea is initially by far the predominant one and that it is not until the Investiture Controversy that the concepts of Providence and divine world-order begin to converge. A systematic elaboration of the relation between the two was accomplished by Scholasticism, in a form that has predominated in Roman Catholic philosophy to this day. On this view, divine Providence can assert itself in the historical process in two ways: *indirectly*, by making the forces and laws at work in the world-order expressions of the Divine will; and *directly*, through God's intervening immediately and supernaturally to give things a different turn than might have been anticipated in the natural course of events.⁸ For that matter, in Protestant circles too the idea of a twofold divine action in history has had a profound influence. Protestant writers, too, gladly employ the direct-indirect

scheme, at least to the extent that they accept the idea of a fragmentary (knowable) activity of God.

IN OUR EFFORTS to canvass the many baffling problems associated with the question of the Hand of God in history, we have already intimated the direction our critique will take. I shall mention just two reasons why I too find the traditional conception of the Finger of God in history unacceptable.

In the first place, our knowledge of the acts of God is thereby invested with something it cannot and may not have on earth. An immanent divine justice is ascribed to events—at least to certain ones—that anticipates God's final judgment. The advocates of the view in question like to appeal to the Old Testament, but it is precisely the Old Testament that pulls the ground out from under their conceptions. It is sufficient to cite the Book of Job and Psalm 73. In Job—such an important book for philosophy of history—God does not explain why He has visited so much misery on a just and pious man, but in a lengthy revelation He discloses who He is; and Job, when he has experienced God from so nearby, no longer needs an explanation: in the few words, "I have uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not . . . but now mine eye seeth Thee," Job conceals and reveals the true depth in the knowledge of the acts of God.⁹ Likewise, in Psalm 73[:17] the solution to the riddle of why the wicked prosper is found to lie not in any reasoned explanation but in acknowledging that God is God, and in appearing before God by going into the sanctuary. Not only the so-called acts of God but the whole of history discloses its full, authentic meaning only when God reveals Himself in His fullness. Therefore all events and all knowledge must be ruled by an eschatological desire to behold God as He is: and it is this fullness that remains hidden to this world, even to faith, although faith knows it exists and is kept for the Consummation.

Yet there is another, no less serious objection. The acceptance of some sort of supernatural divine intervention in the normal order of things entails acceptance of a split world-order and at the very least puts God in a dual relation to His Creation. This objection applies only in some degree to the vision of history of the Early Middle Ages, since in that epoch's theocentric world-picture, which is very clearly reflected even in the capitularies, there was scarcely any

room for the notion of autonomous intramundane causal relations. The Middle Ages are an eye-opener in this regard. In an evolution that required decades, in pamphlets and philosophical treatises, the notion arose that history can claim a certain independence, in the face of which God must withdraw into the background except insofar as He gives an indication of His presence in the direct supernatural act, in punishment and blessing. Eventually, on the mature Scholastic view, it was thought possible to distinguish within the cosmic order a part so well furnished by the Creator—is man's being not a finite participation in the divine Being?—that it could advance towards its goal in its natural, creaturely freedom along paths of its own, especially appointed, prepared, and maintained for it by God.

In later centuries and also in the Protestant line, this dual or, more accurately, dualistic relation of God to history in a mediated as well as in a supernatural causality manifested itself ever more clearly, with a result that was deplorable, as we shall see, on two counts: the process of history came to be viewed as autonomous; and the untenable pretension arose that in certain historical events God's judgment is discernible already today.

In both Roman Catholic and Protestant quarters, however, opposition arose—as I have already said—to such speculative and dualistic conceptions of the Hand of God, and especially to the unwarranted intrusion upon the mystery of God. The writings of Van Schelven and Bellon¹⁰ are landmarks in the effort of modern Christian historians to turn historical science away from divine to human matters: historical science and likewise the philosophy of history must no longer pay attention to “acts, plans, and thoughts of God” but must concern themselves instead with the historical order or with “human deliberations, human intentions, and human deeds.”¹¹ With that, dualism and speculation have vanished—or at least so it seems.

For, the believing historian continues to acknowledge with all his heart that God's guidance is determinative for the whole of history, that world history has its origin and end in Him and its meaning-endowing center in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, in his investigation of concrete historical facts and patterns, the believing historian derives little practical benefit from his confession of faith. If he works with it at all, the “abyss of blasphemy yawns before him,” in the sense that he as a mere historian “attributes his fallible human judgment to a higher power.”¹²

Yet here another abyss appears, just as unbridgeable and no less alarming. It is the abyss inside a person (pardon my imperfect metaphors) between the judgment of faith and the judgment of historical science. On the judgment of faith, God guides all things and, although transcendent, is intimately present in all things and events; on the judgment of historical science, God is there all right, having propelled history on its way and ever guiding it, but to the human understanding He Himself is very remote. Concretely the historian cannot do a thing with God. The great danger is that God ends up hovering high above our heads as history goes its own way according to its own laws and self-perception. For it must be recognized that if God is no longer regarded as *concretely* knowable in His acts, He recedes from our field of vision to the periphery of our existence, in spite of our *general* confession of His guidance. What we are left with is the historical order, its laws and events, and its human agents—indeed, it is from the latter that guidance now comes, to judge from our historical experience. God, however, has become a peripheral figure, as unsearchable and past finding out as ever, imponderable by historical science even as a mere factor.

Past and present; thinking, knowing and doing; sociology, economics, history and ever so many other sciences all converge in the same complex of problems, at the center of which is the presence of the divine mystery in reality. Important things are at stake, for the problem we have noted in the science of history likewise beset us, in a parallel and increasingly distressing way, in the ordinary practice of modern life.

And yet we ought to ask whether we do not touch upon problems here that are too high and too deep—whether we ought not to step back and let rest the connection between historical matters and the ultimate Why of God, which He alone can answer. Still, we have just seen what this scruple leads to: the worlds of God and of man gradually grow apart! And if then the relation between God and history is disappearing from the scientific mind as a reality accessible to human knowledge, I should like to draw it back into the scholarly debate—despite the abysses which then open—before the final decision falls.

For that matter, is the situation really all that hopeless? Admittedly, we have been compelled to conclude that the answer to the ultimate

Why is given only when one stands in the presence of God and hence presupposes the end of history. But that does not mean that in the interim God has kept silent about His presence. God has revealed Himself, and He has done so in a time when we know in part; but faith is proper to this time—and faith is precisely the mode of cognition that is the correlate of Revelation in the interim. And this Revelation has a lot to say about history; but what is no less important: the subject of God's revelations is always the relation of Himself to His creatures, which means that in the Bible there are fundamental statements about what is essential in *all* creaturely relations; sometimes the divine norm is imbedded in the simple story of a particular case. The Bible, as the common saying goes, is not a code of law—at least not in the modern technical sense—nor is it a textbook for any non-theological science. And that is correct. Yet this assertion does not foreclose a variety of responses. Conceivably, the Bible will now be left unopened entirely insofar as science is concerned; but it is also conceivable that people will now stop looking for particular texts to fit particular cases and go on instead to try to understand how what is foundational in any particular text applies to particular cases.

But you are forcing your way too rashly towards a solution, it will be objected from one quarter. And from another: the object of your study now becomes God Himself, whereas science should be concerned with the things He created, with structures and concrete historical events; naturally, you must proceed on the basis of the fact that God created all things and sustains all things in His Providence; in short, you should not study God Himself; rather, you should investigate His world. And then the end result will be a profound sense of awe at the mighty work of God.

There is a fundamental objection to be raised against all the conceptions I have related thus far, against the tendency among Christian historians to place the integral relation of God and man outside the terrain of scientific research and to assign it to faith. That objection is this: God is present in history. Historical science may be at a loss what to do with that fact and relegate God to a mode of cognition beyond the pale of science, to faith; but that does not rid it of the reality of God in the field of history. Only if God had done no more than create the world and furnish it in such a way that it could go its way without Him, or only if God should do no more than sustain the world extrinsically, only then would it be

feasible—yes, then indeed it would be possible—to imagine Him as being outside history; in that case it would make little difference whether we involved Him in our conceptions and ideas of the world or not. But what if God is intimately present in this world, if He acts in it from moment to moment and has related all things to Himself, how then would anyone be able to say anything true about history while leaving God out of account, content with some merely general confession of His Providential rule? Imagine someone writing a history of the Renaissance and systematically eliminating the aesthetic factor because it is too full of mystery: who would attach any value to the picture of the Renaissance that would emerge in that case? The analogy is faulty, I admit, but all the same, it makes a point: every historian strives to do justice to all the factors that are determinative for a historical event; why does he not show similar concern, then, for the Divine, which is more than a mere factor?

There are historians who have struck a compromise in these perplexing matters. They do speak of God in historical science, but then of a God who is accessible to rational understanding. In science such a God, the God of the philosophers, may still have a certain function because He does not differ radically from what people suppose they actually encounter in the field of history. Following this line, a “part” of the truth will suffice for other concepts as well: thus religious phenomena such as the church will then occur in science not in their religious depth but in their mundane aspect, while their full reality is accessible only to faith.¹³

But the God who acts in history is not the God of the philosophers. He is not an abstraction, but the living God. The corollary to this is that all things related to Him never appear in history except in their full religious dependence.

As we are now amply aware, if historical knowledge self-consciously abstracts from God's acts and the creature's response, then such a procedure has a profound effect on our historical experience. To abandon the traditional Christian notion of the perspicuity of God's ways in history means more than to cease to point out God's Hand in extraordinary events. The development of no one less than the historian Ranke is most illuminating here. It is well known that in his youth he harbored the desire to show the providential dealings of God concretely in history, to do his part in “deciphering the holy

hieroglyphic" (a metaphor that would have meant even more in 1820 than it does today).¹⁴ Later, however, Ranke shrinks from such statements, and although the consciousness of God's governance of the world remains strong in him, in his historical writings he restricts himself almost entirely to the "natural course of things" (*die natürliche Lauf der Dinge*) and to their interconnections; henceforth, what determines the course of history for Ranke is ideas and principles, worldly intellectual elements and the spirit underlying them, inscrutable inner forces, the inevitable course of things, the nature of the case, the natural trend of politics, etc.¹⁵ The transformation that we witness here is rather thorough. God continues to be background and, to Ranke's consciousness, the real actor; but now that the dynamics of history can no longer be attributed to God concretely, recourse must be had to some other agency: the intramundane phenomena are now charged with powers that actually belong to God or that function only in the direct relation between God and the world; once they are "reduced" to mundane forms they have to lose their divine character and be re-thought as worldly realities, which for all that continue clearly to betray their original force derived from the divine sphere. The historian, after all, cannot stop and let things rest: when God vanishes from the concrete, a great deal vanishes with Him, and to prevent the historical process from disintegrating into a multiplicity of elements, the historian must invoke as a stopgap (*Lückenbüßer*) the notion of natural processes based on immanent regularities.

Thus there must be a close connection between divine and worldly matters after all: for as soon as the divine is eliminated, at least insofar as concrete human knowledge is concerned, a substitute is needed in the human sphere.

But might not our problem (which in the meantime has perhaps become clearer but also more complicated) be brought closer to a solution if we interpreted the acts of God somewhat more precisely as the work of God in the history of salvation rather than as His work of fragmentary intervention in the form of the surprising and unusual event? For then we could speak with much greater clarity, namely, about God's coming in the flesh, about the guidance of the Holy Spirit, about the public presence of the Church on earth. Moreover, did Christendom in all ages not always regard the advent of Christ as the center of world history? Do we not find ourselves here upon the ground of facts and patterns that are

religious yet at the same time concrete? No, the "clarity" thus provided will not do, even if we leave aside the unwarranted polarity created in this way between the Providence of God and the work of Christ; for in connection with the centrality of the Incarnation of the Word—in the absence of which no salvation history can exist or be known—we encounter precisely the same difficulties that confronted us in identifying the Finger of God. Both involve the mystery of God; in both it is this mystery that imposes identical limits on our knowledge.

Whatever the angle of our approach to God, we encounter the mystery. Equally, whatever the angle of our approach to historical reality, we encounter the mystery; for God stands in such close relation to His world that as long as there is mystery in God there will be mystery in earthly existence. Think away the mystery of God, and the mystery of earth turns into a riddle. We shall let mystery be mystery.

Are we now compelled to admit the impotence of our knowledge after all, or at least of our scientific knowledge? But the mystery has come down into the worldly relations and has even entered into human knowing. This brings us to a crucial question, which I pose in all humility: Has science not gradually withdrawn from the reality of God to such an extent that it no longer possesses the organ needed to integrate the relation of God to His world into the questions it formulates for investigation? In this withdrawal do we not find the deepest ground of the estrangement of science from the mystery in intramundane relations? Again and again, any knowledge of God's guidance in history is assigned to faith—so this guidance is knowable after all—while patterns of historical causality are considered scientific affairs. If God's guidance were just a separate dimension of history, the combination of faith and science together would suffice to make history in its totality knowable. But God is by no means an added dimension, for He stands in relation to all of history. If then God is so intimately present in things, they can only be fully known when worldly knowledge embraces knowledge of the divine mystery. Is this mystery a prejudice? Not at all. Prejudice is a concept that arose to denote that which *precedes* rational thought. But that which faith tells us is an *integral part* of the fabric of scientific knowledge; and scientific judgment is correct and true only to the extent that it also incorporates what is known in other ways, in this case the way of faith. Or more precisely—to obviate the

impression that we are still thinking in terms of two distinct modes of cognition—faith is not an ornament added to knowledge acquired in another way, nor is faith a subjective prejudice that the historian is never quite able to doff; oriented to God and divine Revelation, faith is a conscious ingredient of the scientific method employed by the researcher to open up his “field.”

Christian thought often made the mistake of claiming the scientifically inexplicable part of the world for the domain of faith, with the fatal consequence not only that the area commanded by faith dwindled steadily before the triumphal progress of science, or at any rate came to depend on the scope of science, but also that people formed an altogether erroneous notion of the object of faith, of the divine and the intramundane mystery. Essentially, the mystery of faith vis-à-vis science was identified with what science had *not yet* disclosed. Incalculable damage was thereby done to faith and science alike!

But why in the world exclude faith from the scientific attitude if the relations of this world are characterized by religion? Reality itself demands a congenial method of approach as a prerequisite for full disclosure. For example, several distinct and separate approaches are commonly taken to the concrete historical event: by historical science, and by philosophy of history, and sometimes also by faith or theology. In this manner particular aspects of the historical event certainly can be illuminated, but it is a problem in itself how the fragmentary results thus obtained could ever reflect the full reality of the event.

TO SAVE TIME I have simply posited much of what I have said till now without adducing any further grounds for it. I believe, however, that a “re-ordering of the theory of knowledge”¹⁶ that takes its starting point in the recognition of the fundamental unity of the special sciences, philosophy, and faith affords a sound point of departure for acquiring a better understanding of the divine mystery in history.

It is worthy of note that in almost all great systems of philosophy of history, attention is given to the problem of suffering. Suffering is manifest in history: the extinction of whole peoples, massacres, wars, etc., have such a far-reaching influence on the life of the nations that they are necessarily granted a place in every con-

ception of history. Yet it is astonishing with what matter-of-factness this suffering is recorded. Sometimes a tragic situation is said to be brought about by the course of circumstances or the unavoidable confluence of historical factors; at other times (this is the form in which suffering most often appears in philosophy of history) suffering is made to find its justification in the broader perspective of history as the indispensable transition to a new age, to the happiness of future generations. Suffering has been granted its place, its meaning, in the totality of history and is caught in the nexus of phenomena and events. No sooner did historical science begin to secularize than an intramundane determination or meaning also had to be found for suffering. As Mircea Eliade says in his book, *The Myth of Eternal Return*, where a number of excellent pages are devoted to the problem of suffering in history, "If no transhistoric meaning emerges from the extinction of so many nations, from the mass deportations and massacres of the present time, suffering can only be the resultant of the blind play of economic, social and political forces."¹⁷ To pose the problem in its most acute form, I would add: How can the *individual* bear the suffering generated by the operation of historical powers if he has lost the prospect of a transhistoric world?

Does the question we raise here not apply, however, to *all* of history, to world history in its entirety, irrespective of the suffering inherent in it? In the great systems of philosophy of history suffering is justified again and again in terms of some immanent historical purpose. But, similarly, in these same conceptions all antecedent periods are judged in terms of a period to come, or else one period derives its meaning from another period, from the following one or the preceding one. Generally, earlier periods are regarded as transitional phases or preparatory stages for later ones and ultimately for the ideal time that history is presumably advancing towards or that is about to "dawn." The achievements of earlier times are then assessed either negatively as darkness before the daybreak or positively as preludes, but in both cases they are measured not by the yardstick derived from the nation, culture or period to which the achievements belong but by the significance they have for other times and cultures that sooner or later will set the tone in history.

It is the cyclical theory especially that has resisted this conception. On the cyclical view, every culture develops according to its own law, finding its standard and meaning not in the values of other

cultures but entirely within itself. What is the result? Both the cyclical and historicistic views of world history fragment that world history in order to preserve for each culture its own proper value. Furthermore, these views can apprehend the substance of cultures other than those to which they are native only at the price of inner contradiction.

Now, this resistance to ascribing meaning to a part of history or to a historical event in terms of an ultimate meaning of history has contributed to a denial of the idea of world history as such, or at least to a denial of any transhistorical meaning by means of which the multiplicity of events and phenomena would be forged into an *intrinsically* coherent whole. Currently, every notion of a universal history whose inner coherence and meaning would be derived from metahistory is met by fierce resistance from many sides. People have committed themselves instead to the idea of the historical event or pattern that is determined exclusively by intramundane forces. They still grant the concept of world history a certain acceptance, but not in terms of a unity that transcends history. Rather, world history is conceived of as a plurality of cultural "encounters," as an arena for "dynamic interactions" (*Wirkungszusammenhänge*)¹⁸ which admit of empirical discovery independent of theological and speculative philosophical preconceptions and which present themselves to the technical historian in the specific form of world-historical situations. Alternatively, the starting point is the unique historical fact whose meaning is not externally imposed by rationality but is internally present, radiating outward with irruptive force. So conceived, history itself forges unity from the world's events and forms the arena for the various "intersecting meanings" (*sens entrecroisés*).¹⁹

I am fully aware that a perplexing dilemma confronts us here. Thévenaz even speaks of a 'Copernican revolution' in philosophy of history. The irreconcilable polar opposites appear to be the following. *Either* history derives its meaning from some transhistoric realm, or from a certain ideal age in which transhistoric meaning has already come to reside or towards which it impels its treasures to their full unfolding; in which case world-historical unity and coherence are not guaranteed by extrinsic factors and consequently are not at every moment in jeopardy either (in fact, they are even proof against ruptures and revolutions); albeit all this is achieved only at the cost of having the elements of history sacrifice their own

intrinsic value, since they must suffer themselves to be measured against either transhistoric norms or else against immanent historic standards regarded as absolute. *Or*, with the rejection of every notion of world history, both Christian and secular, the intrinsic value of the historical event, culture, or period as such is safeguarded well enough, but the really crucial question of how the events ever come to be connected—of how it is still possible that they should link up with each other, of how historical complexes are woven into a single, unified tapestry—is ignored.²⁰

Moreover, does the denial of transhistorical unity in world history truly rescue the unique value of the periods and cultures? And if it does, if this unique, this immanent historical meaning in the patterns and events themselves is indeed secured, can history then still be known, and can it be endured?

Our discussions of suffering and world history have clearly revealed the extent to which the recognition of a transmundane, divine world affects the conception of history. One of the main approaches being taken in contemporary philosophy of history is to rethink the problems of history in terms of intramundane elements exclusively. To be sure, this Copernican revolution is an assault on rationalistic schemes of history in the first place, but it is certainly also aimed at the Christian belief in a transhistorical meaning in history.

But all these problems apply to the *philosophy* of history, someone will say. They are of no concern to history as a special *science*. Of course philosophy of history has to deal with things divine at one point or another, but surely technical history is concerned with suffering and world-historical patterns only to the extent that these can be established and explained empirically. The professional historian today is able to note to his surprise and great satisfaction that a number of schools in philosophy of history have arrived at precisely the conclusion that historical science has held to for more than a century: namely, at empirically verifiable inner coherences and at concrete events whose meaning is completely self-contained and in no way dependent on the intrusion of some Absolute.

Now indeed, an important difference undoubtedly persists between historical science and philosophy of history in connection with the rejection of any transmundane meaning in history: the latter is

moved primarily by considerations of principle while the former is prompted chiefly by methodological concerns. But let us have a look at the implications of the disavowal of transmundane meaning in the historical facts—regardless whether it originates in philosophy or in historical science—both for concrete historical facts themselves and for empirical coherences.

Mircea Eliade, in the work I have just mentioned, has spoken of the *terror* of history. Does he perhaps mean by it decay and transience; things changing beyond recognition; people continually being driven from their familiar historical surroundings? Or is he alluding to the *via dolorosa* of the nations? That too, certainly, but in speaking of the terror of history it is history as such that he has in mind, quite apart from the misery and devastation it brings. *Can man endure history if it is nothing more than an immanent historical process?* Eliade's question is pertinent and decisive. It might well have been posed in the nineteenth century—in fact it was posed then, but at that time people were still too preoccupied with a happy future, and too expectant of what the inner dynamics of history would bring forth, to dwell very long on such perplexities. Even when “philosophy of life” captured the minds of many and unrestrained historicism began to pave the way for relativism, people still held on to their belief in some “creative formation” whereby one generation bequeathes an enlarged and enriched heritage to another. However, when, from whatever cause, the idea of progress lost its charm, people were left with nothing but complex yet bare facts and mere interconnections, world-historical in character or not. The modern consciousness was confronted by the very thing that historical science had produced via empirical methods—produced, that is to say, to the extent that historical science had observed its self-imposed limits. The resulting situation was soon reflected in the “philosophy of existence,” which in many respects speaks a language in these matters that modern man can identify with for his own attitude towards history. Modern man feels more intensely all the time that he is pitted against history as against an alien power that threatens him even when it comes bearing promising possibilities and progress. History no longer speaks to modern man, and he no longer identifies with it. Yet he cannot escape the flux of history, which is so intrinsically alien to him, because in essence he is history himself. At best, he can *try*, in the existential moment, to free himself from historical relativity for the

sake of some absolute value. The flux of history is not eliminated, but it survives only as a secondary reality surrounding him like a prison.

An extremely complex situation has grown out of all this. In a process lasting decades, man has attempted to free himself of the transhistorical ties that determine the purpose of his life from without; and now that he has gained the freedom he desired, mundane reality bereft of transhistorical meaning frightens him. To be sure, this feeling of being threatened by history is not universal. Yet one may not counter the above characterization by pointing to the great love that many still have for history. No, what causes men so much anxiety is the fact that in his deepest being he himself belongs to history and no longer has the possibility of rising above it.

Those who have followed our discussion of man's alienation from history attentively and who have noted that the root of the problem is the dearth of a transhistorical meaning might conclude that the perplexities and terrors of history are merely a problem for philosophy of history and not for historical science. That would be an obvious conclusion, especially given the technical historian's impression that it is the philosophers of history with their preconceived schemes who rack history on a Procrustean bed and put human personality in a predicament. Yet such a conclusion would be decidedly incorrect. The aporias and terrors of history also concern historical science. In fact, it is not impossible that technical history is at least partly to blame for the terror of history. For is it not remarkable that the immanent-historical events, which increasingly form the starting point of the contemporary philosophy of history, bear a strong resemblance to the empirical data with which historical science has always worked? It is precisely in those concrete historical facts, established by an ever more sophisticated and perfected historical method, that the menace in history first accosts us. The menace in question could not emerge until the transcendent background of history, which was still present even in the secularized versions of Christian values, receded. As long as man still knew himself to be one with the ultimate ground of the universe, he could feel secure in history; he could trustingly surrender himself to its march, even when the familiar course of things would be interrupted.

History's threat to man arises from his having fallen prey to

historicity and hence from his being alienated from history as the consequence of that reduction.

Still, how can historical science possibly be held co-responsible for this? One often hears it said that historical science is concerned with establishing facts, and then not isolated facts but facts that are so interwoven that empirical knowledge of them necessarily entails a knowledge of their interconnections as well. Thus whenever a historian wishes to know a fact, he turns not to an isolated atom in historical reality but to a datum integrated by virtue of innumerable ties in a more comprehensive whole. He seeks to identify the causal relations of historical phenomena or, more broadly speaking, to account for their conditioned character. For according to the prevalent scientific view, such phenomena are determined by a great many factors and circumstances, determinants which do not exert their influence *arbitrarily* and *haphazardly* but which are themselves in turn integrated in well-ordered patterns or, as the more recent version would have it, basic "structures." Man is conditioned not only from without, by an intricate web of economic, political, social, religious, physical, and other causal factors, occasions, and influences, but also from within: his thoughts and actions are also affected, for example, by his psychic structure. Moreover, an historical event, conditioned in this way and having man as the agent, in turn exerts an influence on other circumstances and historical entities. Thus the conclusion arrived at by historical science (in collaboration with other sciences) is that things, events and people not only are determining factors in their own right but also are enclosed, integrated, and given direction by and in a formidable network of forces and powers, of structures and systems. The historian is extremely resourceful in his attempts to capture the conditioned character of historical events in words: "because," "on account of," "the result being," "with the inevitable consequence," etc. etc., are just a few of the expressions employed.

Meanwhile, the world of history is not yet closed, for in the twentieth century historians realize better than they did in the nineteenth that perfect understanding of life's extreme complexity is beyond the capacity of human knowledge. Historians often optimistically nurtured the hope that time would bring a solution for unresolved historical problems, such as the causes of the rise of towns in the Middle Ages or of the Eighty Years' War. That is, it was hoped that with the increase in the source materials the patterns

would become clearer to us. The outcome was often the reverse. The more comprehensive our knowledge of a historical phenomenon became, the more complicated it appears to us, and as a rule the problems increased proportionately in number.

But not only did historians acquire a lively sense of the limitations of human insight into the conditioned character of historical phenomena; at the same time, they hastened to reassure themselves over and over again that a nexus of historical causality does not function like a law of nature and that human freedom would not be impaired by it—in fact, that human freedom is gradually being enhanced, especially as the result of improving social conditions.

For all the sincerity of such words, they have not alleviated the gravity of science's predicament and man's plight: following a purely scientific approach, scholars have reached the conclusion that man is caught in a web of factors, influences, and systems, partly knowable and partly unknowable, partly rational and partly irrational.

This, then, is the real threat posed by the course of history; this is the terror of which Eliade spoke. When a Christian looks at history, he too sees historical facts, their connections, their apparent inevitability; but he also senses, if only dimly, that there is no power in the historical facts themselves but rather that they are ordained by God and form part of His purposeful plan. In secularized thought, however, facts possess meaning and power by virtue of their mere existence. Granted worth in their own right, they acquire compelling force *vis-à-vis* other facts and even in regard to man himself. They are autonomous power plants furnished with equipment that belongs (I say it reverently) to God alone, powers that bear down upon people and things along avenues of causality and influence and, in their mysterious anonymity, overwhelm them and reduce them to subservience. We are not talking about disasters and calamities or such excesses as despotism, tyranny, revolution, deportation but about ordinary, inconspicuous—morally, legally, juridically, socially, or economically warranted—facts, facts which may even mean prosperity and happiness. The terror of history does not arise from evil in the usual sense but from the fact that man is subject to the historical course of events.

Does this not entail disparagement of the world-order? Is it not denied here that the things God made were good? No, but what happens is that, once the elements of the world-order and the structures are removed from the relation to God, all one has left are the

things themselves. Whatever worth and meaning they have is then self-contained; they are then entirely self-determined. Now then, man increasingly experiences a history furnished like that as an alien and hostile world.

Oddly enough, as the conviction gained ground in science that historical facts are intramundanelly conditioned in character (a conviction that often went hand in hand with the idea that God cannot be known concretely in history) many failed to realize that the circle of influences and patterns nevertheless cannot be fully closed—that breaks occur in the continuity of historical reality. Some examples will suffice to make my meaning clear.

Few historians will deny that there was a causal relation between the assassination of the archduke of Austria and the outbreak of the First World War. There are differences of interpretation, but they pertain to the relation of this factor to other factors leading to the war. And yet, neither the assassination of the archduke nor any other factor, nor even all factors combined, made World War I compellingly necessary. What remains inexplicable is precisely *the fact that* the assassination had that consequence. The empirically observed connection between cause and effect, between the elements of a pattern, could have been broken. *The question now becomes that of the ground of the possibility both of the rise of the pattern and of the pattern's being broken.* It is beginning to look probable that the connection between cause and effect, that the quality or state of being conditioned, in the broadest sense of the word, is wrapped in mystery—although to the mind of many there is at this of all points no mystery, but at most incompleteness in our knowledge. As I see it, divergence in the explanations advanced for a phenomenon is able to arise because of the break between cause and effect: the diversity of opinions is possible not only because of the complicated nature of a phenomenon but more especially because the lines that link the factors to the outcome pass through an area where cause is transformed into effect.

I want to refer to another example. In studying the Carolingian Renaissance we can ascribe its inception to many influences, but ultimately we shall have to ask ourselves in amazement how in the world it was possible that such a thing as the Carolingian Renaissance should ever have arisen. Here, too, after all, the great problem is precisely the question how all these influences were able to give rise to this particular phenomenon.²¹

Summarizing, we conclude: in the transformation of the causes into the consequence, in the transition from influence to effect there lies for consequence and effect alike—I speak, as ever, anthropomorphically—the possibility of deliverance from the compelling force of circumstances.

Is it possible that the constant breaks in the patterns of history on the one hand, and deliverance from history's terror on the other, have something to do with each other?

Two things are simultaneously true of man: he is surrounded by and integrated in overpowering patterns of systems, structures, influences, etc.; and he transcends the intramundane relations. Man is elevated above the interplay of worldly forces by a transcendent power, by the Transcendent One, by God, and thus he is directed towards the Transcendent One. In religion, understood as the relation between the living God and the creature, man cannot be touched by the relations of this world. There is something in man that transcends them. However much the facts may seem to man's mind to be charged with divine power, or with transcendent forces transformed into the mundane, and however much they may seem in their self-contained meaning to hold sway over worldly relations, in reality man in one respect at least is permanently beyond their reach. It is in this region of transcending security in the relation with the Transcendent One that human freedom and responsibility reside. This transcending of the intramundane relations is valid and real both for those who believingly acknowledge the Transcendent One and for those who disesteem Him or carelessly pass Him by. *Even in rebellious apostasy man is kept by God in the transmundane relation* and can be called to account in it.

My formulations could give the impression that only a certain sector is beyond the reach of the mundane. Yet my position is not that at all. I hold rather that the total man and in him the whole of history is comprehended in the liberating transcendental relation.

None the less, is the freedom in the transcendental relation, the release from the intramundane conditioned character of things, not contradicted by the experience of common sense and science alike that man remains entangled in the intramundane relations and subject to the irresistible historical facts, and that systems, institutions, and powers are constantly expanding their sway over life?

Simple recognition that man transcends historical relations is therefore not an adequate solution; to escape the grip of the intramundane, to break away from the absolute conditionedness of things, it is necessary to deprive the mundane of that which enables it to acquire power over this world and all it contains in the first place: historical facts and the mundane must be deprived of that which makes them mundane and factual, namely, their autonomy, their possessing power and meaning in and of themselves.

As God alone can lift man above the intramundane relations into the transcendental relation, so Christ alone can disarm things as such of the absoluteness with which they assert themselves. Piercing to the root, Christ speaks in the Gospel of breaking through the continuous, horizontal course of events and historical patterns, and of putting an end to the independent power of the facts. He does so in the Sermon on the Mount when He condemns the ordinary attitude of concern, of thought for the things that are so important to earthly relations, and in its place puts concern for the Kingdom. He does so, too, when He makes severing family ties and forsaking life's most intimate relationships conditional for entering the Kingdom.²² People have often blunted Jesus' words by limiting their scope to a particular category of persons or to the private sphere; but Christ demands precisely that we forsake and hate the very things that play an elementary role in historical relations as well. People have also undertaken to deprive Jesus' words of their radical character by accommodating them to other passages of Scripture that speak of the claims of love and of cherishing life. Yet this interpretation too obscures what the Incarnation has brought clearly to light. Normally, people think of things as having value even apart from God, as they supply needs and give satisfaction. Now, this is what Christ came to put an end to. The condition for coming to God is to forsake natural relations as these assert themselves as self-reliant and self-determining, independently of God.

Perhaps someone will object by pointing to the fact that the world God made was good and that He preserved its ordinances through the Fall—including matrimony and the family (which the demand to hate father and mother seems to destroy). Yet this is precisely the fact that the ordinances have availed themselves of to constitute themselves independently of God and in defiance of Him, to give man satisfaction, and to supply his needs! It is not excesses in matrimony and family or in any other human relations nor

any overstepping of their bounds that Christ denounces, but intramundane relations as they conform to the standards of organized society. Christ challenges their autonomy and self-sufficiency.

Things, historical relations, need constantly to constitute themselves anew, to emerge afresh, divested of that which was hitherto essential in them. And so historical facts and patterns reappear, emptied of their intrinsic self-importance and hence also of their menace and preponderance over man. In passing from self-contained power to divine mercy, the facts acquire a new direction: it is the directedness towards God which according to Augustine determines the essence of man and rules the course of history: "*Fecisti nos ad Te*"—Thou hast made us for Thyself.²³ Christ's words indicate that this directedness towards God does not by-pass the ordinances and facts but rather appropriates them. That is why it was feasible for me to speak of historical things in anthropomorphic terms: their autonomy and self-constitutive capacity stems from their relation to man; yet in this same relation they are the object of divine renewal. If facts are indeed constituted only in the relation to the Transcendent One, then it is no longer possible to understand the intramundane relations without taking this relation into account.

WE HAVE TRAVELLED a long way—a thorny, roundabout way, some may say—to reach a conclusion that can be stated in a few words: history involves more than intramundane conditionedness; it involves also the relation to God. But this statement is couched in terms that are too quantitative and too spatial. It is a real question, though, whether words will ever be able to express the depth to which the transcendental relation penetrates historical relations. The fact that the transcendental relation is constitutive of the facts entails the following in any case: in their intramundane determinedness the facts, from within as well as from without, are at the same time determined and given direction from the transmundane, divine world.

By way of a double denial—on the one hand, of fragmentary, supernatural acts of God; on the other, of a historical science restricted chiefly to intramundane relations—we have arrived at historical facts and relations that do not constitute themselves except in their relation to God, whether negatively by asserting themselves as absolute²⁴ or positively by affirming, in the divine-human *metanoia*, the transcendental relation.

It is with such facts and relations that the historian is confronted, whether as a philosopher of history or as a technical historian. It is the historian's task to re-think the philosophical problems raised by history in terms of the interlocking of intramundane and transhistorical reality. I have in mind problems such as the unity of world history, historical causality, historical periodization, and the role of great personalities in history—a question Huizinga brought to a new stage when [in answer to the question by what earthly standard we can take the measure of saints] he proposed measuring their influence, via the holy, against a superlunary yardstick.²⁵ Nor should we neglect to mention that Roman Catholic thinkers too are girded to take a fresh look at these phenomena from the perspectives of their relation to God and their transcendental directedness towards the Absolute. Especially worthy of mention in this regard are the studies of Bellon²⁶ and Kwant.²⁷ Common to their standpoint and ours is the rejection of any purely intramundane form of transcendence; our ways part where they adopt a natural theology as background and the doctrine of participation as their starting-point: we do not share the idea that the finite participates in the divine Being.²⁸ Furthermore, the transcendental relation as they deal with it is made fruitful too exclusively for philosophy of history; it is doubtful whether on their conception the special sciences, which investigate the actual coming to be [of phenomena], can do justice to the presence of a religious relation in created reality.

It will not be enough, for example, for the technical historian to heed the signs of the times and shift his emphasis from national history today to supranational and world-historical aspects tomorrow; or to transfer his attention from political to cultural and economic factors or to the structures in history. However momentous such shifts may be and however importantly they may alter our picture of history in the long run, they are never anything more than intramundane relativizations of the sort we have so long been accustomed to and which generally result in setting up some recently discovered or newly appreciated factor as an absolute. No, what I have in mind is this: What are the implications of the fact that, say, economic life is determined not just by intramundane but also by transmundane reality? And what does it mean, to suggest another question, that the national element—I do not say excessive nationalism—no longer holds autonomous sway?

Here, problems are disclosed to which I wish to devote myself from now on. Without a firm conviction and fervency, that will not be possible. Above all, it is necessary that God should preserve me from love of the world, fear of difficulties, and premature satisfaction with any results obtained.

I know that the desire to practice science in such intimate relation to God involves the risk of losing sight of the truly divine. Nevertheless, I adhere to Blondel's words: God must not be left out of our affirmations of the concrete.²⁹

[*The inaugural lecture, as is the custom, concluded with the following personal addresses*]

Members of the Board of Directors: I am profoundly grateful for your willingness to appoint me to this office. It is a privilege and joy for me to be appointed in *this* University, which through its bond with the Christian religion creates the condition for pursuing scholarship *in freedom*. It fills me with great thankfulness that I can devote myself completely to scholarly studies from now on.

From the lecture I have just delivered, the ideals with which I assume my office will be clear to you. You could hardly have assigned me a more attractive combination of disciplines. At the same time, I am well aware that the combination is a risky one and that I shall have to be careful to provide no occasion for suspicion. For more than a century now relations between historians and philosophers of history have been markedly poor, and although there have been some signs of rapprochement in recent years, the technical historian continues to be afraid that the philosopher will do violence to the facts and the philosopher of history continues to fear that the technical historian will ignore the deeper historical patterns that are not subject to direct empirical verification. Although to my way of thinking this old antagonism rests on a misunderstanding and historical science and philosophy are so intimately related that the one cannot be pursued in the absence of the other, I do take it seriously. I interpret your assignment to mean that I am to work to the best of my ability to contribute to the termination of this conflict.

Members of the Board of Curators: It is only now, at the start of my work here, that I realize more fully the responsibility you have laid upon me. If someone were to ask me what guarantee I have to prove myself worthy of the trust you have placed in me, my answer would be: neither this University nor myself have ever lacked the faithfulness and help of Almighty God.

Professors, of the Faculty of Letters in particular: It was your wish to see me in your midst as the successor to Professor Goslinga. Some of you are my former teachers; to some of you I am bound as well by ties of friendship. Not only from them, but from all of you, I will experience spontaneously the cordiality, helpfulness and cooperation I so very much need.

Esteemed Professor Goslinga: I am not your successor in the strict sense of the

word, but my appointment was possible because you made room for it. I rejoice that you, my mentor, worked for my appointment and for the teaching assignment that satisfies my desires completely. *Noblesse oblige*: your meticulousness as a scholar and your intimate ties with the traditions of Calvinism impose upon me obligations that are not light but that I accept with joy.

Esteemed Professor Smitskamp: In you I greet my former thesis supervisor, my predecessor in this chair, and starting today my closest colleague. The line dividing our respective areas of work is to be — I expect to the satisfaction of both of us — not 1648 but 1500. Across this new boundary we will extend hands in a cordial collegiality that will be sustained by a deeper spiritual unity, even when our insights differ — and when does that not occur in the pursuit of science? Inexperienced as I am in organizational matters, I know I can rely on you for guidance.

Esteemed Professor Vollenhoven: The second part of my assignment in particular, the theory of history, will bring me into close contact with you. The way has been prepared in the preceding years, when ties of friendship and trust developed between us. To you and to Professor Dooyeweerd I owe a great debt of gratitude, since you two especially were the ones who opened to me the prospect of the possibility of Christian scholarship.

Members of the Board of Governors of the Doctor Abraham Kuyper Foundation, Dear Mr. Groen: At my departure from the Kuyper Institute, there was a difference, as it turned out, in our evaluations of the manner in which I had fulfilled my task there. I am pleased to think that in the future I shall have ample opportunity to bridge the difference then noted by helping to advance the purpose of the Foundation with the results of my study.

This day is also not without its shadow. Neither of my parents was permitted to live to see it. Mother passed away just a few months before the appointment was announced. But I fervently desire that what lived in them will live in me: warm love towards God, a strong sense of history, an interest in the deeper questions of life.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Student Body: The days are evil for history. From many sides we hear of cavalier interpretation of the sources, of a critical decline in philological exactness, and of diminishing respect for historical facts. Moreover, the freedom of philosophy of history is in serious jeopardy because it is being chained to sociology or compelled to dabble in futurology. But what poses the greatest threat to history is the new idea of progress, which suggests we have arrived in an entirely new age, and the modern sense of the generation gap, which drives a wedge not only between past and present but also between teacher and pupil.

In spite of all these foreboding signs, or rather because I know a wealth of spiritual resources are at stake here, I ask for your trust, your unfolding interest, your youthful enthusiasm, your warm love for a past in which much lovelessness, injustice, and cruelty occurred, and lastly and above all, a spirited effort also on your part to pursue our discipline from the heart of the Christian religion.

My heart is filled with suspense. Will there always be, even at this University, that disinterested interest in both medieval history and philosophy of history which is an indispensable condition for the study of both? I consider it a matter of honor for this University to pursue its own distinctive path in medieval studies, that is to say, in the study of a world from which it would seem on the surface to be separated by a greater spiritual distance.

Insofar as philosophy of history is concerned, you will surely not, and may not, expect me to force my insights upon you. My heart's desire is to make you aware of the great issues with which history confronts us and to be allowed to lead you to the place where the unassailable starting-point for our discipline is to be found.

Thank you.

Notes

1. [See Volume 2 of the present publication: *The Relation between Christianity and History in the Present-day Roman Catholic Conception of History*.]
2. [Thesis XVI, citing Robert J. Fruin, "Over de dubbele ebbe in het jaar 1672" (On the double ebb tide in the year 1672), in *Verspreide Geschriften*, vol. 9 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1904), pp. 161-72.]
3. G.C. Berkouwer, *De Voorzienigheid Gods* [The providence of God] (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1950), pp. 190-228; Eng. trans. by Lewis B. Smedes, *The Providence of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), pp. 161-87. W. den Boer, *Benaderbaar verleden* [Accessible past] (Leiden: Universitaire Pers, 1952), pp. 60ff.
4. See especially Heinz Müller, "Die Hand Gottes in der Geschichte. Zum Geschichtsverständnis von Augustinus bis Otto von Freising" [The hand of God in history: On the understanding of history from Augustine to Otto of Freising] (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hamburg, 1949); and Paul Rousset, "La croyance en la justice immanente à l'époque féodale" [The belief in immanent justice in the feudal period], *Le Moyen-Age* 54 (1948): 225-48.
5. Müller, p. 11.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
8. See F. Sawicki, *Geschichtsphilosophie* [Philosophy of history] (Munich and Kempten: J. Kösel, 1920), pp. 173-74, 183-87.
9. Job 42:3, 5.
10. A.A. van Schelven, "Geschiedeniswetenschap en Voorzienigheidsgeloof" [Historical science and belief in Providence], *Almanak van het Studentencorps aan de Vrije Universiteit, 1924*, pp. 81-88; K.L. Bellon, *Wijsbegeerte der geschiedenis* [Philosophy of history] (Antwerp and Amsterdam: Standaard-Boekhandel, 1953), pp. 251-360.
11. Van Schelven, p. 86n.
12. J.H. Thiel, review of *Benaderbaar verleden*, by W. Den Boer, in *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 66 (1953): 249.
13. See H.F. Kearney, "Christianity and the Study of History," *The Downside Review* 67 (1949): 62-73.
14. Leopold Ranke to his brother Heinrich, late March 1820, Walther Peter Fuchs, ed., *Das Briefwerk* (Hamburg: Hoffman & Campe, 1949), p. 18: "diese heilige Hieroglyphe (zu) enthüllen." [Hieroglyphic writing was not completely deciphered until 1822. — Ed.]
15. See F. Baethgen, "Zur geistigen Entwicklungsgeschichte Rankes in seiner Frühzeit" [Ranke's early intellectual development], in *Deutschland und Europa: Festschrift für Hans Rothfels* (Düsseldorf, 1951), pp. 337-53.

16. See J. Münzhuber, "Erkenntnis und Glaube" [Knowledge and belief], *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 3 (1948): 73.
17. M. Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour* (Paris, 1949), p. 222 [Eng. trans. by Willard R. Trask, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York, 1954), p. 151].
18. Cf. e.g. Hans Freyer, "Das Problem der Einheit der Weltgeschichte" [The problem of the unity of world history], in *Philosophische Vorträge und Diskussionen: Bericht über den Mainzer Philosophen-Kongress* (Wurzach, [1948]), pp. 180-84.
19. Pierre Thévenaz, "Événement et historicité" [Event and historicity], in *L'homme et l'histoire; Actes du VIe Congrès des Sociétés de Philosophie de langue française* (Paris, 1952), pp. 217-25, esp. 224.
20. Nicolai Hartmann not unsurprisingly declared, at the same congress to which Hans Freyer presented his ideas, that he could not share the latter's optimism.
21. Cf. Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1949), pp. 93-112 [= ch.5: "Providence and the Historical Process"].
22. Matt. 6:25-34; Mark 10:29, 30; Luke 14:26.
23. Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1.
24. To avoid all possibility of misunderstanding, I want to emphasize that not just the Christian world but all peoples, cultures, and historical phenomena are of importance to the Christian historian, for all are lifted above historical causality and kept in the transcendental relation—the Gentiles in spite of themselves (cf. Matt. 6:32 ["For after all these things do the Gentiles seek"]).
25. Johan Huizinga, "Historische grootheid" [Historical greatness] (1940), in vol. 7 of *Verzamelde Werken* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, 1950), p. 217.
26. K.L. Bellon, *Wijsbegeerte der geschiedenis*; idem, "Onder welke voorwaarden is de wetenschap der geschiedenis mogelijk?" [Under what conditions is the science of history possible?], *Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 15 (1953): 163-78.
27. R.C. Kwant, "De historie en het absolute" [History and the absolute], *Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 17 (1955): 255-305.
28. [On the doctrine of participation, see Volume 2 of the present publication, Introduction and Chapter 1.]
29. [On Blondel, see Volume 2 of the present publication, Chapter 6, section 5.] [Brief reviews of "The Divine Mystery in History" appeared, among other places, in *Anti-revolutionaire Staatskunde* 25 (1955): 310-16; *Bijdragen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 10 (1956): 249-50; *Canon Gestorum Scripturae* 8 (1956): 10-14; *Historische Zeitschrift* 184 (1957): 662; *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 79 (1957): 331; *Sola Fide* 10 (1956/57): 17-22; *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 17 (1955): 738; and *Vox Theologica* 26 (1956): 160-61. — Ed.]

The Character of the Middle Ages

[1958]

FOR MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED and fifty years now, scholars have been busy exploring the medieval world. Yet, despite an impressive stream of publications, Régine Pernoud was recently compelled to observe in her *Lumière du Moyen-Age* that this period is still the least known part of Western history.¹

Think of it! More than one hundred and fifty years of intensive investigation and still, deficient knowledge.

Is there a clear reason for that? Is it perhaps the case that medieval culture offers us so much resistance that we cannot penetrate it?

I am disposed to answer this question initially in the affirmative. After all, the external approaches already are hard going. There are few periods in history that require such extensive study of the auxiliary sciences. In the best known centers of Western European medieval studies, the youthful researcher is required to spend years practicing the auxiliary sciences alone. Many medievalists devote practically their entire life to these ancillary studies without getting to medieval culture itself. Now, it must be conceded that when people work in the auxiliary sciences, where they deal with documents, calligraphy, old script, seals, and the like, they can already gain a deep insight into the thought and aspirations of this culture.

Yet there is another, stronger source of resistance: the medieval world is so utterly different from that of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The spirit of the two periods is entirely different. The Middle Ages afford a strongly varied range of phenomena and are even rich in contradictions, but there is one characteristic common to the medieval world as a whole: it is religious through and through, even where it has been unable to give concrete shape to the religious "factor."

In contrast to this are the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I do not want to argue now about whether they are a-religious. I wish to observe—and it will not be denied—that the religiosity of these centuries is in many respects a different religiosity. Undoubtedly there is tremendous diversity in the religiosity of modern times, but the predominant feature is that religion—by which I mean the relation of the divine to this world—concerns a mere compartment of life: and this is something that was unknown in the Middle Ages, when even humor, as Régine Pernoud shows, was of a Christian cast because it found its source in the omnipotence of God.²

The modern science that is being brought to bear on medieval history is itself a child of its times, if only because it strives to purify itself of the religious element as much as possible, relegating it to its own compartment. How can a science that has self-consciously divested itself of a fundamental relation ever hope to learn the truth concerning medieval culture, which is suffused with this relation?

Now, I do not want to overlook a change that may be taking place. Among active scholars there are a few who, in conscious resistance to the spirit of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have undertaken to stress the element of worldview in medieval attitudes.

When one places the current works on medieval culture side by side and compares them with each other—for example, Régine Pernoud's book and the works of Philipp Funk—then one is tempted to ask, "Are you both discussing the same culture?" We would soon be reassured, however, for they both talk about the Gothic and about courtly love and they both acknowledge that Pope Urban II died in 1099.

This is far from being the only division between medieval historians. The field fairly bristles with diverging interpretations.

Finally, is this unusual? Surely wherever science is at work there emerges a diversity of hypotheses and conflicting opinions?

Yet, I would venture to say that in the case of the medieval world, the harvest has been exceptional.

And now I come to the second source of resistance. This one is not *originally* present in medieval culture; rather, it is more in the nature of resistance to the way in which the modernist approaches it. Let me try to make this clear with the following figure: as an open blossom closes for protection against coolly wafting evening breezes, so do the Middle Ages wrap their garments close about them against the cold stare of alien spectators.

Of course, there are many ways of looking at the Middle Ages that reveal a lack of understanding in the beholder. Allow me to mention two: that of the person who judges history in terms of progress, and that of the one who measures it by its significance for his own time. Both attitudes exist. In both cases, the measuring stick is one's own time or the future.

True, it is often held that while the nineteenth century did think in categories of progress, that particular approach has long since become passé; it is said we now recognize that the world has reached an impasse and realize that modern man has given no better shape to his life than did the people of earlier, culturally less developed periods. But, if the belief in progress has indeed been overthrown, why do we endlessly encounter phrases in which people put themselves above those dark Middle Ages—phrases such as “Cultural development in that region is still at a medieval level”? While we hear such expressions from the man in the street, we also read them in scholarly works: negatively, “people had not yet . . .”; or positively, “in that period people had already . . .”

It is true that modern man has weaned himself of the belief in progress as a *universal* principle, but he still keeps it in reserve for limited use. As so much sinks away around him, it remains a last point of support in the general upheaval; it gives him a comforting feeling to know that “science advances.”

Medieval culture, too, has been assigned a place in this progression. It is evaluated, and more often than not condemned, by the yardstick of progress or some ideal future.

Thus shaped, the modern picture is reinforced by still another factor. Among academic historians it has long been asserted that history must be rewritten in every age. It is supposed that every age approaches the past in its own way, that it accordingly takes a *different* position with respect to history, and that it naturally will interpret what has happened in the past in its own way. A glance at the scientific literature, however, reveals that not just every generation but every school of thought writes history anew. A plurality of approaches to history results, with the consequence that modern conceptions and methods are legitimized beforehand and then projected into the conceptual world of the period under study.

In summary, we have taken note of medieval culture's resistance to disclosure, and I hope the point will be taken when I say its resistance is to be attributed in a fundamental sense to the

modern researcher, the person of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He asks if the Middle Ages have any use and he asks if they still have anything to say to him, *now*, in the present phase of history. He supposes that to understand the Middle Ages he should approach them with insights borrowed from the time in which he lives. In essence, the conflict between the hidden medieval man and his would-be modern discoverer comes down to the unwillingness or inability of the latter to take distance from his own inevitably limited world.

Many regard the Middle Ages as a period of barbarism and darkness and a lack of real culture—a time when people withdrew into lonely, bare monastic cells to practice strict asceticism; built heavily fortified castles in which knights led boring lives and from which noblemen fought endless wars against their neighbors for the sake of a little distraction; the peasant eked out his days in slavery and serfdom, subsisting, but without comfort and cultural refinements. And what of art then, the most exquisite cultural product of all? The Middle Ages cannot be said to have lacked aesthetic feeling, but only towards the end did the period begin to rise above a primitive stage.

Disdaining this popular view, I shall proceed to speak about the *culture of the Middle Ages*. Thus we must assume that there was culture in those times, a culture still worth studying today.

To understand a culture, we must have something in common with it. And here our historical consciousness is put severely to the test: for, do the centuries not steadily diverge? And if we already have so much difficulty evaluating, for example, the period between the two world wars, how much more difficult it must be to gain a proper insight into a distant millennium!

Medieval culture spans a thousand years—another obstacle! For, can we deal with an age in an hour? Shall I speak about just one century then, a not unusual approach? But which? The twelfth and thirteenth, the centuries of the great transitions? But then, the face of civilization changed earlier, in the eleventh century, when under the influence of the conflict *sacerdotium et imperium*—better known as the investiture controversy—the realms of the sacred and

profane parted company? Or shall we select a particular character from these ten centuries and say, "He that has beheld this figure has looked upon *the* medieval person"? That has been tried repeatedly, and even recently, only to stir up protests more strident than usual in the scholarly world.

Let us draw one important lesson from all this, more than one hundred and fifty years of medieval studies have taught us that these "dark ages" were possessed of a strong dynamic; that there was a richness and variety of ideas, currents, phenomena, and likewise a multiplicity of contrasts, which makes it impossible to characterize the entire age in terms of one particular period, phenomenon, or person. Perhaps I should add that the diversity and dynamism of a culture *can* be indications of its vitality—provided the fruit exhibits the soundness of the root, though there be some rust spots on the leaves.

One thing, at least, is imbedded deep in medieval culture from the outset. It is the problem of what we are to do with that which lies above or beyond this world. What has this world to do with the divine reality? This theme accompanied medieval man throughout the many centuries of his existence: he lived in this relation without always being consciously aware of its what and of its how. Yet he felt himself so much at home in it that many modern students of the period have exclaimed without hesitation: *How theocentric were those times!*

I would dispute that last point. In the many centuries in which culture was granted him, medieval man undoubtedly had a lively sense of God's activity, but often that was altered into a consciousness of walking in proximity to *the divine*. And that is something quite different. Precisely because the divine, the sacred, pressed upon him so cloyingly—after he had framed it himself—his devotion to and expectations of God weakened.

It seems to me that it would accordingly be more accurate to characterize the Middle Ages not as theocentric but as a period in which people were *concerned with the transcendent*.

What did that mean for medieval culture?

At the beginning of the Middle Ages a phenomenon appeared that we can witness even today among nations that adopt Christianity. They generally do not restrict themselves to a bare acceptance of the Christian faith, but perceive from the outset that the new religion cannot leave unaltered the relations in which they have hitherto lived. Whether that stems from the fact that the old religion, too, had an absolute character or from the fact that people apprehend at once something of the all-embracing nature of Christianity, we shall leave undecided here. What interests us much more is the question of the form and substance of that desire and its realization. Michael Seidlmayer observes about medieval civilization that the postulate of making the world as such Christian—of a “Christian culture”—is a creation of the *Early Middle Ages*.³

The reserve that Christian Antiquity showed towards the postulate of a Christian culture was unknown to medieval man. He embraced the Christian revelation—it took him centuries to do so—but at the same time he held on to the culture around him: Germanic, Celtic, or Romance; and he reached back to classical culture as well.

By relinquishing none of these, medieval man in his youthful vitality made things extremely difficult for himself. In his cultural ambition he aimed at the absolute. He almost had it with him on earth. And when he thought he had disclosed and captured it, it escaped him, for it was not of this earth.

Yet the postulate survived: to bring all the aspects of life and every phenomenon of human existence *directly* into relation to transcendence: everything is nourished by that relation and all returns to it again.

Now, two things must be kept in view. Early medieval people did not find themselves in a cultureless, empty world in which one had only to announce the program of a Christian culture; they were bound by countless ties to a non-Christian environment.

Nor was that the only thing. The young tribes that streamed into the established world of classical culture were not without culture, true; but they had very little in the way of cultural goods. Yet they did not have very far to go to find them: they availed themselves—sometimes immoderately, sometimes mindlessly—of classical culture.

Thus was set the main problem that would confront the Middle Ages: Would it be possible to establish an inner bond between the

enveloping culture—Celtic, Germanic, Romance, the culture of the classical world—and the Gospel?

Medieval man pursued this goal with all his might. However, in so doing did he not take too much upon himself? Remember, he was not out to correct what was there, or to put a Christian veneer on it. Even less was he out to prune away heathen malgrowths. No, he had something very positive in mind: to form a Christian culture drawing directly on the transcendent.

I can already hear your objection: Did the Middle Ages not excel precisely in allowing heathen elements to survive in Christian dress?

We can enhance that objection with a telling example. The “Christian Middle Ages” were not content with an emperor who protected the church, or even with one who saw it as his task to help define dogma. No, they anointed the sovereign for his “worldly” role with holy oil and consecrated him with a consecration corresponding to a bishop’s even in the details; they removed all boundary markers between the “temporal” and the “spiritual” by proclaiming the emperor “Vicar of Christ,” “Image of God,” “Type of our Savior,” “King and Priest.”

To their own mind, medieval people were striking out for the radically Christian. In reality, they thereby continued to uphold many non-Christian ideas. So I ask, in attempting to join the culture surrounding them to classical culture and to form it on the basis of what is Christian and transcendental, did they not place themselves before irresolvable tensions, which robbed them of light and joy? Certainly the synthesis they sought was never successful.

The main bearers of medieval culture were Germanic and Romance peoples. After the fall of the Roman Empire, which entailed the loss of the crystallization point for classical culture, Germanic tribes settled in the wide reaches of the West. To them, in association with other peoples, fell the task of being new crystallization points—a task for which they were by no means equipped.

One could compare Western European culture following the centuries of the barbarian migrations to a tree in winter: the most striking thing about such a tree and its surroundings is the bareness. Such a tree, anthropomorphically speaking, barely subsists. It has withdrawn into itself, into its inner core, bereft of every adornment.

And yet, in that bare tree in that winter landscape there is vital force—as yet invisible.

Western culture was already in winter condition when the ancient world—for whatever reason—collapsed, and the Germanic world soon sank away into a veritable barbarization of life, into ceaseless strife and bloodshed.

The nadir was reached in about A.D. 740. Then came the reversal, ushered in by the query of Pepin, the mayor of the palace, to the Pope concerning who should have power, he who was king in name or he who possessed the real power. The Pope's answer, that he who possessed the power should be king, cleared the way for the Carolingians to set Europe's political house in order.

A sturdy political organism can be raised in a number of years, but to build a culture from the ground up requires centuries, unless people are not too proud to seek and accept help elsewhere. That is what the Carolingians did. The memory of classical civilization had never been entirely lost even in the days of the barbarians; it is worthy of mention, for example, that after 750 people rejected the type of architecture long in vogue in favor of a revival, at St. Denis, of the romanesque, early-Christian basilica.

Yet it was not only in architecture that antiquity and the old Christian world provided the model; the past was revived in many fields. Nor was the resort to classical antiquity unique to the early medieval culture of the Carolingians. Medieval man faced the necessity of shifting his cultural plane time and again, and he had the vitality to develop culture; but he did not have the capacity to give form and substance to it all on his own in a short time. To his mind, that was also not necessary: the past had modelled what he now merely had to recall to life.

Here we have a characteristic phenomenon of the Middle Ages, one that we are accustomed to referring to as a renaissance, restoration, renewal, etc. Initially, modern historical science restricted the concept of renaissance to what we call *the Renaissance*, that is, to the last two hundred years of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern period. Gradually, however, the concept was applied to every important medieval movement for renewal. Thus one speaks of the Carolingian Renaissance of the eighth and ninth centuries, and of the tenth-century Renaissance, and of that of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Note well, not one of these revivals occurred without the powerful influence of the ancient world.

There is something else. We must keep in mind that there was something obvious and natural in that appeal to classical culture but at the same time something astonishing. After all, to the medieval person the man of antiquity was a pitiable pagan. Nevertheless, he drew upon his culture.

Ultimately—and the medieval person was probably scarcely aware of it himself—it was not the old culture as such that mattered, for it was not in itself a standard and model to him. All he wanted to return to was the divine world; and that, to him, was not just something in heaven but something realized again and again on earth: in the Old Testament dispensation, in the Roman Empire, and . . . also in the renewal of his own time. He saw classical culture not as a lofty, useful culture that happened to be available to him but as one in which the divine model appeared in a special sense.

To the medieval mind a renaissance did not mean the creation of something novel; it did not mean revolutionary reversal. On the contrary, it meant a return to normative olden times and a revival from decline and decay. Reduced to a formula, decline meant a falling away from the old, model age and restoration consisted in calling this model to life again.

The Germanic peoples—to mention its second component—were not merely bearers of medieval culture; they contributed numerous cultural elements of their own, including their many conceptions of life and religion. Yet these are often so overlaid by classical and Christian influences that they can be brought to light only by long and painstaking scholarly research.

But now the third component, Christianity.

We shall have to dispense with the usual picture of a unified medieval ecclesiastical culture. It is an honest interpretation, and it is even understandable that people should have adopted it; yet, it fails to appreciate the true character of medieval civilization. That it was ecclesiastical is only partly true, and that it was a unified culture I would contest. The medieval world never succeeded in bringing *Romanitas*, *Germanitas*, and *Christianitas* into authentic union.

Medieval culture developed from renaissance to renaissance, from renewal to renewal; always, the *Romanitas* played a role. As

often as the promise of a renaissance or renewal was fulfilled, however, a reaction set in. Immediately following the death of Charlemagne there was a distinctly "Puritan" reaction, led by Benedict of Aniane (†821), against the cultural optimism and "worldly mind" of the Carolingian Renaissance. I cannot help quoting several statements that put the situation in a stark light. The young Walafrid Strabo (†849) complains some years later in the renowned, culturally outstanding monastery of Reichenau: "Those who are in charge here do not like to see me making verses; all studies are slipping, and the light of wisdom is unloved and becoming scarce." No less to the point is the assessment of Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel (†c. 830): "There are soldiers of the world and soldiers of Christ—the former deliver themselves to eternal torment; the others gain eternal life." And in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when classical culture had again abetted a new blossoming of worldly culture, resistance appeared in the form of a revival of the ascetic ideal.

I have cited only two specific reactions, but the cultural history of the period A.D. 500-1500 has many to offer. They confront us with the question of how to account for them. What is their source? Why was there such a chronic resistance to worldly culture, to the reception of classical elements, when the medieval world experienced such a great need of them? Was it perhaps because the worldly attitude no longer recognized any limits? To say that of the Carolingian Renaissance would be far-fetched. Let us listen again to Strabo: people objected, he said, even to his writing poetry.

No, the problem lies deeper. I would prefer to formulate it this way—and then we would be taking just one aspect, albeit one that contains the entire problem: the medieval West never came to terms with the ancient world; it was attracted to it since unable to do without it, yet repeatedly repelled by it (Seidlmayer compares the situation to an unhappy romance: ever and again, infatuation, followed as often by disappointment and repugnance).⁴

But with that we have only shifted the question, not answered it. What gives rise to the restlessness in the medieval world, and why does it always end up rejecting the ancients? However powerful their influence may have been in the Middle Ages, to medieval man the ancients always remained an alien element, a *Fremdkörper*; they pressed in from the outside. A real synthesis was never achieved.

Was that because the Germanic mind could not tolerate the

Romance mind? Perhaps, but there is no evidence for that. In any event, we must be careful not to underestimate the importance of the failure of this synthesis, which is talked about so facilely. For the Middle Ages acquired their distinctive character precisely from both the attraction and the intolerance of Antiquity and Christianity for each other. From the outset the Middle Ages suffered from a deep-seated ambivalence unknown to non-Christian cultures.

Wherein lay that element of irreconcilability? To put it briefly, medieval man wanted to serve two masters: as a Christian on the *Jenseitige*, other-worldly way, he wanted to serve the transcendent Lord; as a person of culture here on the *Diesseitige* way, he wanted to serve that which is of this world.

Many historians maintain there was nothing else he could do. After all, he had to live in social relations and build his life on a particular material culture. These could not be had along the transcendental route.

Furthermore—it will be objected—medieval man never experienced the culture of this world in detachment from the transcendent.

I could not contest that, but at the same time I would maintain that the synthesis between classical culture and Christianity, between transcendence and profane culture, proved to be impossible in the Middle Ages. The entire period was marked by hostility to culture, disdain for the human body, depreciation of marriage—not just among the sects, but often among the most prominent representatives of the age.

That the Middle Ages remained profoundly ambivalent in their appreciation of culture is attributable at bottom to the period's perceptions of culture and transcendence alike. There is an antinomy involved here that is a feature of *medieval* Christianity and not of Christianity as such.

Certainly, medieval people saw all things in connection with the transcendent. However, that need not have issued in disparagement of the human body and of culture. And yet it did, because for medieval people, transcendence or living unto God was predominantly spiritualistic and ascetic in nature. People will say, "Granted, this is the way the sects looked at it; this is the way the hermits and monks felt about life." But that restriction is by no means valid. To forsake the world with one's whole heart was the fulfillment of life for the average medieval person just as much as it was for the religious idealist.

Meanwhile, the average person knew that to renounce the world was not possible for him—or, at least, for everyone. Condemned as he was to remain in the world, he fixed his gaze on the ascetic saint who had detached himself from the world on his behalf, as it were. Such saintliness was beyond his capacity, yet he could not get along without it. There might be saints in marriage and saints among kings, but they could not inspire him in anything approaching the measure of the ascetic saints, for they alone had forsaken the world.

Now we can comprehend what seems at first incomprehensible to us. Even the most wretched miscreant—and that would certainly include some of the Merovingian kings—revered only the person who fulfilled the Christian ideal of asceticism and who in doing so was his substitute.

However much the status of being pilgrims in the world may have been *the* medieval ideal, even medieval people could not deny that the human body is a reality, that the passions are unavoidable, economic requirements inescapable, and classical culture indispensable.

Well now, this produced the fascinating epic of medieval history. The ascetic ideal was held high, but people had to get along with their body, their passions, their world of culture—and what a body, and what a culture: one seething with youthful vitality and creative energy!

One common interpretation is that the church gathered all that worldly life into itself as Noah took the animals into the ark, and that it proceeded to focus that life on a transcendent goal—not the pure ascetic ideal now, but the salvation of souls: thus, all aspects of worldly life were enlisted in the service of other-worldly salvation. Presumably, the church was successful in that until at the close of the Middle Ages art, science, politics, etc., detached themselves from the embrace of the church.

That the former was the church's intention we shall not dispute, but that it succeeded during the Middle Ages in focusing culture on other-worldly objectives is another matter. From the outset there was a yearning, sometimes fervent and at other times dormant, to recognize so-called profane life and culture in their own right, albeit within the transcendent order.

Now, this is eminently understandable, for the idea of fleeing the world entailed nothing less than an outrage upon human life.

Life broke through the restraints again and again. And these ruptures were not just isolated cases, rare occurrences of derailment. No, the break with the ascetic and ecclesiastical ideal constitutes an essential feature in the cultural picture of the Middle Ages. Let me illustrate that with a few randomly selected concrete phenomena.

1. For the Germanic peoples, or at least for their leading, upper crust, war and battle were an essential element of life. The medieval man went on fighting even though he sensed his actions were inconsistent with Christian morality. Still, the problem was resolved in a process of centuries. He dressed war up in the raiments of spiritual warfare, and thus were born the wars of extermination fought in the name of Christ against the heathens and heretics of this world.

2. An extremely dangerous situation was created by the ascetic ideal of world-flight and disdain for the body. Not everyone could subdue the natural passions, so that assignment was delegated to the ascetic, whose vocation it was to do so. Meanwhile, the ordinary person was left without any genuinely positive value to place upon the passions and so was left helpless before them. He could hate vehemently and be infinitely cruel to his enemies. The Middle Ages were not filled solely with cultural creations and religious idealism. What breach of faith was not known to the Middle Ages! What social hardness there was! What ingenuity in torture! Torture as a public festival to which even women came as spectators! What superstition! And were the Middle Ages not rampant in free love, as if, incomprehensibly, it was the most natural thing in the world? Nor was this evil restricted to some forgotten corner; it was found on the high road: the well-known medievalist H. Finke has determined that in the leading circles of the Middle Ages, the sanctity and permanence of the marriage bond were largely fictitious.⁵

3. Yet, this was not the only peril. There was another, more humane, humanistic possibility: a turn toward the things of polite society can be traced throughout the entire Middle Ages. One finds it in the culture of the Carolingian court, in the humanism of the Late Middle Ages, but also in the heyday of chivalry in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when from southern France through central and northern France and into Germany a fresh attitude toward life emerged, largely fixed upon this world and driven by an impulse to improve, decorate and refine the home, clothes, food, drink, forms of social contact (music, dance, games, etc.). In short, there

was an appetite for worldly things, which have value also in their own right. No wonder the ascetics polemicized vehemently against the culture of chivalry.

Again, the Late Middle Ages in particular were exceptionally cruel. After all, these centuries witnessed the rise of the Inquisition, and politics paid homage to the pursuit of personal advantage long before Machiavelli's day. Very little remained of "peace and justice" as the ideal of "Christian politics"; rather, great advances were made in the brutalities of war, especially in the form of a scorched earth policy for the helpless countryside. Indeed, all these evils, and more, belong to the normal pattern of events in the Late Middle Ages.

Yet we must not deceive ourselves. While this was especially true of the Late Middle Ages, the darkness was only a little less deep in the centuries preceding. When we hear of the "Dark Ages," then, much of it is true.

On the other hand, medieval culture has always fascinated people, and many have attributed the decline of the West to a departure from the medieval *ordo*; on this view, the catastrophic development commenced with the disturbance of the medieval worldview.

By putting the matter in such terms people do, indeed, create a picture of the Middle Ages, but one that is badly oversimplified and lacking in certain essential features. Throughout that entire period the Augustinian ideal of *pax et justitia* continued to guide people, it is true, yet wars went on without interruption. The Middle Ages may be inconceivable without the power of the *ordo* idea, yet that did not prevent countless excesses of libertinism: I have mentioned free love, but the attachment to house and home seems to have been so tenuous for many that they simply left everything to wander through the land in bands.

Despite all this, Régine Pernoud asserts that medieval culture knew a confidence in life and a joy in living which have no equal in any other culture, and that in philosophy, architecture, life-style, and everything, there is an exultant delight in existence, an energy that is nothing but positive.⁶ This idyllic scene would be true to life if the dark backdrop had not been omitted.

The Middle Ages failed (which in itself is not exceptional since every historical period falls short). They failed because they had to fail: they aspired to a goal that can only be attained in heaven. In the cloisters of Cluny the monks sang praises to God like the re-

deemed in heaven, and in an anticipatory way they realized eschatological peace by giving up all possessions, the source of all discontent.

That failure however was fraught with serious consequences. Medieval people sought above all else the absorption of worldly things in the transcendent. They were unsuccessful in many respects, but nowhere did they have as little success as in the economic and social areas. Cities were founded, flourishing economic centers, with a church in the center and saints as guardian patrons of the guilds—and yet, that did not preserve the inner connection of religion to economic life.

What was the everyday reality? There was a Christian, transcendent superstructure, but it was suspended in space, without any inner connection to real, concrete economic life, which went its own way according to its own norms.

The burghers of these medieval cities were pious, even exceptionally pious. They lived in a multiplicity of religious forms. But all this was no longer attuned to the requirements of life. A unified ecclesiastical culture was never achieved in the economic field; from the outset, there was a duality. Whatever there was of religion in economic life consisted largely of an external framework.

But the divergence between religion and worldly life is not the only thing the Middle Ages have bequeathed us.

In the Gothic, a form of life is disclosed that was no less determinative for the centuries to come, down to the present day. In medieval culture, as in so many other cultures, the houses were regarded as the *dwelling places of God*. Only, the Middle Ages concentrated this idea upon the church edifice. The most exalted expressions of it were the Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals.

The Gothic churches point symbolically towards a supraterritorial reality, for—despite their rational construction—the arches, the many windows, the light, the altars, the images, the polyphonic music, etc., are all designed to apprehend supraterritorial reality, which is ungraspable as such, and to represent it to the senses and bring it into proximity upon this earth. Because worldly components faded into the background or, to put it differently, were enveloped as by the heavenly regions, the world as a believer experienced it inside Gothic edifices was a transfigured, heavenly world.

Yet the Gothic did not succeed in conjuring up heaven by material sensible means; nor did it succeed any better in enveloping

naked terrestrial reality in celestial light. On the contrary, its bold identification of this world with a perfect world distracted people's attention away from the latter and focused it on the earthly paradise. In the Gothic, consequently, an authentic secularization of Christian values occurred. That is, these values were so fascinating in their earthly forms that their transcendent origin in heaven came gradually to be neglected. At the same time, in the medieval cathedral the *divine* is so embodied in the outward sacramental *sign* that it can be fully experienced there, and even taken and borne away: its numerous altars, images, windows, spaces, niches, etc., each in its own way, bring one into direct contact with the divine.

Perhaps by now you will have some objections to my way of dealing with the Middle Ages. So many gloomy aspects have been mentioned that I shall perforce have to characterize the period as the Dark Ages after all, shall I not? We have heard of little else besides sins, unbridled passions, inner ambivalence, failure of the attempt for a cultural synthesis, etc. But what of the bright side, you will say! Surely the culture of chivalry, although it lowered people's sights, was a unique phenomenon in world history; who would want to deny its greatness? Moreover, was not asceticism itself a cultural factor of the first order? In those periods in which cultural life declined — and there were many — was it not precisely the centers of asceticism that rescued culture from extinction and preserved it till the time arrived when the task could be left to other, worldly institutions? Did not the monasteries engage in cultural life even at the risk of forgetting the ascetic ideal? Is it not thanks to them that much of the classical heritage was preserved? And does the credit for land reclamation, as important then as now, not belong to the monastic orders? Were the foundations of much in which we often take pride, as being in contrast with those dark ages, not laid in that very period, so that all we had to do was build upon them? Did they not, in a word, bequeath to us a culture that still enriches our lives today: their chronicles with their world-historical perspective, their philosophy of history imbued with real human concern for suffering and transitoriness, their masterful satire, their priceless *evangelaria* and other illuminated manuscripts, their now classic Christian lyrics? And how little I have mentioned! Why, just in the last two years two works

have appeared on the Middle Ages as the Age of Light. How clearly the light must have shined at that time. Surely the period must have been the Age of the Cathedral (what a misnomer to label it with the pejorative epithet *Gothic!*)—of the cathedral where light entered in a hundred ways, there to take possession of life?

For all that, we shall maintain our characterization of the Middle Ages as a period of profound ambivalence or fundamental dichotomy: on the one hand, being for God; on the other, being for this world; at one and the same time, drawing upon classical and Germanic conceptions, and living by the Gospel.

Notes

1. Régine Pernoud, *Lumière du Moyen-Age* (Paris: Grasset, 1944); [cf. Eng. trans. by Joyce Emerson, *The Glory of the Medieval World* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1950), pp. 5, 137, 181-93].
2. [Régine Pernoud, *The Glory of the Medieval World*, pp. 253-55.]
3. [See Michael Seidlmayer, *Das Mittelalter: Umriss und Ergebnisse des Zeitalters* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1949), pp. 23-42, 47.]
4. [Ibid., p. 31.]
5. [H. Finke, *Die Frau im Mittelalter* (Munich, 1913), p. 62, as quoted in Seidlmayer, *op. cit.*, p. 56.]
6. [Régine Pernoud, *The Glory of the Medieval World*, pp. 258f.]



Culture and Salvation

[1959]

TO KNOW OR UNDERSTAND our own times, it is of great importance to know the things and problems our contemporaries find engaging. There are subjects that almost everyone suddenly has something to say about yet that are soon dropped again; and if one asks this person or that why no one takes an interest in it anymore, he is likely to be told, "Oh, it's not so important after all," or "You can't resolve it anyway, we can make better use of our time." There is a note of fatigue in these remarks, but also of doubt concerning the value and utility of certain subjects.

There are questions, however, that do *not* disappear from discussion and that have even persisted for centuries. It is one of those questions I want to dwell upon with you now for a little while, namely: Is there an intrinsic relation between culture and salvation? The experts know instantly what must follow: Is there a Christian culture? Is it permissible to see an intimate connection between Christ and culture? What should a Christian think of progress in civilization? And — this is perhaps the most difficult question — does such progress (if it exists) have its origin in Christ?

It is these questions that have been the subject of lively debate in recent decades, not the least since the Second World War. This debate is not only lively; it is also surprising. Imagine that someone highly knowledgeable of the religious and cultural currents of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries took leave of Europe to go to a deserted island in 1935 or 1936, stayed there without any means of communicating with the rest of the world, and then ended his isolation just this year, in 1959, to find out what is going on in the world of the theologians. Astonished, he would ask himself how it is possible that in such a relatively short time such profound changes have taken place in the thought of so many. Criticism of those who have

seen a close relation between Christ and culture and who have dared to speak of a Christian culture has been fierce in the last hundred years. But today? To be sure, there are those who continue to take a strong stand against the possibility of a Christian culture, but this is not the group that draws attention at the present stage of the debate: listening carefully, one finds little that is new in the objections being levelled against a Christian cultural idea. A general enthusiasm has been aroused for renewed reflection on the positive contents of culture and history and, more precisely, for the idea that the meaning of both can be approached or discovered only from the coign of vantage of the suffering and resurrection of Christ. We encounter this enthusiasm, however, not in the first place amongst those who have long considered themselves called to Christian cultural work but amongst those rather who previously, indeed who until very recently, emphasized almost exclusively the infinite qualitative difference between God and this world and who understood the Lordship of Christ in an eschatological or individual-spiritual sense. The change in the climate of opinion is so far-reaching that a psychological explanation—for example, the yearning to escape the atmosphere of crisis and to take up life once again on the basis of positive values—must be considered inadequate.

Now, it can correctly be said that when one examines the development in theology between 1920 and today more closely, much of the surprise vanishes: elements can be pointed out in the theological currents of this period that made the unexpected shift from negative to positive attitudes on the relation of Christianity and culture comprehensible to an important degree. For a historian—and not only for him—the interesting question now is why the development, so surprising from a distance, takes this positive direction and why there is not a persevering in the negative attitude. A historian may have a predilection for such questions; resolve them he cannot. At most, he can cast some light on them. He should be aware that a purely historical method, however excellent it may be, is inadequate for solving a problem like the one just described.

The matter that engages us this hour is not the framing of a historical problem but rather the relation between Culture and Salvation. But then, as it turns out, we cannot do without history. For history is indispensable to fathoming this relation, if only

because of the fact that since the days of Jesus and the Apostles there has never been a period in which Christendom has not wrestled with the question of Christian culture. Simple wisdom teaches us to have recourse to history, to see how people in Christian circles have thought about culture. Yet this is not the only thing we want to know from history: it teaches us that we can never avoid the cultural question and that we shall always be confronted by the relation of salvation to culture, in short that man lives permanently in this relation, willy-nilly, consciously or not; and the cardinal question now is: *How* does he live in it?

We can understand this from Scripture. As early as the first chapter, God Himself gave the cultural mandate (Genesis 1:28), and Christ alluded to it in the Sermon on the Mount when He explained the fundamental structure of the Kingdom. In general, the Scriptures are filled with statements pertinent to culture. They speak about it in such a natural way—in different terms than we use, but no less clearly for that—that it generally does not stand out. It may sound strange when I say that in the closing passage of Matthew 6 Jesus deals with the problem of culture in all its depth. Since receiving the cultural mandate, man has never ceased to live in culture; he cannot escape the mandate. But in his cultural labors it has been his experience time after time that culture can be to his salvation or to his grief. To mention a few examples, Moses forsook the treasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11:26); food and clothing, Jesus said, are the things the Gentiles seek (Matthew 6:32); the ships of Tarshish shall be the first to bring your sons from far; they shall bring their gold and silver with them, to honor the name of the Lord, your God (Isaiah 60:9).

Before looking more closely at the relation between culture and salvation, we should add a note here to avoid some misunderstandings. Often a treatise on the problem of culture commences with an explanation of what we are to understand by the concept of culture, including how it differs from civilization, history, and so forth. We shall not do that, since that would wither the problem at the outset; nor shall I define the concept salvation (*heil*) beforehand. I use both terms in a pre-theoretical sense, so that they mean just what they do in everyday usage. Our intention in leaving the concepts open is not only to avoid a premature restriction of our discussion but also to be reminded from the outset that the intrinsic relation that salvation has to culture exists also between—to mention some examples—salvation and sexuality, salvation and history.

In many cases where I use the word culture you may even substitute the terms history, sexuality, etc., and sometimes I shall proceed to do so myself. That the problem can be transferred every time is not due to culture, history, etc., as such but to salvation, which remains essentially the same in all relations whatsoever.

I started by observing that the problem of culture is of lively interest in Christian circles nowadays and that the tendency exists to appreciate culture as something positive . . . in Christ, and therefore (it goes without saying) with an appeal to the Scriptures. There have also been times, however—and they are still continuing—in which people were apprehensive of culture, fearing too great a fascination for this world and a slackening in love for God. And the Scriptures provide support for such apprehension. In broad historical perspective, world acceptance and world renunciation occur side by side, again and again, most often as reactions to each other: a period of cultural optimism is not infrequently followed by another in which world and Christian belief are kept far apart. This development makes us think of an unhappy love-affair. Sometimes the Christian is drawn to culture—precisely because of his being a Christian. At other times, he tries to keep it at arm's length—again because he is a Christian. This game has been going on for centuries already. This image—which is happily somewhat defective, as we shall see—is helpful also because we believed the same problem is encountered in the relation sexuality-salvation as in the relation culture-salvation (I do not use the word sexuality in the current sense but in the sense of the male-female relationship).

Let us examine this unhappy love-affair a bit more closely. I think immediately of monachism, eremitism, and asceticism. Since the early Christian era, their relation to culture has been strained; and yet cloisters were, and are, centers of culture as well. We cannot really imagine what might have become of Western European civilization if in the Early Middle Ages, a time of profound cultural decline, there had been no cloisters into which the ancient civilization could retire, as it were. Is the estrangement of culture and cloister, then, based on a misunderstanding? By way of introducing the answer to that question, I would note one fact: Alcuin was a very important figure in the cultural reformation under Charlemagne, and to this end he kept to a cloister, but without practicing the

ascetic life; he preferred to remain in the cloister even when his lord summoned him to follow in his retinue—not because he wished to be undisturbed in the experience of God's presence, but because he desired to pursue his studies without hindrance.

This story brings us naturally to the question of what is essential or, if you will, primary in asceticism. Much has been written on the subject in recent times. Does its essence lie in its *merit*, perhaps, both for those who practice asceticism as well as for those who did not have the opportunity to withdraw from normal life? Undoubtedly, the merit of ascetic life and thought has played an important role: how often, for example, do we not encounter in medieval sources a certain reassurance in the realization that the ascetic life of the privileged benefits those who have to be satisfied with a life in the world. Nevertheless, when we consult the ascetic literature, especially of periods in which the practice of asceticism reached a high point, it becomes abundantly clear that the motives of merit, rigorous self-discipline, imitation of the sufferings of Christ were indeed of very great importance yet as a rule played only a subordinate role and that the supreme motivating force in asceticism is *love of God*. Here we touch the heart of the problem in the matter of the relation between culture and salvation. Someone unfamiliar with the history of asceticism may find it odd to learn that precisely love of God should have brought about strain in the relation to culture. This tension between the great love commandment and the world—in which culture is an integrating element—has left its traces in many legends and stories, and not only in those of opponents of asceticism. I will relate one such story, as we find it in Albert Camus: Saint Demetrius was to meet God in the steppe, but as he hastened towards the appointed place, he met a farmer whose wagon was stuck in the mud: the wagon was heavy and the mud deep, but after an hour the battle was won and Demetrius could hurry on to the place where God awaited him, but when he arrived, God was no longer there.¹ Stories of this nature have been passed down to us from all ages: they are simple and interesting, but there is an element of profound tragedy in them: people try to love God supremely and to serve Him without reservation, but when they do so, things go wrong on earth, and they neglect the love of their neighbors. It is not without a reason that I shall go on now to tell a story from a non-Christian religion in which the same tension arises in the practice of asceticism: Indra, in the Indian religion, retires to

the mountains for an exceptionally demanding ascetic exercise because of the vanity of this world, but he cannot complete it because to do so would endanger the world's equilibrium—after all, has Indra not had to abandon his wife and neglect his worldly duties?

Alternatively, one can assess the tension asceticism brings with it and say: asceticism involves—the history of Western culture bears this out—a healing element, not only for the ascetic himself but also for his environment and the culture which is host to his cell. We certainly do not want to deny the tremendous influence that the practice of asceticism has had on culture, but to accentuate this aspect is to draw attention away from the tension in which the ascetic himself lived and from the inner conflict which besets a culture the moment asceticism is required and practiced in order thereby to partake fully of the love of God.

Is this tension, is inner conflict, not inherent in an integral Christian approach to life, and is distance with respect to the world and culture therefore not required of the Christian—if he would save his life? This question is not just one for a historian who would like to know precisely how things used to be; it is also a burning issue in a time when a Christian cultural optimism is gaining greater influence. Here, historical and current problems converge. The present-day historian has a penchant for strongly emphasizing the differences between medieval and modern man, but all at once these two turn out to stand very close together in the face of the great problems of life. It is remarkable that just in our time, when many Christians are being carried away without resistance or reservations in the maelstrom of cultural development, asceticism is being proposed, in numerous writings, as a way of salvaging the freedom of Christians. It is a remarkable thing that culture, which surely is not evil in itself, can begin to imperil Christian freedom. Apparently there is an inner connection between Christian freedom and being free from the world. When the ascetic seeks freedom in this dual sense and relates it directly to love of God, then he touches upon a commandment that is repeated over and over again in the Bible, too.

It is not entirely accurate to speak of *the* ascetic, for there is rich variation in the ascetic attitude towards life. Some ascetics have even carried their world renunciation to the verge of manicheism. We cannot go into all the varieties of asceticism and monachism

here, of course, and must necessarily generalize; well now, in that case we can say that precisely the rigorous ascetic is the one who believes most deeply that God created all things good; and yet he finds himself called to warn against this world, even to forsake it, because love of God renders this inevitable. And so these two come to oppose each other; love of God demands estrangement from the world and love of God requires going out into the world, turning to the world in love.

To keep the question in its pure form, I would make two prefatory remarks. It cannot be objected to my exposition that in historical reality this opposition has not been so serious after all: think of the order of Cluny, of the very strict rules of Bishop Odo (926-942), who, entirely in line with Pope Gregory the Great, regarded monasticism as a transcending of this world (the *extra mundum* or "other-worldly" ideal); yet, how offended Christians must have been at the turn of the eleventh to the twelfth century by the beauty and luxury that reigned in Cluny. Is it not clear from this that somehow people always find the way from cloister and cell back to the world? The history of the order of Citeaux is even more telling in this regard. The order was founded to follow strictly the original Rule of Benedict, which meant absolute withdrawal, prayer, charity, and penance; yet it is precisely this strict order that accomplished so much for the unfolding of medieval culture—even before rigorous asceticism flagged and luxury set in—for example, in the reclamation of wasteland, improvements in the methods of agriculture, and so forth. Thus history seems to want to impress upon us that the tension at issue is not so serious after all.—And indeed, to external appearances, that may be so. Yet the ascetic, the Christian mind, found it hard to come to terms with it. A single example can suffice. Gregory I, a pope for whom the ascetic ideal of the Middle Ages meant so much, saw himself pulled to and fro between his calling in ecclesiastical affairs and the ascetic ideal of leaving this present world in order to enter already into the kingdom of eternal life.

Not only did the *connection* that was still experienced in ever so many ways between world renunciation and world ministry have important historical consequences; the *tension* which the ascetic never resolved between heavenly calling and cultural task has likewise put its permanent stamp on Western culture. The Middle Ages bequeathed asceticism as an irrepressible challenge not only to the

reformation but also to humanism. I hope to say more about this.

The second prefatory remark I would make relates to the first and is the following. One fairly often hears it said that the ascetic may think he can escape from the world to a place somewhere far removed from the world but that the world pursues him right into his solitary cell; and that he may delude himself into thinking he has renounced culture, but that in reality he remains culture-bound since life without it is possible for no one. Think of the Cistercians. Their monasteries were built far from the inhabited world; great care was taken in selecting sites in order to insure the experience of the monastic ideal. But what do we see? The convents were built in the style of their times: Romanesque, transition from Romanesque to Gothic, Gothic.—With that, many regard the problem of asceticism as a dead issue; they simply write it off as an impossibility. To be satisfied with such a result, however, is to miss the heart of asceticism, as will be clear from what follows. I do not deny that asceticism is an impossibility, but what interests us here is the question *why* it is an impossibility. It seems superfluous to pose this question, since it is as transparent as can be. However, I feel it is worth our while to have a look behind this self-evident character of the case in order to determine why man can never free himself of culture. In the interest of fairness to the ascetic—and likewise for a good understanding of my argument—let it be noted again: in the literature of asceticism it comes out again and again that the ascetic, too, is usually well aware that total world renunciation and an *extra mundum surgere*, a rising out above the world, are not possible, but he likewise knows that the world is not equally perilous for him at all points, or, more correctly, that worldly temptation is concentrated in certain institutions and phenomena, where its effect is multiplied, and that by holding things at bay he delivers a blow to the world . . . in its perilousness.

But let us return to the basic problem that confronts every form of Christian asceticism: Does total, loving surrender to God not require that the Christian abstain from the world? To assure the attainment of a good view of culture and its meaning for salvation, I would reiterate that the ascetics—the exceptions aside—have maintained that God created this world good. For all that, they believed they had to flee the things of earthly existence because they saw in the

world an obstacle to love of God and the attainment of perfection: to their mind, this world no longer understands itself as God's creation but as sufficient unto itself and hence tends to forget the love of God. This is the basic theme that dominates ascetic literature.² Therefore suffering as such cannot be the main point of asceticism (there are many exceptions to this rule, since often what was secondary was made the leading idea); the primary purpose was deliverance from both the world and self. To live as a monk or hermit means to step out of worldly entanglements into the vastness of the love of God. The threads of the ascetic life converge in the *non-use of this world*. The negative—deliverance from the world—is not the primary thing, but the positive: concentration upon God, placing one's self radically and totally at His disposal. In this manner the negative is essentially present in the positive, and Christian writers expressed that by identifying love of God and the ascetic life. Theodoret of Cyr (†460) subtitled his history of monks: "History of the Love of God or the Ascetic Life."³

The thought suddenly occurs to us: Is the ascetic not "standing on Biblical grounds" here? He adduces numerous texts that often occur to us, too, when we hear the Messianic and apostolic message about forsaking the world. People have invoked the words of Jesus to the rich young ruler, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me" (Matthew 19:21). Here we find all the elements of our problem together: perfection—exactly what the world of the ascetics was all about; very well, you can only acquire it when you put the world behind you. But there are still many other Scripture passages that one can cite in support of ascetic world renunciation: "For our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20); "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him . . ." (I John 2:15-17); and we may not forget Colossians 3:2-3: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

One can object to all this and say, Yes, but there are other things in the Bible too, which attest to the good that still exists in spite of sin, and to the Christian's calling in this world! Undoubtedly. We would by no means want to shortchange the latter point; yet it would be just as impermissible to empty the passages I have cited above of their meaning in order to force them into agreement with

the rest of the Bible. In all these troublesome passages, so cherished by ascetics and monks, the issue is the meaning of life (perfection, salvation, etc.), namely, God: and to share in that, a condition is set that can in no way be deprived of its force: forsake the world and deny yourself. Asceticism (and the Bible as well) seems to place us before a dilemma: either proceed on the basis of the goodness of creation and find our calling in it in keeping with the great cultural mandate proclaimed by God Himself: “. . . replenish the earth, and subdue it . . .” (Gen. 1:28); or else give primacy to the mortal peril in culture and flee from it accordingly.

The matter becomes considerably clearer when we pursue the ascetic line of thought further, or, to put it differently, when we throw some additional light on a no less essential feature of the ascetic conception of the love of God. It pertains to an aspect that receives considerable attention in current historical literature. I shall mention in this connection only Jean Leclercq's book about the love of learning.⁴ According to Leclercq, the aspect in question has been constantly present in all periods in which asceticism has been practiced. In the ascetic pursuit of the love of God, this world is transcended in what tends at the same time to be an eschatological sense. In monastic literature one finds numerous expressions or themes for this, including that of ascension, that of the *vita angelica*, and so forth. These expressions will not make very much of an impression on us at first, but upon closer scrutiny they will be seen to have a very distinctive content that we can best get a grasp of when we think of the “other-worldly” ideal: it involves a transcending, a stepping out of this world. The danger exists, however, that we can no longer comprehend today what that entailed, since the expression has undergone a great deal of erosion: the monk was deadly earnest about taking leave of this world. Leclercq correctly states that the entire conception of monastic culture must be judged according to the positive meaning of the *extra mundum*, that is, that the ascetic life is an anticipation of life in heaven, a real beginning of eternal life.⁵ Something more is involved here than merely orienting oneself to the great eschatological future; the strictest ascetic knew that the heavenly life cannot be realized in its fullness on earth, but he did regard as possible a form of anticipatory participation, or what German commentators call an “anticipation of eternity” (*Vorwegnahme der Ewigkeit*). And just as the life of eternal blessedness is indescribable, so also must the monk's sojourn in

solitude remain beyond the reach of human concepts and words, as an "inhabiting of the heavenly places" [cf. Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:6].

Yet we are able to form some idea of this "anticipation of eternity" if we consider the positive objectives of life in the monastery according to the — oft renewed — Rule of St. Benedict: no marriage, no property. This all sounds extremely negative, but if we view it in the light of the "anticipation," we learn that in the very "detachment," elements of the heavenly life can be present on this earth. Ascetics diligently studied the Bible on this point, searching for the description of heaven. They read the words of Jesus, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:29-30). Thus the injunction against marriage was ultimately motivated by anticipatory participation in eternity. This is also true of other monastic do's and don't's. For the rule of silence, for example, appeal was made to Revelation 8:1, to the great silence during which all creatures stand before the Son of Man. And for the never-ending praise (*laus perennis*) that the monks were to offer God, they followed numerous Scriptural passages.

Now, the danger exists that we will not take all this seriously enough and that we will interpret away the real intention in monastic life by thinking of it in connection with some hackneyed expression such as enjoying "a heaven on earth." I know that this is the predominant tendency in interpretation. For the medieval person, however, the "new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (Rev. 21:2) was now already reality. As we shall see, the category of the "anticipation of eternity" had consequences for the history of culture that can be felt to the present day.

Let us now put asceticism aside for a few moments. No, I would ask one more question: we heard that even the most rigorous ascetics knew of the goodness of God's creation. But why, then, such detachment from this world, why this immediate habitation of the "heavenly places"? We sense that everything hinges on the meaning of "goodness." I hope that it will become clear that our view of the relation culture-salvation depends upon what we are able to discover in the concept of the good. To this end I want to look briefly at

Berkhof's book, *Christ the Meaning of History*, which appeared and went through three editions only last year.⁶

How different the world of this writer is from that of the ascetic! Berkhof's reflections pertain to history in the first place, but culture is such an important part of history that we can speak of Berkhof's theology of culture with as much justification as of his theology of history. The central feature of Berkhof's perspective is his approach to the whole of culture and the whole of history as analogies of the cross and resurrection of Christ.⁷ Berkhof appears in this way to supply an answer to the age-old problem of how Christ is in a concrete sense the center of world history. That particular question we must leave aside here, in order to concentrate entirely on the substance and meaning of the analogies. In order to understand them fully we would have to present an extensive survey of Berkhof's book, but we cannot do that here, of course. (For that matter, we would have to do a lot more: we would have to study Berkhof's book against the background of current developments in theology of history, in Barthian and Roman Catholic circles in particular. But let us return to the analogies.) In Berkhof's conception, too, we encounter the currently popular but fortunately not yet generally accepted notion that history does not begin until Jesus Christ. Given this postulate, the perspective one will have on history is already decided. In the first place, it is immediately clear that Christian missions must excel all other forces in shaping history since "the missionary endeavor leads to freedom." It is equally clear that the freedom which missions confer is not the freedom that existed before Christ and which belonged to people of all times, but a freedom which liberates man from a deified reality: till then, man was bound to the (natural) powers that came to him as gods or that were filled with something godlike; he could not free himself of them: apart from them there was no point of orientation to be found for the construction of a new life. Sexuality, for example, was not a purely earthly state or event but something understood as human participation in the divine creative life; what was not at stake, then, when man withdrew himself from this process!

Now, on this view the decisive thing that came about in Christ was that man acquired freedom with respect to the world around him and for the first time was truly liberated from the cycle of naturalism. For the first time, through Christ's victory, it could now be revealed what is in man, in man as he came forth from the hand

of God, as he was before he got caught up in the sacral order of life. In Christ's victory the dynamic of man's 'becoming' was set in motion, manifesting itself in man's independence from nature. Against this background, technology and culture appear not as the ripe fruits of the ancient world but as products of the gospel and the kingdom. Decisive for Berkhof's interpretation of culture is his notion that the new order of life, the powerful manifestation of culture and technology, can also be the portion of one who accepts and experiences them outside their origin, outside Christ. The new salvation, whose richness is not really seen until it is contrasted with the bygone, nature-bound, sacral order of life, comes to be shared in equally by those who remain far from belief in Christ. The lordship of Christ over this world has become so overpowering that non-Christians are often less attached to the old pattern of life and more devoted to building up culture than Christians are.

Countless people are in the service of Christ's dominion without knowing it or desiring it: scholars, artists, physicians, nurses, educators, social workers, engineers and technical assistants in underdeveloped countries, but also and no less the mothers at home who pass Christ's order of life on to their children. These and many others are in the service of Christ — who has compassion on the groaning creature that waits with earnest expectation for deliverance into liberty (Romans 8:19-22) . . .⁸

This quotation is found in the chapter on 'The Risen Christ in History'. "Therefore what we call progress in the world also originates in Him, just as the entire concept came into the world only after and through Christianity."⁹ For Berkhof, the resurrection power of Christ in history consists not only in the restraining of the power of sin; it is likewise a principle that really sets history in motion in good earnest, and forms it. The writer speaks in this connection of "analogies" of Christ's resurrection, but his conceptions go far beyond simple analogical thinking.

Now, does the foregoing mean an unbounded optimism to Berkhof? No, for as he says, "Whenever freedom is awakened in this fallen world, there will also be a misuse of freedom."¹⁰ The very preaching of liberty in Christ opens the possibility for man to use his acquired freedom apart from and even against God and thus to behave as an anti-god and the measure of things.

Many of the nuances in Berkhof's interpretation had to be left out of our summary. Most of what I have said thus far will be

familiar to you, for it is in keeping with the theological thought of former ages and of our own time. Berkhof's basic theme has appeared repeatedly, in various terminological guises, in the course of time. Thus the idea that salvation can fall to someone's lot independently of his personal attitude of faith is at once old and new; nowadays the phrase often used for it is "objectivity of salvation."

There is another notion in Berkhof that has become fashionable in recent decades; I mean "thinking from the center," that is, from Christ. It is especially with respect to this point that H.N. Ridderbos and J.T. Bakker¹¹ have expressed criticism of Berkhof's way of thinking. I shall return to this point later.

We have now assembled sufficient material to enable us to pick up the thread of our argument concerning asceticism as it pertains to the relation between culture and salvation. But, someone may caution us, are we now not comparing or bringing together conceptions that are far removed from each other and that betray entirely different worlds of thought? At the risk of becoming bogged down in complications, we will seek our way in the confrontation of highly divergent views.

We have already observed that the genuine ascetic attitude to life does not imply a manichean denial of the goodness of this world. Perhaps this very heresy of Manicheism saved nascent asceticism from open dualism. Still, the Christian ascetics often promoted so radical a renunciation and non-use of the world that, as a Roman Catholic writer, Joseph Ernst Mayer, remarks, "a certain quiet propensity toward dualism breaks through which then congeals, in popular piety, in a positively heretical, manichean form."¹²

It should be noted that Mayer's words pertain not only to the early Christian centuries but also to our own time. To the ascetic mind the goodness of the world and its independence with respect to God—and thus its unusability—were two poles, albeit the former was often lost in the latter.

Perhaps we ask in great astonishment how this was possible: to have begun with recognition of the goodness of God's world and yet before long to have ended with the demand to abstain from this world? To my mind: because people grounded this goodness in the creation. At first blush this statement will seem obscure and unacceptable. Even I, when I do not reason from the beginning, seem to

start thinking from the center. Perhaps a few people here and there feel frustrated at the rather roundabout way in which I try to extricate us from this tangle. Yet there are too many important things at stake for us to simply cut through the knots.

The ascetic acknowledges that God has made everything good but discovers that the world, because of the Fall, now seeks itself rather than God; he also discovers that love of the world likewise dwells within himself. Up to this point we are in agreement with him. It is the ascetic's experience that the world proffers itself repeatedly, in all its desirability and fearsome temptation, even in his lonely cell and cloister. Yet he also knows divine deliverance, a place of refuge, namely, eschatological space, already present on this earth, in part at least, present as an anticipation of heaven: the cloister cell involves at bottom, as Jean Leclercq¹³ observes, the translation, the transmission—still on this earth, in this sinful world—of eschatological values.

To continue speaking in spatial categories: as a result of the estrangement of the world from God, access to the space of the good creation silted up, while the center of history, the cross and resurrection of Christ, seemed to afford entrance only to places where a foretaste of heaven and the heavenly future could be enjoyed. But what did the center of history mean for worldly, for everyday existence, for culture, for socio-economic life? When we consult the popular conceptions and the commonplace phrases, we can answer without hesitation: the influence of Christ's work at the turning point of the ages was very great indeed—did it not, for example, stamp many centuries as the "Christian Middle Ages," as the "theocratic period" (700-1300)? I mention this example because it was at this time that asceticism also reached its peaks. That being the case, were the blessings of cross and resurrection then perchance *not* restricted to experiencing heavenly values in monastic solitude and to saving souls? Could it be that the blessing flowed out instead over the breadth of human life? Our problem displays so many facets that the danger of distortion is a constant peril; I want therefore to say in passing that however critical we may be—as will appear shortly—of the idea of *Christian Middle Ages*, we fully recognize that Christianity had a powerful impact, despite all resisting forces and harmful conceptions, amongst which we also include the monastic tendencies. And I do mean "despite," for humanly and unhistorically speaking, much more could have come

of the Christianization of Europe if monastic theology had not in many ways restricted the meaning of the cross of Christ. It simply did not know what to do with this sinful world—it wanted to keep it at bay, even to overcome it by fleeing it, but in so doing it deprived itself of the possibility of retaining its connection with Christ. To avoid the reproach that as Reformed Protestants we are poorly equipped to comprehend the true nature of medieval life, I shall cite Roman Catholic authors, especially the well-known German medievalist Michael Seidlmayer:

The monastic life represents—and this is a second ancient catchword (present already, for example, in the Rule of St. Benedict)—the *militia Christi*, life as military service for Christ. And to this ideal the layman, too—the Christian who is living in the world—insofar as he strives after true perfection, has to conform, as best (or as poorly as) he can. For all intents and purposes the Christian ethic of the Middle Ages amounted to a “monasticization of the lay world.” Apart from the brief flowering of a class ethic in courtly chivalry, the Middle Ages were not able to work out (in any case not beyond a few fragmentary theoretical beginnings) a Christian lay ethic, an ethic that is erected upon an unreserved appreciation for life in the world with its tasks and its values and so is *grounded in itself*—which points up one of the essential respects in which the spiritualized (later) Middle Ages no longer did justice to their Christian mission. The layman remains, so to speak, the Christian ‘at the left hand of God’.¹⁴

Other writers of recent times strike the same chords as Seidlmayer. Here I shall mention only Father Ephraem Hendrikx¹⁵ and the previously cited J.E. Mayer:

It seems to me that the Church’s attempts so far to give the lay element its own proper form of Christian perfection have not been very strong, and less so as history has worn on. Granted, attempts to mold worldly Christians and laymen Christianly are found in St. Francis, in St. Francis of Sales, also in Ignatius, yet it appears to me that today the problem is being addressed much more urgently and in much broader terms than before. For, surely, one cannot shake a certain uncomfortableness when one sees again and again how in the very theories and spiritual teachings of the masters, precisely because of their distance from the world, a certain quiet propensity towards dualism breaks through which then congeals, in popular piety, in a positively heretical,

manichean form. One cannot miss noticing in many popular writings on the spiritual life that there is discernible, to say the least, an aversion to vocation and marriage and the world which goes beyond the proper measure and which somehow discovers in the essence of things, instead of eschatological relativity, evil itself

Is Christian perfection a commandment for all Christians or only a counsel for the select, talented, charismatically gifted few? At issue is the opposite of Matthew 5:48 and Matthew 19:21.¹⁶

Numerous Roman Catholic writers emphasize that the ideal of perfection (dying to the world out of love for God) has in the course of the centuries not been restricted to the inhabitants of cell and cloister but has been valid for every Christian: every believer must *detach* himself from the earth in order to *attach* himself to God. This requirement of every Christian appears repeatedly in Christian authors, in particular in Chrysostom.¹⁷ It is now clear to us, however, why the Christian life in its monastic sense could not be realized in the world of the laity.

That culture and morality in many respects failed to measure up to Christian standards in the Christian centuries is not just to be attributed, however, to the fact that the ideal or, if you prefer, the norm, was set too high, that it lay in heaven, really, and was no longer suited to this earth. They had to fail because people overestimated the Christian life; they also foundered, however, because they underestimated it: we are compelled to acknowledge with the ascetic that the deep tendency of the world is to keep us from the love of God, yet we must at the same time contradict him: there is a possibility of escaping the mortal peril of worldly temptation, not in world-flight, but in surrender to Christ. Christ Himself set the requirement that man should detach himself from worldly things, and in a most radical way: "sell all that thou hast" (Luke 18:22); "whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33); yet at the same time Jesus points back to the world: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (in the high-priestly prayer, John 17:15). Jesus detaches His own from the world and at the same time attaches them to it, because in Him is perfect assurance that they can withstand the temptation of the world's self-sufficiency. In Christ, the non-use and use of the things of this world coincide.

There is thus a way from Christ to history, to a positive appreciation of culture and the whole of human life in all its facets: here we have the point of departure of the new, optimistic interpretation of cultural development after Christ, and we apparently have no choice but to adopt it.

Still, we sense difficulties. This time, however, it is a question of fine distinctions, and it is no easy matter to find just the right words; yet these distinctions have to be made, since they are ultimately decisive for our perspective on the possibility of a Christian culture. Must we—to take one point—proceed “from the center” (Christ) or “from the beginning” (creation)? At first glance the question seems unimportant; yet theologians discuss it animatedly, and rightly so. Berkhof views both culture and history from the center and the end, while the significance of the beginning remains entirely in the shadows. Herman Ridderbos, however, in his fascinating review of Berkhof’s book, maintains that the Christian view of culture is more multifaceted and more complex and that to ignore “the beginning” is to neglect a great part of reality.¹⁸ But in his own turn, Ridderbos found himself reproached for drawing two lines, one from creation and one from Christ and ending up as a result in a certain dualism.¹⁹ Ridderbos answers this with a fine discussion of the convergence of the two lines in Christ, as Paul shows us in his Epistle to the Colossians, but in the remainder of his argument he never entirely escapes the two-line approach.

I can imagine that many will think something is wrong here after all, and that in that case a consistently Christological approach still seems preferable. Again, is the question really of any importance? This is not the place to elaborate on all that may be entailed in thinking “from the center” or “from the beginning” or “from the end,” but one thing immediately strikes anyone who actually chooses one of these three possibilities: by doing so one is unable to do justice to certain important aspects of the whole question. Berkhof, for example, devalues Greek and Roman culture in its significance for the making of Western civilization by letting the disclosure of history take its inception in Christ. His picture of ancient culture, at least insofar as its essence is concerned, is rather unfavorable. To be sure, he is too keen a thinker to extend a rigid—naturalistic—scheme to the pre-Christian cultures; he knows

and acknowledges that both scientific historical research and philosophy of history have led to the insight that the last thousand years before Christ were a unique period in world history, a period of exceptional importance for this reason, that man no longer experienced himself as a function of the harmonious cycle of nature.²⁰ "The Greeks"—this is still Berkhof—"more than any other people before them, discovered man as a being that transcends natural events . . . , but history [to their mind] does not in principle stand above natural events." Consequently, in the Greek world there is "no room for history."²¹ It will be objected that Berkhof's view pertains to history, not culture. Granted; yet this objection cannot be admitted since it is of far-reaching importance for a view of culture whether the bearers of culture experience history as a cosmic natural process or as an event having a distinctive character and meaning of its own.

If thinking from the center brings Berkhof to an undervaluation of the pre-Christian cultures, it leads him no less to a schematization of the present cultural scene: after Christ, so Berkhof explains, the powers in this world rage against God, especially the power of self-deification; it is certainly not the case that after Christ's victory on the cross freedom in Christ has become the salvation of all: on the contrary, Jesus' triumph is accompanied by apostasy from the Christian faith, by anti-Christian doctrines of salvation, by a Faustian pursuit of self-realization. When we read all this we feel obligated to admit that the power of sin and evil appears to be taken in all its seriousness. Nevertheless, we hesitate to grant this, in view of the fact that Berkhof also advances the idea that people can come to share in salvation without having turned to the Fountain of salvation in personal conversion and that they can stand in the service of Christ's dominion without knowing or acknowledging it. To my mind, Berkhof renders his words about the anti-Christian powers in the dispensation of Christ's lordship powerless by sublimating them to the notion that Christ's salvation is shared in by those who do not accept His cross and His rule.

It is not only interesting but also illuminating once again to compare Berkhof's way of thinking on one particular point with that of Herman Ridderbos as well as of Abraham Kuyper. Berkhof proceeds from the center, with the result that the pre-Christian period fares badly at his hands; Ridderbos and Kuyper know, besides the center, also the beginning, the creation, and their assessment of an-

cient culture is more favorable.²² In this way, the assessment of the period between creation and incarnation becomes a touchstone of one's view of cultural history. Once again, with reference to what has been said above, I maintain that each of these interpretations entails a weakness: if one thinks only from the center, history before Christ seems to be inevitably shortchanged and the creation motif inevitably neglected; on the other hand, if one draws two lines, one from the creation and one from Christ, then a certain dualism seems unavoidable. Furthermore, a devaluation of the radical corruption of man and the power of sin and evil seems inherent to both interpretations.

Now, is there no escaping this dilemma? As a non-theologian, I shall not presume to indicate a way out, but I will attempt to cast some light on a few aspects of the problem that are also of decisive importance for the relation of culture and salvation. It is possible that what I am going to say is implied in Herman Ridderbos's exposition²³ of the connection between creation and Christ according to Colossians 1:15 ("Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature"); the reason that I have my doubts is that in this same exposition and also in his other writings this connection once again recedes into the background. But to the point.

Throughout the entire discussion the little word "good" recurs repeatedly. To my mind the view of the relation of the creation to Christ and vice versa is controlled by what people understand by "good." It also occurs in the creation story: "And God saw every thing that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). Must we understand this to mean that all things had what they were supposed to have, that they were created to the purpose? Or must we search behind these apparently so neutral words and read them in the light of what precedes them: "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness" (Gen. 1:28a)? Without hesitating we choose for the latter. But then everything comes to turn on understanding these words correctly; and how numerous have been the opinions about the "image of God"! Inspired in part by G.C. Berkouwer's very fine expositions of *Man the Image of God*,²⁴ we hear in the familiar words of Genesis 1:26 that the most essential thing that can be said of man is that he is totally and actively related religiously to God; this means that anything further that can be observed in or about man can be understood only on the basis of this relatedness to God. The image of God can consequently never be exhausted in a

mere relation to God: everything in and about man, everything he does and accomplishes, and the world in which he moves, is constituted from this religious relatedness to God; it is in the relation to God that the reality of human existence and the world is first disclosed. Calvin has already expressed this: "Man never attains to a true knowledge of himself unless he has first contemplated the face of God, and then comes down from contemplating Him to look into himself."²⁵

The light of the preceding is so clear that both the one line (from Christ alone) and the two lines (from both the creation and the incarnation) fade and another line comes into view, namely, the *theocentric*. The matter can be put this way: in human existence, yes, in all creation, the purpose is not man or the creature as such, but God. Everything revolves about Him and moves towards Him. This is what Genesis 1:26 principally teaches us. Now then, that is at the same time the essential, the real purpose of Christ's work, *the* meaning of the coming Kingdom, namely, the resumption of the original meaning of creation that was negated by man in his turning away from God. There is a great danger—strange to say—in the Christocentric approach, which often results in Christomonism or Christolatry, namely, that God is lost to view or relegated to the background. Christ Himself, however, points always away from Himself towards the Father; He has not come for Himself but for the Father. Jesus steps back so that the perfect wholeness (*heil*) and ultimate meaning, which were put into the creation by God, will now stand wholly revealed: "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John 5:30; cf. John 6:38ff, John 4:34, etc.).

There is thus agreement between the divine purpose in creation and the work of Christ; the new element that is revealed in the latter, namely grace, is an answer to the negative response from man's side.

Theologically, the entire religious relatedness of man and world to God now lies open to view. But—whenever this insight is to be made fruitful for culture and history, numerous difficulties arise, almost all of them having their essence in this, that they still continue to insist somehow on a certain independence for man in his worldly activities; that the religious relatedness to God is acknowledged, to be sure, but that the qualifiers *totally* and *actively* demand just a little too much of a (Christian) person. Anyone who is

not immediately persuaded of this should read Berkouwer's important discussion of freedom: here a serious attempt is made to understand this concept entirely in terms of the relation to God and to exclude every notion of a more comprehensive formal concept of freedom;²⁶ but from the reactions to it, it is apparent how difficult it is for many people to accept an integral religious idea of freedom (the addition of the term "integral" to "religious" is really redundant yet appears necessary nonetheless). I firmly believe there is a solution to the problem of culture, as well as a solution to the problem of freedom, and that it involves relating them to the intimate connection between creation history and the revelation of the Kingdom of Christ. We have already seen (from Genesis 1:26-31) that it is not possible to speak of the goodness of things in a neutral way, apart from the relation to God; only in directedness to Him are they good, purposeful, etc. Now then, in Jesus Christ the direction of man and things is again what it originally was. Jesus takes over, as it were, the final words of Genesis 1 ("everything that He had made . . . was very good") in His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, specifically in the closing passage of Matthew 6. In Christian circles people often see a contradiction,²⁷ or at least a different emphasis, between Genesis 1 and Matthew 6. The first book has the cultural mandate; carrying it out requires entering into cultural life; and it is nothing less than a divine commandment. In the Sermon on the Mount we hear the opposite; here the commandment is to put away the world of culture: you think you need food and clothing—cultural goods if ever there were any—but mind you well: these are the things after which the Gentiles seek (Matt. 6:32). The upshot therefore seems to be that the Christian camp must necessarily split into two parties: there are the cultural optimists, the advocates of a Christian culture, the adherents of an objective salvation in Christ and of His supreme lordship in this world—they like to remind us that God made things good and impress upon us the universal significance of Christ's saving work; opposed to them, however, are the genuine ascetics, people for whom what matters above all else is pure, unobstructed love of God—and they want to call attention to the radicality of man's corruption and the world's tendency, given God's beautiful gifts, to forget God Himself.

Shall we say that both are right? Shall we say to the ascetic: the cultural mandate has been given to us, and when we act upon it we are always safe? Yet the ascetic will—quite correctly—counter with

the objection: you misjudge what at present moves culture. What shall the solution be? God tells us in the creation story and Christ explains to us in His sermon on taking no thought: cultural mandate, acceptance of culture, fine, but first remember that I am the meaning of all culture and that accordingly you can accept culture only when you desire My Kingdom and love Me more than yourself. See Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added unto you"; see also especially Mark 10:28-31, where Jesus elaborates, as it were, upon the words just cited:

Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Here Jesus explains concretely that even in this life, houses, lands, etc., will, for His sake, fall to the lot of those *who believe in Him*, on condition, however, that they first give up everything for Christ. The tragedy of the ascetic was that he neglected to read the words "in this life," or exegeted them away, because he failed to understand that Jesus restores the things of this world to us if we have but once given them up for His sake.

The danger is not imaginary, however, that we will construe as self-evident for Christians the total and active relatedness—restored in Christ—of all culture to God, in just as gratuitous a manner as that in which, according to Berkhof, "countless people are in the service of Christ's dominion without knowing it or desiring it."²⁸ But it is precisely in this way that the essence of a Christian culture would elude us.²⁹

What strikes us in the Scriptures and particularly in Genesis 1 and Matthew 6 is the nearness of all culture to God. That nearness culminates in the words of Genesis 1:26: "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness, and let them have dominion . . . over all the earth." This passage links man's cultural calling most intimately

with his total relatedness to God, for in the clause “and let them have dominion over all the earth”—which is a literal translation of the Hebrew text—the word “them” signifies those who possess the meaning of their existence in living before the face of God. Culture is carried on immediately before the face of God—even when man, in his desire to be something in himself, denies, disesteems, or attempts to destroy this nearness and immediacy to God. Man can never slip out of the relation to God, not because he desires to remain in it but because God keeps him there.

We can say many things about culture, about its forms and its unfolding, but the moment we inquire after its meaning or ask about its relation to salvation we stop getting answers as long as we remain within mundane dimensions. It is as if everything transpires in interaction with God, and about that only the Scriptures can make us wise. We must catch the light that falls here, and that is not easy, if only because the Bible often speaks in other terms and about other matters than those with regard to which we consult it. Yet this is ultimately still no obstacle, for the Scriptures always center on the relation in which man and things stand to God—this often happens in a story or a detailed description—and therefore the words of the Bible touch people and things that may be separated by many centuries.

Thus the Scriptures speak to us directly as we wrestle with the problem of culture: the immediacy of culture before God according to the creation story and the Sermon on the Mount expresses the meaning of culture: nearness to God is salvation, is the meaning of life in all its expressions.³⁰

In that case, if culture remains in immediacy to God under all circumstances so that its proper meaning can never be lost, in view of the fact that God constantly manifests Himself in it, does it really make any difference, then, whether people believingly acknowledge the fundamentally religious meaning of culture or not? It almost seems as though Paul had foreseen this central question; in any case, in Romans 1:18 he answers it directly: the truth can be held in unrighteousness—and it is so held by those who stray from God and thus attempt to escape God’s immediate nearness. Just as loving surrender to God and living in His nearness determines culture in its essence and external features, so also does the negation or misconception of the true meaning of all of life leave its imprint on culture: if it can no longer find its meaning in God, then it must

itself become meaning—an identification which can take place in two ways, either by equating culture and the divine (or at least blurring the boundary between the two), or by attempting to locate the fullness of meaning or of salvation directly in culture, history, the state, sexuality. The former dominates in cultures that have not yet been affected, or affected but weakly, by Christianity, the latter in all cultures that have passed through Christianity and now offer resistance in increasing measure to God as the meaning of life.

The transference of meaning away from God's immediate nearness in the issues of life entails yet another very important consequence: it introduces a profound restlessness into culture, which manifests itself in cultural forms. Whenever man seeks the meaning of life in culture, he discovers that the form, the style, the cultural expression which he has invested with the meaning neither is nor ever can be that meaning. Psychologically and historically, the existential disappointment at the failure of a generation or of an entire era finds expression in a feeling of discontent (i.e., a remaining without inner peace), in a reaction, in the search for a new style; once again expectations are high: will the new forms finally manifest the meaning that is in all things? I do not know how long this expectation has dominated our culture: perhaps it arose (again) in the Middle Ages—at least, the Gothic had it when it substantialized the Kingdom of God on earth; and Modern Times, in which the transcendental background of earthly things recedes ever more from view, attempt to overcome it by means of an identification of this world with a perfect world or secularized earthly paradise. For some considerable time now, the restlessness in culture has been on the increase: modern man is able to discover ever more quickly that meaning cannot be here, so perhaps it is some place else: the expectation of the disclosure of the meaning of culture has become a matter of 'moments'. We cannot help but be reminded here of what is happening nowadays in the relation between the sexes: people expect the meaning of life to be revealed in this relation, but they demand of it what it can never give. So the dilemma confronts us here, too: either entertain expectations no longer, since salvation lies outside the things and the relationships, or live in tension between the disappointing present and the still undisclosed, perhaps meaningful future.

The ascetic tried, in order to abide in the love of God, to get away from the world of culture, but he never succeeded; understandably so, it will be said, for no one can live outside culture. Yet the cause lies deeper: cultures may rise and fall, may unfold powerfully or petrify slowly, but man can never step outside of them because he cannot dissociate himself from the meaning of his own existence.

Modern man restlessly turns from one cultural form to another, merely touching them. Culture does not give itself, however, when it is desired only for its external appearance. It opens itself only to those who want to understand it in its essence and deep meaning. But that demands from the man of culture the sacrifice of himself—loss of self in the Biblical sense described above.

We are going to close, perhaps to your disappointment, for it is just now that things should really begin to open up. Can we stop here without having made our reflections fruitful for ever so many practical and scientific questions, which neither will nor should lose their grip on us? And yet it is good that we can close here, for time and again we see it happen that the religious background of our cultural problems is acknowledged only to be taken less than seriously in practical life. What is urgently needed is that we again and again dwell a good while upon the perspective I have sketched above. One who does so will be able to understand that we conclude now in the spirit of Advent, since in God, the Meaning of all that is, the meaning of culture is very near to us.

Notes

1. A. Camus, *Les Justes, Acte IV* (Paris, 1950), pp. 123-24. Cf. G. Didier, "Eschatologie et engagement chrétien" [Eschatology and Christian engagement], *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 75 (1953): 1ff.
2. Cf. Macarius the Great, *Homiliae* 24, 1f. (PG 34:661 D).
3. On this point, see Uta Ranke-Heinemann, "Die Gottesliebe als ein Motiv für die Entstehung des Mönchtums" [The love of God as a motive for the rise of monasticism], *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 8 (1957): 289ff.
4. Jean Leclercq, O.S.B., *L'Amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1957); Eng. trans. by Catharine Misrahi, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 67; Eng. trans. p. 72.
6. Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christus de zin der geschiedenis* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1958); Eng. trans. from the 4th ed. of 1962 by Lambertus Buurman, *Christ*

the Meaning of History (London: SCM Press, 1966).

7. *Ibid.*, chs. 6 and 7, pp. 94ff.; Eng. trans. pp. 101ff.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 160f.; Eng. trans. p. 171.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 85; Eng. trans. p. 92.
11. H.N. Ridderbos in *Gereformeerd Weekblad*, Sept. 5-Oct. 3, 1958; J.T. Bakker in *Homiletica* 17 (1958), nr. 3, pp. 13-20.
12. J.E. Mayer, "Volkomenheit in dieser Zeit" [Being perfect in our time], in *Seid vollkommen* [Be ye perfect] (Vienna, 1955), p. 198.
13. Leclercq, p. 59; Eng. trans. p. 66.
14. M.Seidlmayer, "Religiös-ethische Probleme des italienischen Humanismus," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 39 (1958): 108.
15. E. Hendriks, *Lekenspiritualiteit, een probleem in de geschiedenis van de Kerk* [Lay spirituality: A problem in the history of the Church], (Nijmegen, 1959), *passim*.
16. Mayer (see note 12), pp. 197f.
17. Cf., e.g., *In Mattheum homilia* 55.6 (PG 58:548). Cf. Leclercq, p. 69: "se détacher de la terre pour s'attacher à Dieu."
18. *Gereformeerd Weekblad*, Sept. 19, 1958.
19. *Ibid.*, Oct. 3, 1958.
20. Berkhof, p. 14; cf. Eng. trans. p. 18. Karl Jaspers refers to this period by the—now commonly accepted—term "first axial period."
21. Berkhof, p. 17; cf. Eng. trans. p. 21.
22. For Abraham Kuiper, see inter alia *De Gemeene Gratie* [Common Grace], 4th impr. (Kampen: Kok, n.d.), pp. 422ff. See also H.N. Ridderbos, *op. cit.*
23. *Gereformeerd Weekblad*, Oct. 3, 1958.
24. G.C. Berkouwer, *De mens het beeld Gods* (Kampen: Kok, 1957). Eng. trans. by Dirk W. Jellema, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).
25. *Institutes* I.i.2. In the same vein Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1955; Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1955), pp. 560ff. and G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, pp. 19ff.
26. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, pp. 310-48.
27. On this controversy, see P. Schoonenberg, "Onderwerpt de aarde" [Subdue the earth], *Nederlandse Katholieke Studiën* 52 (1956): 162-65.
28. See note 8.
29. On this point, see J.E. Mayer (note 12), pp. 200ff.
30. Cf. the beautiful short essay, "De twee vormen van het geluk" [The two forms of happiness], in J.H. Bavinck, *Flüsen en fragmenten* (Kampen: Kok, 1959).



The Sacred Dwelling Place

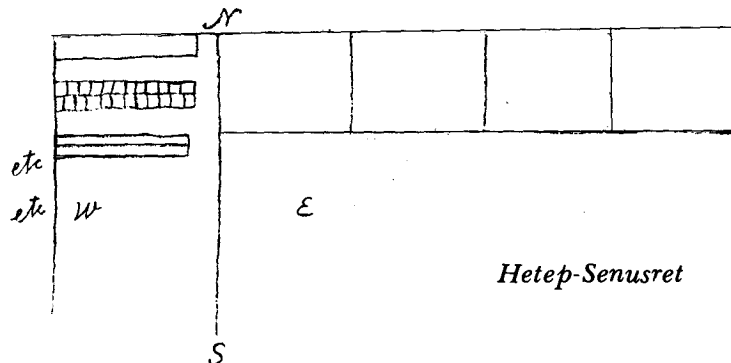
[1960]

FOR ORIENTATION IN the problem I would raise today, we shall first make an imaginary visit to various cities and edifices.

(1) Egypt

Located at the entrance of the Fayum is the city of Kahun, the present name for Hetep-Senusret, which was built by Senusret II of the Twelfth Dynasty in about 2000 B.C. Only a part of this city has been preserved, namely, the northern part; the southern part was washed away.

The most striking thing about the layout of the city is the north-south orientation both of the city as a whole and of its individual houses, so that the streets run in an east-west direction. Moreover, a north-south wall divides the city into western and eastern parts. The former was for unfree workers. The latter was for the magnates; there, too, were the market and shops. The houses of the magnates make no mean impression; they had as many as eighty rooms and were situated against the northern wall of the city.



In addition, there are the temple buildings and the palace, for the city Hetep-Senusret (which means *May Senusret be gracious*) served at the same time as a residence of the king and his court.

The city is a small one, but all the important parts and aspects of life are present: economic, social, political, and religious life. Thus Kahun is not a sacred city in the strict sense of various other ancient oriental cities—e.g., Persepolis, Arbela, Loyang. Nor is it a place in which economic life dominates. It seems to be just a very normal, everyday city that owes its great fame to nothing but its well-preserved layout—a city, thus, that can be regarded as an important source for our knowledge of ancient oriental urban structure.

And yet, this city raises a very important question: Why the precise north-south alignment, which has been carried through even into the components, not in the geometrical sense but certainly so that every building (consistent with a living harmony) has acquired a proper place in the social order, which in turn is itself incorporated into the north-south orientation?

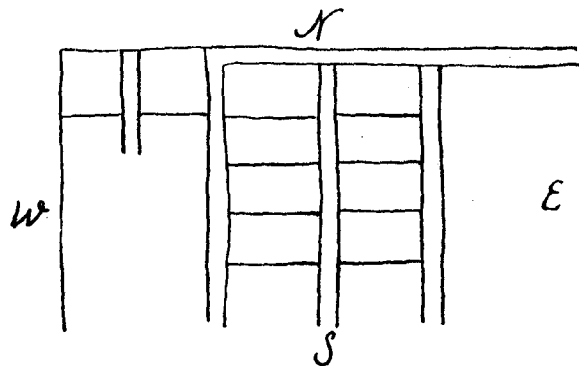
I want to say more about this order. An organism arose whose laws were in turn determined by the requirements of climate, the social order, and religious conceptions. These three elements are inseparable, however, because according to the conceptions of the ancients, life is a unity. When they mention first one aspect and then another they do not mean to say that these aspects can be isolated from each other; their attention is merely focused, and only temporarily, on one particular aspect. For example, when the artisans were settled in the western part of the city, that was for more than one reason: there was a climatological one—the bad winds blew out of the west; but there was also a religious one—evil came from the west. Furthermore, the homes of the magnates lay along the northern wall. At Kahun it is uncertain, however, where the temple or temples may have been located.

To form a correct notion of the Egyptian city and of the layout of Hetep-Senusret, we shall visit two other Egyptian cities. First, El Amarna, not the renowned city of kings and temples but the so-called workers' city, which is no less famous, though only among specialists. Every pharaoh required a very large number of workers to build a city of his own, his grave, and the temple complex that

went with it. Usually, space was reserved for these workers in the temple city itself—think of Kahun—but in the case of Amarna a separate city was built for the workers to the east, happily so because it gave rise to one of the most remarkable cities in the world, remarkable for the model—not unknown, however, elsewhere in the world—but especially for the purity with which it was executed: the whole is a quadrate, divided into western and eastern sectors by a wall in the middle. The western sector has one street and the eastern four streets running in a north-south direction parallel to the outer walls; all the houses on these streets are situated in an east-west direction. The result of such planning was a *checkerboard model*, without any deviation since there were no public buildings. Many questions still remain to be answered: for example, what was the purpose of the wall that split the city into eastern and western sectors? Yet the system is clear: the north-south alignment, the parallel streets, and the houses placed at right angles to the streets.

There is one further aspect of the Egyptian city that might be pointed out, and for that we go to Thebes, the capital city of the Middle and New Kingdoms, situated on the Nile. At Thebes, too, we must content ourselves with probable boundaries, and then we find—insofar as we can judge at the moment—that the alignment this time was not exactly north-south but south-west to north-east for the long axis, an alignment oriented to the course of the Nile.

If we could discuss every ancient Egyptian city known today, we would discover that almost without exception their perimeters have the form of a rectangle or even a square. Further, should any significance be attached to the fact that the water of sacred pools, of



Amarna

canals, of the Nile played an important role in the life of the city?

Thebes was the capital of the Middle and New Kingdoms. Here the Nile flows in a north-easterly direction, and the bordering hills run further apart, widening the valley. The Egyptians call it Nu, the city; or Nu-a, the *great* city; or Nu-amon, the city of Amon. To the Greeks it was *Diospolis hē magalē*, the *great* city of the gods. The Latin name was *Diospolis Magna*. Today the area is one of the villages: El-Uksor, or Luxor; and El-Karnak.

Thebes is very old, antedating the Middle Kingdom. It was destroyed in 661 B.C. by the Assyrians, later again by Cambyses, and in 24 B.C. by the Romans. Homer said it had a hundred gates. It is worthwhile to note the references in the prophet Nahum: "Art thou [Nineveh] better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had waters round about it . . . ?" (Nahum 3:8). The term *be* ("among" in the King James Version) can mean "on" or "between"; and in the Hebrew Bible *ye'orim* is the plural (albeit for the Nile) of *ye'or*, from the Egyptian word for the Nile.

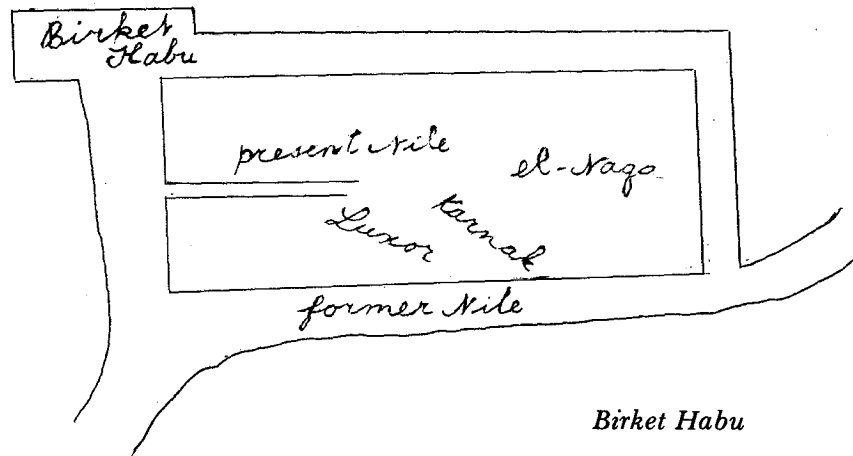
The size of the city in various periods is uncertain, but in about 24 B.C. Strabo visited it and reported that traces of the city were discernible for a length of what would be about fourteen kilometers. That *could* mean the city was about that long, which would be acceptable in view of the fact that the probable length of Memphis was nine to thirteen kilometers. Strabo aside, if we take the present area of ruins we get nine kilometers by six kilometers, with the nine kilometers as the southwest-northeast axis and the six kilometers for the short axis.

Thebes raises countless questions. The present situation is as follows: Karnak and Luxor are on the east bank of the Nile, the Nile itself having lateral tributaries, not at right angles but branching from the Nile and then running parallel for a stretch, and then more ruins on the right banks against the hills, and in the hills the royal tombs, with extensive empty spaces in between. Thebes as we know it today gives us no impression of the [ancient] city. That is not to say it was not there, for the street plan also shows us no city *between* the streams (see Nahum). In all likelihood the Nile flowed much more to the east four thousand years ago, to the east of Thebes' eastern wall, with artificial canals from the Nile protecting the southern and northern walls.

However many the probabilities, it is certain that the main directions of the city follow the course of the Nile (namely, the main

streets and monumental buildings). Just as in Memphis, the waters of the Nile are diverted for the construction of canals, lakes, and the like, and it is probable that one of these canals gave rise to the river's present course.

Speaking of lakes, one of them can still be accurately reconstructed. One kilometer by two kilometers in length, its axis parallel to the Nile, it was built by Amenhotep III in front of his palace, called Birket Habu today. Issuing into this lake at right angles was a kilometer-wide canal that most likely received its waters from the Nile.



In summary, one can say the following about Egyptian cities:

- a. The main direction is north-south, with larger or smaller deviations as required by the course of the Nile (see Thebes or Amarna) or by the terrain.
- b. Palaces and houses of magnates are oriented towards the north (e.g. also Tanis in the eastern delta), while the temples usually point towards the east.
- c. The perimeter of the Egyptian city is predominantly rectangular and sometimes even perfectly square.
- d. Egyptian cities were constructed according to certain ratios: 1:1; 1:2; 1:2.5; 1:3; 2:3; 3:5. These proportions were applied to items large and small.
- e. Worthy of note is the important function of water in Egyptian life: the Nile itself, many canals, and also lakes and pools in urban life.

f. Certain deviations notwithstanding, the layout of the Egyptian city is plain, and its straight, consistent forms even give it a modern look.

All this being so, we cannot help but ask: What are the principles that govern it?

(2) India

In recent decades the so-called Indus culture has acquired great renown, especially through the publications of Ernest MacKay, *Die Induskultur: Ausgrabungen in Mohenjo-Daro und Harappa* (London, 1938) and *The Early Indus Civilization* (London, 1948), and also Mortimer Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization* (Cambridge, 1953).

In the prehistoric period or towards its close a nation of conquerors (where they came from is not known) invaded the land and subjugated the indigenous population (in about 3000 or 2600 and 2500 B.C.). It is probable that this race was spared serious political turmoil and was able to develop its culture for some thousand years. The question concerning contacts between this culture and other cultures has still not been answered. Especially interesting is the question of its relation to Mesopotamian culture. It has been suggested—a very interesting point of view—that the Sumerian and Indus cultures originated in the same region, namely, the mountains and plateau situated between Mesopotamia and India. If that is true, the conditions for habitation there must have been far better than they are today, especially with regard to climate. Unfortunately, archeological data is still inadequate for providing a clear picture of how the land was inhabited.

The important settlements of the Indus culture are Mohenjo-Daro in the Sind north of Karachi, on the Indus River; and Harappa, far to the north and east of the Indus, in the Punjab. In the former, we must have a look at the residential city. The city has something most remarkable: ten levels have been excavated representing ten urban periods, yet with no essential difference between the levels. The levels reveal that the end came each time as a result of some catastrophe, most probably natural and not political. The final demise occurred in about 1500 B.C. through revolts or foreign invasions, and the culture of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa was destroyed; the Aryan invasions came some two hun-

dred years later, which explains why the Aryans adopted nothing of the indigenous culture. The intervening period is called that of the Dravidians. In contrast to the culture of Mohenjo-Daro, the Veda culture was purely agrarian, at least at the outset.

Mohenjo-Daro was spread over two hills, between which was a ravine some 250 meters wide, probably a branch of the Indus. Here, too, the streets ran north-south and east-west, without exception; the whole of the city was about 1100 meters by 1250 meters, its orientation to the four regions of the world. Three streets ran north-south more or less parallel to each other; and two streets ran east-west to the north and south of the western hill, which served as the citadel of the city with its own fortification. In this way the city was divided into twelve major precincts, each of which was in turn subdivided by broad or narrow streets; all of this was regular and oriented to the four winds. Here again there are palatial structures, ruled, however, by a confusing multiplicity of forms—the effect, in all likelihood, of later remodelling and joining of structures. The end result is a capricious whole. The size of these structures varies greatly: there is one with 112 chambers and there are many with eighteen. The significance of the city plan at Mohenjo-Daro is enhanced by its great similarity to that of Harappa in the north. Here, too, the citadel is in the center of the western sector; the orientation is to the four points of the compass; and the regularity in construction does not extend to the houses themselves. The impression does exist that Mohenjo-Daro had a more economic and civilian character and Harappa a more military one.

The Veda culture (1400-800 B.C.) evolved gradually: initially agrarian, it saw the development of life in villages, fortified villages, fortresses, later also royal citadels, and really only in the fourth phase (1000-800) certain settlements encompassed by city walls. It was in this phase, we know, that the layout and construction of houses, palaces, and cities according to sacred rules became established. How far back these rules go and whether they still had some connection with the Mohenjo-Daro culture is now beyond discovery. Failure to adhere to these rules, it was believed, resulted in certain misfortune. These rules were compiled in books—for example, in the *Silpa Sastra*, which consisted of sixty-four books, some with instructions for architects and sculptors.

The *Silpa Sastra* stipulated the maximum dimensions for houses for the king, military chiefs, ministers, specifying length,

breadth, height, and number of chambers, and the house was strongly oriented to the four winds. Moreover, all this—especially the last requirement—was absolutely essential for the good fortunes of the house, its inhabitants, and all it contained!

From the *Silpa Sastra* it is more than clear that the rules governing the construction of the house were not just important technical, economic, and perhaps aesthetic considerations but, decisively, religious-sacral ones. Now there need not always be a clearcut distinction between the technical and the religious-sacral requirements—which might explain why these religious-sacral requirements elude us whenever we are confronted with archeological data unaccompanied by written sources.

The *Silpa Sastra* does not let matters rest with these general rules but goes on to provide detailed information concerning the religious-sacral meaning of its components. It is worthy of mention that this applies not just to religious edifices such as temples but equally to ordinary houses and settlements. For example, essential in the religious-sacral meaning are the locations of the doors; the open veranda (on one or several sides, or a specified side of the house); the interior structure (in particular, the corners and the center); the forms; the measurements; and the building materials.

The same can be said of the construction of cities. Religious conceptions of the city are decisive. Orientation was to the four regions of the world; measurements and proportions were fixed. Especially important were the two principal streets. The longer east-west street was the royal street; the shorter north-south street was the broad street; and within the city was a city ring or processional street; and in the center of the city was a hill where a temple tower or *stupa* might eventually be built. There were even various magic zones for various castes among the people.

In summary, house and city were conceived and constructed as the microcosmic epitome of the macrocosm and imbedded in nature and landscape and climate. Furthermore, house and city, settlement and dwelling were thereby placed in relation to the powers of the underworld and the world above; and precisely in this relation house and city, etc., are directly linked to happiness, misfortune,

blessing, curse (these concepts in their all-embracing, religious-sacral sense). That is the heart of the matter.

In the writings I have cited and elsewhere, a house is built when the sun moves north (December to June) and the moon waxes; the latter assures prosperity, the former light and blessing. The construction site may not be salty, and there must be no thorns (probably in connection with infertility). Certain trees are not permitted to face the prevailing winds, on pain of premature death.

One who desires fame and power must make a door to the east; one who desires cattle and children a door to the north. Moreover, numerous rites, including sacrifices and sprinkling, must be observed before and after construction or annually in order to guarantee blessing for the house.

Also important was the location of the sanctuary in the city or village. The Siva temple was in the northeast, the Visnu temple in the west, the Suriqa temple in the east. The entrance to the first and last of these would face the rising sun and the center of the settlement. Sanctuaries dedicated to evil or dreaded powers, however, were perforce located outside the settlement. To the northeast lay the way to heaven, the place of victory.

Thus building construction and world picture are interwoven, and they are grounded in the magical connection between the universe and the world of man: buildings can properly fulfill their functions only when they are in harmony with the structure of the universe.

Now an important question: The *Silpa Sastra* belongs to the phase 1100-800 B.C., which was Aryan, but what connection did it have to the Mohenjo-Daro culture? Are these conceptions strictly tied to the Aryans, and did they bring them with them?

Certain arguments can be advanced in favor of a connection. In the first place, the Aryan conquerors came down from the northwest of India via the passes of Karakorum, etc., and the first settlements were restricted to the Punjab and Indus region, that is, to what had been the Mohenjo-Daro culture zone, from whence they spread, but not until later, to the Ganges region, etc.

Secondly, when the Aryans arrived in about 1400 B.C., they

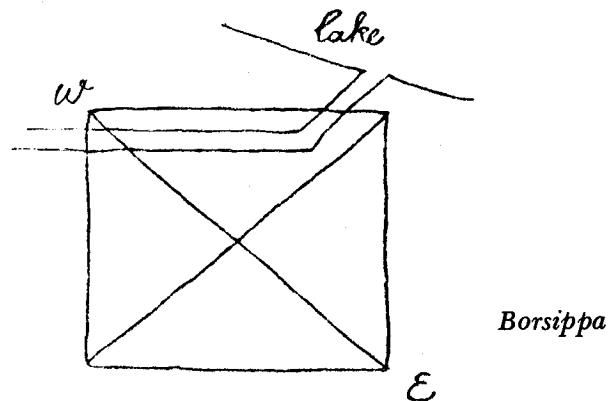
were an agrarian people who found city life distasteful; yet city life was well established by about 1100 B.C.; and the *Silpa Sastra* suggests a long-established urban tradition: the precise rules can only stem from long practical experience. It is therefore legitimate to wonder whether in the Aryan conceptions of the city we are not witnessing a revival of the urban tradition of the bearers of the Mohenjo-Daro culture.

(3) Mesopotamia

We have seen that in Egypt a uniform type of city was practically ubiquitous. In the Land between the Two Rivers the situation was entirely different.

At Borsippa the groundplan is a quadrate, as is the temple. It is not known how the residential streets and civil buildings were situated. Besides the perfectly square layout it also strikes us, however, that the streets, as far as our knowledge goes, did not run north-south and east-west, but that the diagonal is oriented exactly north-south in the case of the city and also of the main temple. Both diagonals intersect exactly in the center of the city and of the temple. Flowing through the city at right angles to the northern and southern walls and parallel to the eastern and western walls is an arm of a lake.

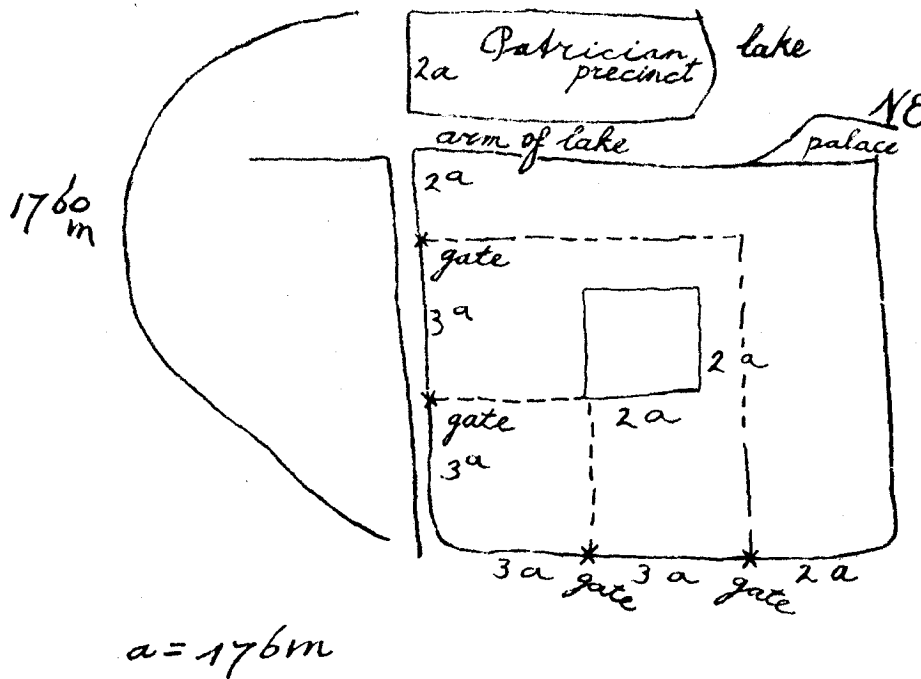
I might add that the same situation exists at Babylon, where, however, it is the Euphrates River that flows through the city.



Borsippa is located south of Babylon and west of the Euphrates. The city is (almost) an (extended) quadrate of 250 hectares, an area 1,408 meters by 1,760 meters.

The main temple is exactly in the center and is also a quadrate. The regularity in both quadrates is impressive; moreover, the temple quadrate is also at right angles to the arm of the lake; and we must not overlook the unit of measurement of 176 meters, which governs the proportions so that it is possible to construct a rather accurate table of ratios for the city as a whole; for example:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. of the temple quadrate | $2a = 2 \times 176m = 352m$ |
| 2. of the south side | $3a + 3a + 2a = 1408m$ |
| 3. total of one side | $10 \times 176 = 1760m$ |
| 4. total of the other side | $8 \times 176 = 1408m$ |
| 5. the gates, too, fit in; see, e.g., the four gates at 3×176 | |
| [There are actually seven gates in all.] | |
| 6. that is not all: the temple quadrate is equidistant from all city walls: | $3 \times 176 = 528m$ |



Borsippa

Our enumeration does not exhaust the characteristic features of this type of construction. The diagonals are oriented to the four winds, or better, to the four regions of the world, and the palace is situated in the northeastern corner, on the lake. The civic arrangement of the city is unknown, but according to one theory the artisans' residences were inside the temple area, together with the market. As to its orientation, Borsippa was therefore both on the water (either at right angles or parallel to it) and, in virtue of its diagonals, on the four regions of the world.

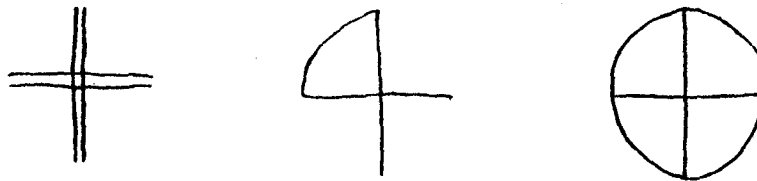
Dur Sarrukin, to the north of Nineveh, was built between 713 and 707 B.C. Here, too, a proportional design was followed, one reminiscent of Kahun, suggesting possible Egyptian influence. The unit of measurement was sixty-one meters—for the basic layout of the city, the offset from the walls, etc. Again, there are the same tendencies towards proportional designs as in Egyptian cities.

We cannot deal with every city, but we can note that Sumerian influences were important, as were Hittite, Kassite, and Egyptian influences.

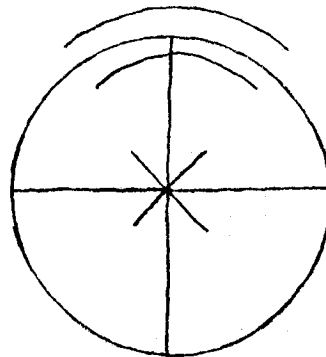
What is noteworthy in the Assyrian and Babylonian cities is the following: there were important external influences, but there was likewise something indigenous: on the one hand, there was an established basic plan that was often rectangular or quadratic with diagonals and axes, subject to geometrical and rational rules; while on the other hand, in the internal structures of the cities this plan was abandoned, creating an impression of disorder and lack of discipline. Both characteristics have been ascribed to the Semites—the latter feature purportedly reflecting the peculiarities of nomadic life; thus rectangular perimeters, but at the same time crooked streets. Additionally, the hilly terrain often influenced construction, causing striking irregularities in Nineveh and Assur, for example.

However all that may be, what interests us in the Land between the Two Rivers, for various reasons, is still another shape of city construction, and that is the circular city.

Is there any greater difference imaginable between a circle and a rectangle or square? And yet, from the standpoint of urban planning and architecture, these forms actually have a great deal in common: a center, and the north-south orientation. It recurs countless times in the East, but also on other continents. Given the north-south line, one draws schematically fixed lines parallel to it and also perpendicular lines and the ground plan is finished. But one can also bisect the north-south line with the east-west line, with a circle forming the perimeter of the whole, and the city is divided into four equal quadrants.



I would emphasize that the city consists of four equal parts that meet in the center, and that the center is situated at the point where the four regions of the world meet. I would point out in addition—do not say that this is self-evident—that the gates are located at the ends of the two intersecting main streets. This system appears in the Assyrian reliefs, e.g., the one in the palace at Kalach: here it pertains to an army camp that is so perfectly circular that the circumference can be drawn with a compass. Is this intended to be a pure representation of reality? That is not impossible, for the walls of the Hittite city Zendsjirli (c.1300 B.C.), with a diameter of 700 meters, at the foot of the Amanus had the strictly circular form. Later, similar cities are found with the Parthians, under the Sassanids. Beyond that, I would mention Baghdad, built under the



Baghdad

Abbasids, the "round city of Mansur" (A.D. 762); the perimeter consisted of a double wall, two concentric circles; both walls were surrounded by a moat, and each had four gates, all situated at the ends of the two streets which intersected at right angles in the exact center, where precisely was placed the palace of the caliph. Inside the inner wall ran a circular street that widened at each gate to form an open area.

In the light of the basic plan of Baghdad, it is possible to regard the Assyrian army camp at Kalach, the Parthian city Darabjird, the Sassanid city Firuzabad — all perfectly circular as if drawn with a compass — as prototypes of the most perfect circular city to be found anywhere in the world, namely, Baghdad.

An excursus on construction materials [excerpt]

There was little natural stone available in Mesopotamia, so people had to use materials made of clay, usually in brick form, e.g., 40 x 40 cm. with a thickness ranging from 5 to 10 cm. (see the writings of R.J. Forbes). These were usually only sun-dried, but for facing walls they were baked more thoroughly and often glazed. The clay bricks in the core of a wall were laid with mortar of clay, but the outer masonry in baked stone was often laid with asphalt. Glazed reliefs of fired brick were first modelled in clay, then cut into brick-form pieces for firing and glazing. Where the glazed bricks were dismantled in the course of time for use in the construction of houses, the inner core of sun-dried brick was exposed to wind and weather and quickly reduced to a shapeless mound of clay.

The upper part of a wall was built of less durable materials than the lower part, on account of the pressure. For example, the walls of the ziggurat or temple tower were built of fired brick to a height of about 1.60 meters and above that of sun-dried bricks.

Houses from the time of Hammurabi consisted of dried clay mixed with reeds, in brick form or as a compressed mass.

At Dur Sarrukin (built by Sargon II between 721 and 705 B.C.), the city wall has been preserved to a height of up to 2.3 meters, of which 1.10 meters consisted of natural stone and the part above that of bricks.

Practically all the houses of the Indus culture, including the very simple ones, were constructed of fired brick, doubtless with the

heavy rainfall in mind, since unfired brick would have been reduced quickly to a mass of clay.

In Egypt before the Third Dynasty construction was of woven reeds plastered with clay, of unfired — thus sun-dried — brick, and of wood, and seldom of natural stone. Real stone architecture as well as buildings exclusively of natural stone, together with the first applications of the pillar, also of natural stone, date from the Third Dynasty. Excavations corroborate the statement of Manetho, a Greek-Egyptian priest, that Imhotep invented the construction of monumental edifices from hewn natural stone.

(4) Denmark

My earlier statement, that Baghdad is the “most perfect circular city to be found anywhere in the world,” I shall have to retract, for in the last twenty years settlements have become known that surpass the system of the circular city in mathematical exactness, in a region where one would hardly have expected to find them.

I want to travel with you outside the Mohammedan world, away from the Baghdad of 762, to the world of northern Europe, to Trelleborg and Aggersborg. The former is a Viking citadel three to four kilometers from the coast of West-Seeland, thus on the Great Belt; the latter, likewise a Viking fortress, is on the Limfjord.

A brief historical digression is necessary here for a good understanding. Excavations were begun in 1934, and the fortresses acquired a name in the years the excavators published their reports: Nörlund published his report on Trelleborg in 1948 and C.G. Schultz his report on Aggersborg in 1949.¹

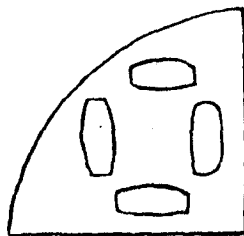
Nörlund advanced an historical interpretation of some plausibility: the fortresses probably were built shortly before A.D. 1000 and used until about A.D. 1050, when they fell into ruin. Nörlund associates them with the raids of King Sven Gabelhart (986-1014) into Western Europe: both citadels lay on the sea routes there, Sven was the great organizer of the Viking raids, and from the fortresses' construction it can be shown that the assault on England was carefully prepared: here were the assembly and embarkation points and, in case of failure, a safe haven. The fortresses were situated between two bodies of water, the outermost wall shielding them from the hinterland. Thus they were positioned on pro-

mentories surrounded by very little solid ground. Moreover, dividing the inner wall from the outer wall and the hinterland was a moat running the entire circumference of the two walls. The fortresses were exceptionally large, with estimates of up to a thousand men per garrison.

Undermining these conjectures is the fact that not a single artifact from England has been found at these sites, while there are many objects from the Baltic area; were they perhaps royal garrisons and directly under royal command?²

What accounts for the great scholarly interest in these fortresses? They are circular, but that was true elsewhere. Here, however, we are confronted with a strict mathematical system, with an exactness of execution which—insofar as is now known—made only one concession to the terrain or geographical conditions. The two main streets are axial or portal streets that intersect at right angles, thus connecting the eastern gate with the western one and the southern gate with the northern one. The system as a whole resembles exactly the concentric cities of the East, but there is more. The two axial streets divide the fortress into four quadrants and within each quadrant there are four buildings, thus sixteen in all. The radius of the fortress is eighty-five meters, including the wall of earth and wood, which is seventeen meters thick, but eighty-five meters is also the distance from this wall to the outer ring of defense works, so that the diameter of the inner fortress is 170 meters, which is likewise the length of the radius from the outer wall to the center. I quote you these numbers in order to give you an impression of the mathematical precision with which people went about their work here. These measurements recur time and again, but the numbers twenty-four, twelve, and in particular 29.5 occur even more fre-

Trelleborg quadrant



quently, since the chosen unit of measurement was the Roman foot; for example, the length of the buildings is one hundred Roman feet or 29.5 meters, and the diagonal of the central square is the same.

Ah, yes, those buildings, about which a great deal has already been written—they are in the shape of an ellipse truncated at both ends. It is generally agreed that these buildings are to be regarded as models of ships. But what does this symbolism mean? Or did these buildings originally serve as shelters for the ships in winter, although later they did not, since they were eventually furnished as quarters for the crews? Nörlund and Schultz, the two people who know Trelleborg and Aggersborg best, both point out that the latest finds corroborate the hypothesis that it was the intention of the builders to imitate ships, which is to say that the seamen wanted to remain seamen even in their winter quarters.

Just a comment yet about the number twelve—there is a strong similarity between Trelleborg and Aggersborg, but it may perhaps be important to notice here that the number twelve, usually in its multiples, plays a larger role in Aggersborg.

Another fact also deserves mention at this point, since it could well be decisive for the interpretation. Nörlund, upon further investigation, has come up with three additional discoveries: beneath the excavations of eleventh-century Trelleborg there is an older settlement—a temple, or else a chieftain's seat; the older settlement shows a striking similarity with the buildings of Trelleborg, or rather vice versa; and Trelleborg is situated precisely where the largest building (temple or whatever) of the older settlement once stood. This triple discovery refers numerous problems concerning Trelleborg to an earlier time. Regrettably, in preparing this study I have not been able to consult the results of further excavations.

Let us now move to the other side of the Danish peninsula. Fyrkat is located on a spit of land south of Limfjord on the east coast of Jutland. By land it can be approached only along one road, as the surrounding area is marshy; since the only other access is by sea, it can be defended easily.

There is not a shred of written evidence on this fortress. Here, too, the principal material for buildings and streets was wood, almost all of it now vanished as the result of fire, rotting, etc. None the less, it is possible to reconstruct the groundplan and the build-

dings from the piling holes, now filled with a particular substance.

This citadel, too, was built according to the established geometrical system, just like Nonnebakken in Odense (on the northeast coast of Fünen), and both were constructed with absolute exactness. Once again, they are circular, and surrounded by a wall and a moat. Again there are four openings in the wall, all at the ends of the four streets which intersect at right angles in the center of the camp, thus again creating four equal parts; each quadrant has four identical wooden houses (in Aggersborg there were three per quadrant), again in the shape of a truncated ellipse; even the interior construction of the houses is identical; the unit of measurement is the Roman foot. And yet, there are a few differences in the characteristics of the details. The pallisade just beyond the outer ring of defense (see Trelleborg) is missing; all the emphasis is on the main wall.

As to the measurements of Fyrkat, the diameter was 120 meters, and the wall was twelve meters [thick at the base] and probably about three meters high. The sixteen houses were 28.5 meters long (corresponding to ninety-six Roman feet), 7.5 meters wide in the middle, and about five meters wide at the ends. As at Trelleborg, their elliptical shapes always had one focus in common. The houses appear to have been divided into three rooms, a smaller one at each end of the ellipse and a large space exceeding eighteen meters. The purpose of the small chambers is uncertain, but the great hall was definitely for sleeping and living, since in the center of that space in some of the houses traces of a large fireplace have been found, and along the walls were probably wide sleeping berths able to accommodate at least fifty sleepers per hall. It is probable that some of the houses were used not as dwellings but as work places (for example, one was a smithy) or as storage sheds (one contained a great quantity of grain). Not everything can be established with certainty, for some traces of habitation may have been ploughed under.

There are deviations from the rigor of the system. The houses have four doors, one in each ellipse and two in the hall diagonally opposite each other. This is all uniform, but the two doors in the long sides have entryways as large as church doors and even resemble them. Now then, these portals are not always built with the same exactness as the houses. The excavators are agreed that this is because these portals are not incorporated into the system. These portals do not appear in other Viking houses.

Twenty-three graves have been excavated in the northeastern sector of the spit of land. The heathen graves contain funerary gifts and are recognizable because on the surface there was a fireplace for the ritual fire, while the adjacent Christian graves contain nothing but the bodies, fully decomposed.

Objects found at Fyrkat indicate that this fortress, too, was built or inhabited in the last decades of the tenth or early in the eleventh century.

Just a few general observations remain to be made about the four Viking citadels. It is generally agreed that they could not have been constructed just like that in a very short time, given the uncanny exactness of the constructions as a whole and the well-considered details. However, there is a difficulty: there is not much to be seen in the way of centuries of preparation. They appear suddenly, and after a half century, the development abruptly ceases. Hence scholars have sought their prototypes elsewhere: in the geometrical camps of the Romans, the remains of which the Vikings would have seen in England (note that Roman foot!). But L'Orange contests this theory, for the Roman *castra* is rectangular, Roman military theory having forbidden circular camps unless the terrain required them.³

Therefore, our recourse must be to antiquity The matter is extremely complicated, and irresolvable in the absence of further excavations.

(5) Persia

We must leave the Danish citadels for a while and return to the East, this time to Persepolis. This city has become very familiar to us from the excavations and magnificent publications of Pope, Herzfeld, and especially the work by Erich Schmidt the first volume of which came out in 1953.⁴

Persepolis is rarely mentioned in the Eastern and Greek sources. Even Ctesias, who resided for a long time at the Persian court, is silent about the city. This hush in the non-Persian sources is the more surprising since Persepolis was unsurpassed in scope, wealth and grandeur. Xenophon says the kings divided their time between Babylon, Susa, Ecbatana;⁵ Persepolis is not mentioned, yet

it was the capital. Perhaps it was too remote? But why then so many treasures bestowed on precisely this city, more than any other? The king did go there, but the residence there seems to have had no political significance. The solution has been sought, naturally, in the idea that Persepolis may have been a luxury residence for the king and that such a grand city manifested royal power and gratified royal pride. Examples of such cities or residences are certainly not hard to find.

Yet Pope has subjected this entire interpretation to fundamental criticism, without being able to construct a complete argument to support his own view. He sees Persepolis as a *sacred* city—like others to be found in the East, e.g., Arbela; which is not to deny that they were also meaningful for exhibiting royal power. When Pope puts such a strong emphasis on the sacred character of Persepolis, he does not mean to say that the city had a normal urban life and that in addition to that it was sacred as well: the city was *intended* as a holy city, and this was decisive for the character of its buildings, of its reliefs, also of its economy, etc., etc.⁶

Yet, is this so exceptional? Was not every ancient oriental city sacred in virtue of its temples, its processional streets, even its palaces and fortifications?

Here we have arrived at a point where it is necessary to look back over the route we have travelled.

We can describe the cities in the customary way and never inquire into the deeper meaning of their existence. In an Egyptian city we find a lake, and we have the explanation directly at hand: in Egypt water was urgently needed for the economy and hygiene, nor could cultic requirements dispense with it. But does that exhaust the meaning of water for the life of the city?

It is these and similar questions that should engage us. Their importance for understanding the history of the East will not be lightly dismissed today. The studies of P. Lavedan, *Histoire de l'architecture urbaine*; vol. 1: *Antiquité-Moyen Age*, 1926 have made an impact. In his entire *oeuvre* the idea is upheld that in the origin and life of cities, paramount importance must be attributed to religion, at least where Antiquity is concerned. Lavedan's work is cited approvingly with striking frequency. Yet it is no less striking that many scholars make little or no mention of the religious factor

even in connection with the ancient oriental cities. Even such an outstanding expert as Edith Ennen relegates the religious element to the background in her well-known book, *Frühgeschichte der europäischen Stadt* [Bonn, 1953].

By the religious factor in the construction of a city it is possible to mean the simple fact that a city has not only profane but also religious buildings: temples, churches, but also palaces, fortifications, and even houses can be sacred edifices; these sacred buildings occupied a larger place in the ancient and medieval worlds than they do in the cities of the present-day Western cultural sphere. Although these things no longer really need to be said, I may perhaps be permitted to point out as a sign of the times that it is just in the last decades that a great deal of attention has been paid to sacred buildings; archeologists are no longer satisfied just to observe that a temple or palace appears in a city — today they want to know in the first place what the function of these buildings was in the basic plan of the urban settlement. And it is not only the sacred buildings that are attracting attention; scholars are also investigating the religious significance of the streets, lakes, fortifications, etc. In the ancient Egyptian cities, for example, one would expect to find crooked, narrow streets, but instead there are broad streets, ranging up to forty and even 120 meters in width. These are processional streets before all else — which serves to explain why they are so wide: for the full deployment of a procession, considerable space was required. Even in small cities substantial space was kept free for processions. To mention a concrete example, in El-Amarna, which is well known through the excavations, a straight street forty-eight meters wide was discovered running parallel to the river, in the north-south direction. The other streets run at right angles and/or parallel to this street, resulting in a city plan on the checkerboard model. Thus the design of the city is determined by a street of preponderantly religious significance, the processional street.

People have tried to prove the existence of such processional streets in medieval cities, too. I have in mind Ulrich Noack's contribution on *Stadtbaukunst* in the *Festschrift für Kurt Bauch* (1957). While it is beyond doubt that the ancient Eastern cities had their processional avenues, their presence is arguable where the Middle Ages are concerned. At issue are broad streets that some think were street markets but that Noack believes were processional streets from the period of the later Otto's. They would have been intended for

the so-called *Festkrönungen*, occasions on which the king was crowned in the church and strode in full state to the main church for the mass; only the cities of the bishops had space enough for the elaborate ceremonial. As cities with processional avenues Noack mentions Trier, Würzburg, Spiers, and several others.

It should now be clear what is normally understood by the religious element in city construction and urban life. People can now—and they commonly do—describe urban life from economic or political or social or aesthetic vantage points, and likewise from the perspective of the religious aspect. And someone who takes a broad view will look at all these aspects in their mutual coherence, and in that way many a scholar, especially in recent years, has arrived at the insight of the dominating significance of religion in the urban culture of the ancients.

And yet, when I speak here of the sacred dwelling place, of the religious meaning of cities, buildings, of human settlements in the broadest sense, then what I have in mind is not primarily temples, processional streets, churches, or any other such sacred structures. I use the word “religion” in connection with the concept ‘dwelling place’ here in a much deeper, more universal sense. I mean to raise the question whether the human dwelling place *as such*, whatever it may be, has religious significance.

Leaving modern times aside, let us direct our attention exclusively to Antiquity and the Middle Ages. I would emphasize that it is not my intention at this time to present the results of extensive research but rather to provide a few introductory reflections at the start of the investigation. This introductory reflection is urgently needed, for there is an obstacle to the unravelling of our problem that many take as a warning to venture no further. The apparently insurmountable difficulty is this: *the silence of the sources*. This seems an exaggeration; after all, the sources do speak of the sacral character of the human dwelling place. To be sure, they do, but—let me put it this way: *what is the scope of what they say?* Is this world of thought divulged only in vague outlines, and are the deeper-lying, truly motivating ideas suppressed? Must we strictly limit ourselves to what the source materials teach us in a direct way? The historian will prefer to adopt that method, accustomed as he is not to go beyond the sources; the phenomenologist of religion, in

contrast, is easily disposed to look behind the sources, believing himself to have at his disposal sources of information which a historian would reject as speculative. Must we not choose the side of the historian? His method has a real basis and leads to knowledge that is certain, does it not? It is possible, however, that ordinary sources will not reveal the very thing that is essential, that they will be silent about it, and that we will not even know why they keep silent. Yes, in that event the historian—not to mention the philosopher and phenomenologist—may venture upon extremely precarious paths and even deem these paths reliable, while the handbooks of historical method have not a good word to say about them.

Let me bring my argument home to you with a few cases that have given rise to current controversies.

I have already mentioned Persepolis and the debate concerning it between Pope and others. Scholars as a rule try to understand Persepolis in terms of modern Western thought; they compare it with Versailles, with Hadrian's villa at Tivoli: the city becomes an expression of the struggle of kings for power and grandeur. Accepted into the bargain are the inscriptions which dutifully proclaim that the buildings were constructed by the grace of God, that the kings are mediators between divine and human worlds.

To my mind, one of the first conditions for acquiring an understanding of the dwelling place of the ancient and medieval worlds is an awareness that the natural presuppositions of modern Western science with its exaggerated confidence in rationality and factuality, with its attentiveness to the letter, and its secularized character threatens to close off access to fundamental aspects of ancient Eastern culture: throughout the ancient Orient, as Pope says, the religious motive was primary, and symbolism was the natural and universal form of thought.⁷ Only when this is appreciated do we have a sound point of departure. Yet even that does not, at a stroke, solve all our problems and difficulties of interpretation.

To stay with Persepolis: its reliefs are celebrated and admired for their great aesthetic value. But let us have a closer look: on the reliefs there appears a bull that slays a lion, and a king that slays the bull. Is the meaning of all this that the king is mightier than lion and bull, or are we confronted here with a nature-symbolism that was indispensable to the survival of life on earth? I am reminded also of the representations of the sacred mountain in the palaces of

Persepolis: are they purely aesthetic depictions, or are they deeper symbols?

The sacred mountain played an enormous role in the Orient; beyond Mesopotamia, think of Angkor in Indo-China! Yet the portal had no less significance in the urban life of both East and West. The portal was preeminently the boundary between this world and another world. In Egypt especially, people reflected long and often on the meaning, the symbolism, of the portal and discovered in it the transition, the point of transition from death to life, the point where life conquers death, or more exactly, where life *arises* from death. And when we keep in mind, furthermore, that in symbolical thought the part usually stands for the whole, we can begin to gain some idea of what the Egyptians saw in the depiction of a portal.

In connection with it, too, the question presses: In Egyptian life did the portal have technical and aesthetic significance only, and in connection with the religious did it fulfill a symbolical function merely because it was eminently suited to do so, or did the city gate in its religious meaning of transition from death to life have an irreplaceable and decisive significance in the life of the Egyptians?

We sense that this all comes down to the meaning of symbolical depictions as such in the lives of ancient peoples. The problem which I have concretized with these examples is essentially the same for the Middle Ages as it is for Antiquity.

(6) Medieval Europe

Johan Huizinga asserts in *The Waning of the Middle Ages* that every aspect of the medieval world of thought is thoroughly permeated by religious notions. This viewpoint has been formulated countless times, both before and since Huizinga gave expression to it: the Middle Ages are religious through and through, and even theocentric.

I am not convinced of very much of that, however — at any rate not when I go by the standard reference works on the subject, e.g., the *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* [General history of the Netherlands] or the writings of great medievalists, like Ganshof. True, church and cloister, pope and priest occupy a very substantial place, but for the rest, life has a rather worldly, or better, secularized look such as we are familiar with today, and the idea that the

medieval world of thought was thoroughly permeated by religious notions is a fine theory, but little is done with it in practice—I mean, not in the practice of medieval people but in the practice of present-day medievalist scholars (I do not say of *all* present-day scholars). People built cities; there they carried on an economic life and a social life, according to rules which still have validity. Naturally, there are important differences, but essentially there has been no change: then as now people acted rationally, in keeping with the principle of utility, and sometimes they also acted impractically. They built bulwarks around their cities, for such purposes, obviously, as protection and security.

Perhaps someone will object: That this is the trend in our modern scientific literature we would not deny, but why must we resist it: the medieval sources themselves are “worldly” and when we say that the Middle Ages were religious through and through then what we have in mind is the dominant position of church and theology.

To test the tenability of this objection I am going to say something about a very recent article by Le Goff. This writer is an authority in the field of medieval economic and social history and has made an important contribution to the question just posed; it appeared in the *Annales* of 1960. Here Le Goff argues that the concept of time in the ecclesiastical-religious sense differs fundamentally from the economic concept of time of the merchant of the High and Late Middle Ages. The average medieval person has no eye for the essential difference between the various historical periods, he is markedly indifferent to time, or as Marc Bloch says, there is an unmistakable flowing together of past and present, so that a second-century missionary, for example, is made a contemporary of Christ's. But now observe the merchant of the medieval towns, says Le Goff: his whole existence requires an exact accounting of the measure of time: in economic life a minute can mean a fortune.⁸ Thus in sources pertaining to the economy, such as those for the annual fairs, great value is attached to correct time-measures. Elsewhere too, however, one finds the same phenomenon. In 1355 the governor of Artois set fixed hours for workers to arrive at their place of work. For the merchants, according to Le Goff's conclusion, an entirely new concept of time came into play. Time now became measurable and likewise *worldly*: it was the time for profane activities.⁹

Le Goff does not present very much that is new. Earlier research by Rousset, Marc Bloch, Etienne Gilson and others had yielded the same results, at least insofar as the religious concept of time is concerned.

And yet it is doubtful whether the contrast Le Goff sets up is sound. In 1958 a dissertation appeared in Göttingen by Heinrich Schmidt entitled *Die deutschen Städtechroniken als Spiegel des bürgerlichen Selbstverständnisses im Spätmittelalter*. It attracted a great deal of attention in Germany. Schmidt gave the *Städtechroniken* an unusual reading. Reasoning along the line taken by Le Goff, one would expect to find in these Late Medieval town chronicles a modern conception of time; merchants were already using it in the High Middle Ages. Schmidt, however, arrives at the conclusion that in order to read these chronicles properly we must first forget our modern concepts: only then will we discover that, right along with all kinds of factual reports and legal documents, the chronicles present a picture of the world, of time, and of history that is distinctively their own—confusing to the modern sense, but to the medieval sense having a deeper unity.

The most surprising finding of Schmidt's study, however, is the blurring of the conception of time in these chronicles. They shift the contemporary juridical status of the town back to the origin and bring the origin forward into the present—thereby abolishing all historical evolution, which is to say that the time-measure, or the *value* of time, disappears.

I trust that this presentation of the controversy between Le Goff and Schmidt will have cast sufficient light on the path I want to take. Both authors devote insufficient attention to an important aspect of the problem of time in the Middle Ages, so that the controversy, especially in Le Goff's approach, cannot be brought to a satisfactory resolution. But we fully agree with Schmidt in maintaining that even when we come upon directly accessible notions in the sources, we must still first ask what they mean in the medieval world of thought. And now, to bring the matter to a head and return to our subject: what does a *wall* mean to a medieval person, and why has he enclosed his cities with walls?

To be able to answer those questions, it will be worthwhile to take note of certain peculiar features of medieval thinking.

a. *Pars pro toto* thinking is strongly present in the Middle Ages: for centuries people imagined the city by thinking of its walls and/or gates and towers. Hrabanus Maurus says in *De universo* (P. Migne, *Patr. Lat.* 111, l. xiv, p. 384): *Murus autem ipsius civitatis inexpugnabilem fidei, caritatis speique firmitatem significat* ("But the wall of this city signifies the invincible firmness of faith, love, and hope"). In countless cases the walls are sufficient to represent the entire city.

b. For ancient and medieval people the city had a deep meaning, often expressed by means of symbolical devices: the city is the domain of justice and order, and the walls and towers are what enclose and secure it; through the *civitas* man was free, delivered from the peril and disorder that ruled the countryside. Justice reigned within the city walls, but injustice was a tyrant holding sway outside these bulwarks in the wilderness.¹⁰ Numerous illustrations bear out this interpretation. Also indicative is the representation of the first human pair being driven out of the city gate, out of the domain of divine civil order, into a savage country devoid of justice. This motif is found in all phases of the Middle Ages. Thus the city was highly esteemed in the Middle Ages.

c. To the medieval mind the ideal city is circular. Circularity is the image of perfection. It could be objected here that a hexagon is the form of the perfect city—see especially the miniatures of the Early and High Middle Ages—but it should be borne in mind that the hexagon and the circle are closely associated in meaning.

People conceived of the heavenly city and eternal Jerusalem as circular, that is, perfect cities. And so the terrestrial city, too, had to have a perfect form. From the twelfth century onward, however, preference was given to the rectangular or square designs for small cities, probably for practical reasons, but even then, depictions of ideal forms reveal a continued preference for circular cities. Rome and Jerusalem, for example, continued to be circles, and on a seal of Louis of Bavaria dating from 1328 we find: *Roma caput mundi regit orbis frena rotundi* ("Rome, the capital of the world, controls the reins of the circular world"). One could not imagine the form of the walls of Rome without a symbolical meaning.

d. The symbolism goes even further. The walls had twelve gates. The heavenly Jerusalem had twelve portals. And Milan before its destruction by the barbarians was described as a city with twelve mighty gates. In the smaller cities especially, as late as the four-

teenth century, people tried to divide the city's domain into twelve equal parts.

e. There were many deviations and irregularities to which one might call attention, but behind them medieval people still saw the form of the ideal city, in intimate relation with the actual city. For example, there were fifteen gates in the third wall built around Florence, yet in some surveys of the city, e.g., that of 1339, we read: *portas habens duodecim magnifice forme* ("having twelve gates of glorious beauty").

f. For this entire subject we shall have to detach ourselves from modern conceptions. That is even clearer from the following example. A church in the Middle Ages was built after the model of another church, the ideal church. To the medieval mind they looked alike, but the modern reader wonders how they ever managed to see a resemblance. The medieval notion of representation, symbol, likeness differed entirely from ours. It did not involve the whole but was *limited* to a choice few *essential* elements (beginning in the thirteenth century a change does take place towards striving for reproduction of visible aspects of the originals). By contrast, a modern representation, with its exactness in rendering the *entire* building and with its striving for absolute reliability, leaves out the *content and meaning* of the edifice—and that, now, was precisely the *goal and the essence of the medieval model or representation*.

To medieval people exact imitation of the model was of no essential significance. For example, they often copied the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and even took its measurements; but to the modern mind it is difficult to discover similarities between these affiliated structures and the model church. The medieval person was concerned to imitate what he regarded as an *important*, and to him *meaningful*, feature of the model, for if such a feature were incorporated or worked into the building there would be an *inner, essential* relation between the old model and the new building, and this connection far transcended the copying of the external forms. That was the case, for example, with regard to numbers derived from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Eight was taken to involve the return of one; it was a symbol of new life, of regeneration (see, e.g., Candidus). Various interpretations were possible in the Middle Ages.

Thus the measurements and imitations pertained only to particular parts or aspects. Yet they placed the entire building in which

they were applied, not merely in relation to but *fully in the center of the higher, ideal order*. In the Middle Ages this was referred to as typical (*typice*) or figurative (*figuraliter*) construction.

And now it is time I made some observations.

I can understand that people have approached the life of ancient cultures and of earlier times with modern notions in mind. In earlier times, too, people allowed themselves to be guided by considerations—even by the necessity—of self-preservation and utility, and when the sources tell about that naively, then we must not go on to look for too much behind it: we understand the sources so well and directly because in them human beings speak to human beings. To give a very concrete example: Must we look *per se* for deep religious motives behind the many quarrels between cities?

With these questions—I concede at once—we have approached the most critical point in my presentation. I can not even answer them adequately at the moment—happily not, for then I would already have reached the end of an investigation that will, I think, require many years.

It does, however, even now raise another question that has so far remained too much in the background. Is it really so important whether people used to see more in a city or any other human settlement than a rationally furnished dwelling place? People may have attached ever so many religious and symbolical notions to walls, portals, palaces, fortresses, yes even to hovels, but did not all that symbolism remain far removed from the humdrum, everyday political and social life? Anyone who would so assess the case would thereby show that he had not yet succeeded in detaching himself from modern concepts.

Fortunately, there is a growing awareness that symbols in Antiquity and the Middle Ages were not yet weakened or even emptied of meaning as they have been in recent centuries and that to the mind of the ancients religious ideas did not lead the shadowy, peripheral existence they are so often condemned to today.

A primary distinction in the history of religions is that between the sacred and the profane. This armchair distinction has far-reaching significance: it suggests a *break* that makes itself felt in all parts of life, a break that penetrates the homogeneity of space and thus affects the human dwelling place as well. The constant concern

of the ancients was to maintain contact with the sacred and to remain within its ambit, since only what is sacred is real, and life arises from the sacred alone.

The sacred space had enormous significance in the lives of practically all peoples, for it is there that there is communication with the other world of divine beings and of the forefathers, with the world of the divine forces. This accounts for the great concern of many peoples for the *opening*: the *opening* in the tent, in the *roof of the hut*. In this world of thought, the portal too—the palace portal in the first place, but no less the city gate—had its place.

The sacred space assures contact with the source of life, is itself the point of intersection between the sacred and the profane. But communication with the other, cosmic, celestial world can take place in another way as well, namely, by means of the symbol. We shall have to detach ourselves, however, from our idea of the symbol. In the conception of many peoples, the symbol is the unifying link between seemingly distinct realities. Finding oneself in the symbol meant participating in the symbolized reality. People remained aware of the distinction between symbol and reality but acted as if the two were identical. It is beyond our capacity adequately to express the relation entailed in the symbol; for that matter, the ancients never succeeded in doing so either. The relation is essential none the less, for it is the way to linking the other existence with this existence; and to link them means to have this life participate in the divine, cosmic life. Whenever people build a model of the sacred mountain in the palace or city, or even merely paint the sacred mountain on the walls, then the palace, city, or fortress itself participates in the sacred mountain—which is to say that in the mountains are concentrated the mysterious forces of life that produce vegetation, from the mountains arises a renewing primordial force, and a simple depiction in the sacred space is basic to the survival of an entire nation.

It was with great care too, then, that people selected the site for a settlement; the ways in which the city could reflect cosmic relations were calculated with great exactness. Primary importance in this regard was given to celestial direction, number, circular or rectangular model. The application of a cosmic number meant that people lived in cosmic relations here on earth. The imagination of the ancients was inexhaustible, ranging from the vague to the concrete. Symbolical thinking exhibits an elasticity that can drive a scientific researcher to despair.

One must keep in mind that something impossible was expected of symbolism in the ancient sense: the linking as one of the sacred and the profane after they had first been separated from each other. This is the deeper reason why one and the same human dwelling place can be sacred one moment and profane the next, and why the street, portal, or pillar can be nothing more than an ordinary avenue, entryway or technical support at one moment and at the next lose its contours and be absorbed into the transmundane reality it is meant to represent: the abbot Suger of St. Denis saw the pillars of his abbey church transformed into the twelve apostles—and he was not out of his senses when he saw it.

Notes

1. Poul Nörlund, *Trelleborg* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1948). Carl Georg Schultz, *Aggersborg. Vikingelejren ved Limfjorden Fra Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark* (1949): 91-108.
2. See Otto Höfler, *Der Runenstein von Rök und die germanische Individualweihe* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1952), p. 371. [Cf. also Otto Höfler, "Die Trelleborg auf Seeland und der Runenstein von Rök," *Anzeiger der phil.-hist. Klasse der Oesterreichische Akademie der Wissenschaft* 1948: 9-37.]
3. See Hans Peter L'Orange, "Trelleborg-Aggersborg og de kongelige byer i Osten," *Viking* (Oslo) 16 (1953): 307-31.
4. [See, among others, Arthur Upham Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (6 vols.; London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1938-39), esp. vol. 1, and *Masterpieces of Persian Art* (New York: Dryden, 1945); Ernst Emil Herzfeld, *Archeological History of Iran* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), and *Iran in the Ancient East* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1941); Erich Friedrich Schmidt, *Persepolis* (3 vols.; Chicago University Press, 1953-69).]
5. [Xenophon, *Anabasis* III.v.15.]
6. [Cf. A.U. Pope, *Persian Architecture: The Triumph of Form and Colour* (New York: George Braziller, 1965), p. 29f.: "The usual view that Persepolis was primarily a group of impressive palaces built in the capital city of a great empire in order to express political might and to gratify royal pride is Western thinking: factual, literal, rationalistic. It fails to comprehend the constellations of assumptions, attitudes, hopes that had descended from the ancient Orient with its ingrained reliance on emotions and symbolism. Persepolis . . . was, in fact, a sacred national shrine dedicated to a specific purpose: it would not only glorify the divinely sanctioned dynasty, proclaiming the political and religious unity of the state but—even more important—it would also concentrate and heighten his [Darius's] empire's appeal to the powers of heaven for fertility and abundance, particularly at the great spring festival of the new year."]
7. [Ibid., p. 30.]
8. Jacques Le Goff, "Au Moyen Age: Temps de l'Eglise et temps du marchand"

[Merchant's time and Church's time in the Middle Ages], *Annales* 15 (1960): 417-33 [reprinted in Jacques Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Age: Temps, travail et culture en Occident* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977); Eng. trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago University Press, 1980), pp. 29-42].

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 424-28 [Eng. trans., pp. 35-8].
10. See Günter Bandmann, *Mittelalterliche Architektur als Bedeutungsträger* (Berlin: Mann, 1951), pp. 97ff.

[The diagrams in this chapter were prepared by Margaret Van Dyke after freehand drawings in the original manuscript. —Ed.]

A Turnabout in Historical Science?

[1962]

THE QUESTION MARK AFTER the title of my paper will suit many of you. I can answer the question both affirmatively and negatively myself. Many will ask whether the changes in our picture of history are so drastic that we may speak of a turnabout.

True, our source material is growing very rapidly on the whole, and in various areas of historical science reorientation has proved imperative. I mention just two examples: the discoveries in the wilderness of Judaea, and the finding of numerous philosophical and theological works from the Middle Ages. Yet all this—and a great deal more could be mentioned—is not sufficient to warrant speaking of a turnabout taking place in a discipline. More is required than just an increase of source material and, thanks to it, improved knowledge of a historical phenomenon, of an institution, of a complex of events. We shall speak of a turnabout only when the *outlook* on history changes. Generally, a proliferation of source material and a change in *outlook* go together, yet this is not necessary. Not infrequently it happens that old, familiar material that has undergone no noteworthy expansion is interpreted differently, sometimes entirely differently, after the passage of time. Medieval studies in particular are rich in such reinterpretations. I mention as an example Heinrich Fichtenau's opinion of the sources for Charlemagne's coronation as emperor in 800. Fichtenau uses the old, familiar sources but arrives at new conclusions. Why, however, does Fichtenau choose to accept the reliability of the *Annales Laureshamenses* while this is doubted by most experts? Does Fichtenau's interpretation deserve preference because it is scientifically more sound? His conclusion is accepted for this reason, but when we examine it in the context of his picture of history, we say: his preference is in part a matter of *historical outlook*.¹

With my argument I have stated, however, that the *outlook* or *change in outlook* on history as a whole or on a particular event is determined not only by the source material but by a much more comprehensive background.

It is necessary to set several limits on our lecture. Obviously, it will deal primarily with views current in the present and in the recent past. To set a limit within that field of purview is more difficult, however. The number of phenomena pointing towards a turnabout is extremely large, and it is impossible to deal with all of them in a single lecture. Nevertheless, the formulation of our subject promises completeness insofar as possible. There is no acceptable escape: a *choice* must be made from a great number of problems, and it will be up to you to judge whether I have made a happy selection.

I need not restrict myself to the *science* of history or to the *writing* of history or to the *view* of history, for from the use of the concept *historical outlook* it is at once obvious that our subject is the mutual relations of all of these within the single discipline of history.

Finally, I must—to my regret—set one other limit. I shall offer no *assessment* of the questions discussed. Within the limited framework I have described they can only be presented in outline; a searching discussion would require a separate study for each.

Prevalent among many practicing historians today is a strong sense of uneasiness. Note that I say “among many,” and that I have not yet said *what* it is that many feel uneasy about. For that is difficult to define, but I believe I shall not be very far from the core of this uneasiness if I see in it the feeling that the historical profession is not achieving its purpose. There is concern, in the first place, that all too many historians are preoccupied with isolated facts and then with facts, moreover, which can only be viewed from the outside or that have no essential value. Secondly, there is concern that history is gradually losing importance in our culture.

I said that many practicing historians are troubled: it is of great importance to take note of this. For the fact that philosophers of history have serious objections to the common way of practicing history is already old and all too familiar and generally does not bother the professional historian very much.

Furthermore, it is *many* historians who are concerned, thus *not*

all—for there are others who also are not entirely at peace but whose uneasiness is of an entirely different sort. These others regret that source materials remain imperfect in many respects and that there is no prospect of filling in all the gaps in our historical knowledge; in addition, research techniques and methods of procedure are still far from perfect. Yet what grieves them the most is that preconceptions which by nature involve philosophy, theology, or worldview are allowed to enter into the practice of strictly scientific history. They too will on occasion acknowledge history's loss of function in present-day society, but they expect a recovery as soon as the present anti-historical storm has blown over—and is it not subsiding already?—or else they advocate as a remedy the writing of history once again as the great historians wrote it in former times, inspiring entire generations through their creative powers; or, again, they retreat from the impasse with the declaration that the true historian does not need to concern himself with the utility of his studies, he has only to establish how things actually went in history; the professional researcher simply makes facts available, as it were, although it can in turn not be a matter of indifference to him into what edifice his bricks are incorporated.

Perhaps you are not happy with my portrait of these others and would like to hear the actual words of someone who takes the position I have just described. Very well, listen to what Professor Enklaar wrote in a book review not too long ago: “. . . our author shows himself to be more an aesthete than a historian, *the latter of whom is disposed or has learned to look at the course of world events, even in changing times, with neutral resignation as from a distance.*”²

It would be difficult to express more sharply the controversy between the “neutrals” and the “concerned.” The latter vehemently oppose this “neutral resignation.” They complain bitterly, for example, that the historians' preference for remaining unimpassioned observers at a distance, passing their lives in strict scientific erudition with no relevance for life, is co-responsible for the fact that France in 1940 was easily trampled underfoot, forfeiting its leading position in the world.³ Similarly, when human nature with its “confused, superstitious, and dark emotions, which can be martialled by leaders under myths and symbols” allows dictators to rise to power, then the historian may not remain indifferent but must come out of his “ivory tower.”⁴ The present has hitherto been the “victim of the

past," but from now on the present will exploit the past.⁵

Conyers Read, also one of the concerned, has spoken in this connection of the "self-indulgence" of the historian.⁶ With that, the background of the concern is clearly indicated: it is concern about *man* who is shortchanged in traditional historical practice. Here we are confronted by an extremely complicated problem. I shall try, leaving aside various aspects, to present an analysis of it.

In the first place, we must not think here of the dilemma whether history is determined by the great personalities or ruled by supra-personal, anonymous forces. It is a lingering legacy of the Renaissance, say the 'new historians', to direct attention primarily to the ruler, the brilliant artist, the great individual; it is up to us to debunk the great historical personalities and to concentrate our scientific interest on the common, average man, perhaps the anonymous man in the masses. This is the demand of our anthropologically, or rather *anthropocentrically* minded age.

The usefulness of scientific history is tangible as it were in the human interest that is served by it. Society in this century is undergoing progressive development on the way to a better and happier future. Man's role in all this is not that of an observer; he has rather to participate fully through large-scale development of social activities. An important task is laid aside for history: though renamed an *auxiliary science* — the name is a token of its subordination and usefulness alike — history provides a service that is indispensable: it provides the material, the facts "to promote rational progress."

You have been listening to tones from a very influential circle of American historians, the *liberals*, of Robinson, Beard, Read, Carl Becker, and ever so many others. Enlightenment thought, socialism in various forms, Marxism — all had their profound influence on them, but no less so, in a more recent phase, the politics of the New Deal (which they influenced in turn). Of perhaps still greater importance, however, was the philosophy of pragmatism, according to which social studies have a direct interest in history because of the empirical source material it provides.

Yet it is not only the "liberals" in America who put all the emphasis on the central importance of man for historical study. Various schools in Europe are doing the same thing. For example, in

the *Annales* circle (thus of Febvre, Braudel, etc.) one encounters time and again the declaration that history is about man, that he is the true subject of study, that his creative activity and the inexhaustible wealth of his potentials in life are of paramount importance, rather than the facts: if one addresses primarily the latter, then man is also *determined* by the facts.

Following this line of argument further, however, we discover that it comes to a dead end. We encounter a peculiar difficulty here which occurs not only in the circle of the *Annales* but which is a matter of debate in numerous kindred schools.

We are obliged to discuss at greater length the general problem before us. For a long time already historians have battled over the question what factors are at work in the historical process, which factors control it, or more generally formulated, how are the various factors interrelated (political, economic, psychological, geographical, natural factors, ideas). There is virtually no phenomenon in history that has not been subjected to the merry-go-round of factors. However, many a historian is weary of this game—I mean the circle of the *Annales*, but no less Werner Conze, as well as the holists, the integralists, the structuralists in the broader sense—for the sake of convenience I am using labels. But, what is more important, they have come to the insight that the current way of practicing history can never achieve its objective. Historians are starting out from the isolated factor, from the isolated (preferably political) fact, and in so doing touch only the external side of historical events and can arrive at best at a synthesis. Take good note of this word synthesis: it is the binding together of things in an external way, the combining of what was separated and remains intrinsically separated for lack of an *original* coherence. By taking their point of departure in components (the meristic or individualistic method, according to Othmar F. Anderle), historians are depriving themselves of the possibility of ever discovering what belongs originally together. This is the fate of the history of events, of *l'histoire événementielle*, as the school of the *Annales* is pleased to call it, and there is only one way out, namely to listen to the *histoire nouvelle* (Fernand Braudel). This 'new history' is nothing other than social history, but then not in the old sense of history that focussed on the social question or social life. The new social history must be apprehended as the *histoire des structures*, which is to say that all aspects of a civilization, of a society, of a historical period in-

terpenetrate each other, forming a real structure in which the many elements are genuinely interrelated in an original way and for a long duration.⁷

Historians must take their point of departure in a coherent organic whole—a period, a culture, etc. They must think themselves into it, understand it as such at its deepest level, and only in those terms go on to describe its elements and the behavior of individuals. There is not a political history and an economic history and an art history; there is only one history, and that is simply *l'histoire sociale*.⁸

We encounter *parallel* conceptions in the integralistic and holistic approaches advocated by, respectively, Romein and Anderle. Generally, says Anderle, historians proceed according to the meristic method, but by this route they never arrive at the real coherence. To reach that, what is required is a “reversal of methods”: to descend from the whole, the *Ganzheit*, the totality, the structure, to the component parts, the constituent elements. The terminology is remarkable: Anderle says a “meristic” method works synthetically but the holistic-integralistic method analytically.⁹

To illustrate, I give three examples. Alberto Tenenti has observed, in his *La Vie et la Mort à travers l'art du XVe siècle*, that the representations pertaining to death underwent a basic change in the fifteenth century: instead of the so-called heavenly death, that is, serene death focussed on the hereafter, there now comes a truly human representation of death, dominated by reason. But earlier historians saw that too, did they not? Certainly, yet what usually eluded them—Huizinga is an exception—is that this drastic change in the representation of death conformed to the change of *structure* of the entire period, a change that manifests itself in all phenomena of this time.¹⁰

Thus every period and every civilization has its own world of feelings and thoughts, a *univers mental*. In this respect they are all distinct from other periods and civilizations, and this distinctiveness penetrates *to* and arises *from* the deepest level.

A second example is taken from Fernand Braudel. A civilization, the French for example, can undergo major upheavals and suffer great losses yet retain all of its differences and points of originality vis-à-vis other civilizations. Thus “the French Revolution is not a total break in the destiny of French civilization, nor the Revolution of 1917 in the Russian”¹¹

Now a third illustration, taken from the integralistic-holistic

historical writing of Anderle. The assassination of Wallenstein makes sense only in terms of a comprehensive whole in which the component parts are mutually dependent and non-interchangeable. In itself the death of Wallenstein is "fortuitous," but it acquires meaning only in the entire complex of the Thirty Years War, which in turn acquires meaning only as a substructure of the Age of Spain, etc., etc., until we arrive at the last meaning-unit in this holistic regress: the framework of Western culture as a whole.¹²

As announced, I shall not engage in criticism, but for what follows it is of importance to pose the following critical questions—though this certainly does not mean that we decide against the structuralistic and holistic method in favor of the prevailing way of writing history; the same critical questions can be posed with equal justice of the latter.

1. When in the various civilizations and periods we are confronted by totally irreducible worlds, each with its uniquely distinctive *univers mental*, how is it then still possible, in an authentic way, to get to know or understand other peoples, other styles, other worlds of thought?

2. We must—so we are told—proceed from the whole or from the structure in order to get to know the parts or the details, but how can we arrive at an intimate knowledge of this all-controlling structure if we are not permitted to traverse the way from below (from the component) to above (the structure, the civilization)?

3. The most important question: one of the deepest tendencies of current historical science is consideration for man, even more for what is essential in him, his freedom: historians have set out to save man from the determining powers, from the terror of history. This is the program with which all the schools under discussion (the liberals in America, the structuralists, the integralists, etc.) have undertaken their campaign against the modern disciples of Ranke. And what has been the result?

Allow me to present several citations. Braudel, addressing himself to the *histoire des structures*, talks of "this silent but *imperial* history of civilizations": all the phenomena of time obey this history—at bottom in any case.¹³ And what Febvre writes is almost disconcerting: ". . . human beings carry society within them to the depths of their individuality, an individuality for which society provides the definitive key and explanation."¹⁴ And once more we hear Braudel: individual lives and events are little more than specks of

dust: "They pass across the stage of history like fireflies, scarcely glimpsed before they are swallowed up again by the night, often passing into permanent oblivion."¹⁵ And all this has been written by those who have called *man* the true subject of history!

The problem, however, is too comprehensive for the critique and the endeavors of Braudel, Anderle, and others to be disposed of just like that. We want to notice two points in particular as we turn now to the problem of structure and factors on a broader scale: What is history, really?

1. In modern historical science it is repeated ad nauseam that its central concern is the individual, the unique, the unrepeatable. But does this stand on its own? Surely it is ordered in a coherence? I shall return to these questions.

2. When the case is made for man in the school of the *Annales*, then there is a solid reason for that. One of its sympathizers, Professor Boogman, in his inaugural address at Groningen, has censured the—still all too common—finalistic scheme in which the past is viewed too exclusively as preparation for the present and a rectilinear, natural development is constructed.¹⁶ The original quality, the unique aspect, but especially the intrinsic value of an event or a period is disesteemed. The tenth and eleventh centuries have often had to forfeit their uniqueness because they have been regarded almost exclusively as preparation for the luxuriant blossoming of the twelfth century. It was the old cyclical theory but no less the new *histoire des structures* which made it their central doctrine that historical periods and cultures have their value within themselves.

Yet there is more at issue here: man, his freedom and responsibility. What is left of them when history advances irresistibly and man imagines he is shaping history yet is himself at bottom determined by the sovereign course of history?

With that we have arrived at the theme of freedom and history, central for both philosophy of history and historical science. It will be clear that this theme refers not only to man in his relation to the state but also, in a far greater degree, to man in his relation to actual historical events, to history as such.

It cannot escape notice that philosophers of history have been much more preoccupied with this question than working historians

have been. We need think only of Hegel (the goal of history is "progress in awareness of freedom") and of such towering historicists as Dilthey and Troeltsch—and is it not the main theme of the philosophy of existence? But still, even in the works of professional historians freedom time and again turns out to be the dynamic factor, and increasingly so in recent decades.

Yet the difference in approach remains. Why and to what end? As I see it, the deeper basis of explanation is this, that one can deal with history in two ways insofar as its essence is concerned (and I would add immediately that the line of division does not run between philosophers of history and working historians). Two diametrically opposite effects issue from history: on the one hand, an enriching, meaning-creative effect; on the other, an emptying, meaning-depriving one. This polar tension is as old as history itself, but it reached its high point in the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, and this must be seen as an inevitable complement of the strong awakening of historical consciousness in this period.

It deserves to be noted in the first instance that the unveiling of history through historical research meant an unparalleled enrichment of human existence. For the first time man was now in a position to see things, cultures, in historical perspective, to see them in their becoming. Whole cultures, even worlds, yielded up their riches to untiring investigation. Historical traditions, convictions, forms of life, myths, and philosophies disclosed what had been concealed for centuries. Thus the last two centuries bear as much the stamp of history as they do that of the advance of the natural sciences. It is only natural that the working historian should be the first to experience the enriching effect of history and that in general its privative effect should make little impression on him. One who devotes himself lovingly to the facts of history will be richly rewarded.

Now, this has not escaped the philosophers of history either, but they and some practitioners of historical science have likewise been deeply impressed by the privative effect of history, and it is precisely to this other effect that they have ascribed a positive and enriching significance, be it with fear and trembling.

For, historical consciousness has thrown open the treasure chambers of history but at the same time unmasked every belief, every worldview, every phenomenon in its historical determinedness

and limitedness, in all its relativity. Every religion, art form, philosophical insight, etc., is valid only in a particular (that is, historically bound) period and can make no claim whatsoever to general validity.

In earlier times, too, people had lived with transitoriness and mutability, but it had not then touched historically existing man at the depth-level: precisely the depth, the essence, the substance, the core, the true nature of things were perceived as unaffected by the changing times. History was there, yes certainly, but it touched only the external forms, that which was accidental. The new historical way of thinking, however, had discovered man in his true nature, and this was not substance but, on the contrary, *historicity*. "Man, as a type, dissolves in the process of history," said Dilthey, who elaborated extensively the theme of man as history.¹⁷ Hence when man sees life's values and goals sinking away in the relativity and anarchy of historical movement, then nothing is left to him in the midst of the treasures of the past and present but the "pain of emptiness."¹⁸ Indeed, pain, for it is no secret to historical thought that man has an urge to rise above his limitation and take up residence on higher ground, far above relativity. Nevertheless, historical consciousness deprives him of precisely that: it knows only of constant leave-taking, never again to find a permanent home.

Yet why does the historian take this gloomy path of deprivation and not that of enrichment, which the historical consciousness has also opened up, and equally so? Because whoever follows this way to the *end* receives as his portion the *liberation of man*. Just listen: historical consciousness of the finiteness of every historical phenomenon or social condition, of the relativity of every sort of belief "is the final step in the liberation of man."¹⁹ Man is no longer bound to one true faith, to one social or philosophical system, and Dilthey can accordingly write, "The knife of historical relativism . . . must also bring healing" — and that healing is freedom.²⁰

Here, I believe, we have struck upon the deepest motive of historicism: the emancipation of the human personality and the recognition of its sovereignty.

When existentialism came to work out this freedom motive, it did so entirely in agreement with historicism. If man were to receive deliverance as coming from the meaning of history, then his emancipation would come to an end. Therefore man does not receive the meaning of his existence from metahistory, nor yet from the

historical process, even less from the future, and thus he realizes his existential freedom. Yet where, then, is he to find the meaning of his life, and how, then, shall meaning still be ascribable to events? No longer from without, but through the fact that the well-spring of meaning is in the event: the event has its meaning, its ordering power fully within itself, and man projects the meaning of his existence in terms of himself, in terms of his own sovereign autonomy. The fundamental problem, naturally, is: How is history still possible if these meaning-charged monads (events and persons) may have no meaningful connection with one another?

The historicistic and existentialistic mode of thought has left deep marks not only in the fields of philosophy and theology but also in historical science (Hofer, Smith, Michalson, Butterfield, Thévenaz, E. Grassi).

No less noteworthy, however, is the vehement reaction against the historicistic and existentialistic philosophy of history, a reaction which even has the character of an attack on the historical way of thinking as such (Karl Löwith, Gerhard Krüger, and others), and which is supported by a revival of writings on natural law. And when it is emphasized that the most implacable resistance at the awakening of modern historical consciousness was offered in terms of natural law, then we can expect that an old, supposedly dead controversy has sprung to new and vigorous life. We can observe a renewed interest in the *Ansichseiende*, in objective Being, in the elements of tradition, in the classical epochs, that is, in the high points of history, because they were relatively closer to *the* reality, that is to the *Ansichseiende*.²¹ And Löwith turns from that which ebbs away in history to that which is enduringly human, to nature and the world as such: man must understand himself not as a historical being but as a member of the cosmos.²²

History has become the "ultimate religion,"²³ according to Löwith, and this can be traced (be it in a secularized sense) to Judaism and Christianity with their discovery of the historical world and historical existence, whose meaning is located in the *telos* of the future.²⁴ But this turning to history was only achieved by turning away from the world and from nature, from what is "enduring" (*immer-während*) and "constant."²⁵

What, however, will become of history if its "most elementary form" is permanence, not a permanence sprung from some

transcendent reality but from nature, from the cosmos?

And yet, how understandable this reaction is!

Here we must interrupt our sketch in order not to impose upon your indulgence. In preparing it for publication I shall work it out. I especially regret that I cannot now take up the new approach to history from the side of such Christian historians as Wittram, Butterfield, Meinhold, Marrou, Dawson.²⁶

Nevertheless, I may not omit an epilogue.

Perhaps the thought has occurred to you, or at least to some of you: but what, now, have all these ruminations to do with historical science? The issue was our historical discipline as a whole, and now the interpretive element, as it turns out, has occupied all our attention. One ought, however, to keep the following in mind: what has already been developed in one's *view* of history turns up as a mere *tendency* in one's historical *science* (with the exception of the structuralist and integralist conceptions)—tendencies, however, which grow stronger by the year: in the inaugural addresses of Professors Niermeyer and Boogman, for example, one finds sympathy respectively for social history in the new sense and for the structuralist approach; yet both scholars are in the first instance professional historians. And is Butterfield's view of history comprehensible apart from the existential philosophers? Is Marrou's? Or, for that matter, the new integralists? And lastly—to leave it at that—in German historiography preparations are again being made to write world-history, not from the standpoint of philosophy of history but on the basis of the results of the sciences—but alas, now that historians have begun to reflect on the *concept* of world-history the disputed element in it is the concept of *world*. How the debate will end is still difficult to say, but it is certain that the old idea of world-history will not be given another chance and that remarkably much weight is being accorded to Löwith's idea of the relation between world and history, with primacy for the world.

It will be countered that these influences of theoretical and philosophical reflections on our work do exist, but by the time they reach our science they have already lost much of their keenness and freshness; it is at most tendencies that are adopted.

Indeed, but has it ever been otherwise? Ideas have generally penetrated historical science in weakened form, often penetrated

fructifyingly, but it is precisely in this way that they have induced historians to embark on new roads.

And thus I can return to the prologue, to that uneasy feeling, to that inner uncertainty in which many historians live nowadays (Postan, Caillois, Barraclough, Wedgwood, Heimpel). What is the real source? To make my answer clear, I would recall for a moment several thoughts of Robert Fruin's, together forming a bit of philosophy of history, be it of simple construction. I refer to his "De beteekenis en de waarde der geschiedenis" (The significance and value of history), an address given at Leiden at the beginning of the academic year in 1867 and repeated in 1870 and 1872. Fruin observes that in his time many people are interested in history, and he attributes this phenomenon "to the entire direction of our time, which may indeed be called the historical direction" Fruin then turns against the revolutionary way of thought: "Our time stands diametrically opposed in its mode of thought to the spirit of revolution . . . with the propensity towards sudden change But above all we have gained the certainty that in the history of humanity . . . everything is interconnected . . . that nothing is immutable, that everything steadily transforms, not arbitrarily, but according to the nature of its essence From which it follows that the things that are can only be properly known if the causes from which they issued are known."

Now comes the clincher as Fruin gives his own peculiar interpretation of the old adage *historia magistra vitae*, 'History is the schoolmistress of life': "The direction in which [the development of human society] is moving at the moment must allow itself to be determined by the direction followed until now . . . it shows where we have come from and where we are going. It shows us the goal" ²⁷

And we listen as well, finally, to Lord Acton in his inaugural lecture at Cambridge in 1895: facts can be established impartially, methods of research can be improved, and so it can be ascertained precisely how things happened . . . to the end that men may acquire knowledge of the past, as "an instrument of action and a power that goes to the making of the future"; for history is the story of how humanity has constantly improved and increased in knowledge, justice, and civilization ²⁸

The great historians, and many others with them, had a background against which they lived, and a deep faith in which they

engaged in their historical labor, even when this consisted of bringing to light events of seemingly little importance.

Notice, however, that this background, that faith in which they, without further justification—sometimes only intuitively and in a very simple way—express their opinion about the *meaning* of history and the *meaning* of their toil, is metahistorical in nature.

And history in the grand style has always been practiced this way, with an intellectual-spiritual vision. The medieval history-writer would open his chronicle—even when it was only a city chronicle—with a sketch of sacred history starting with Adam, and then would follow the account of often disconnected facts. And Tillemont works with the same metahistory as Bossuet though his work is nothing more than a series of footnotes, which he regards, however, as footnotes to divine revelation. And so we could go on to mention many others (see also Fruin and Acton).

History wants to be practiced against a metahistorical background, however rudimentary it may often be. There the historian finds the serenity for his concentrated toil and the certainty of doing meaningful work.

And then he may still be ever so much at a loss—Fruin, the chroniclers, Tillemont will have been too—when he is asked to show the connection between his metahistorical belief and the bare facts.

I am persuaded that the crisis, the uneasiness, the uncertainty in our discipline have their origin in this, that the former metahistorical conviction has fallen into decay, that that which in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the *meaning* of history (especially progress) has lost its validity or charm for many. And so it cannot be otherwise than that the facts have lost their *meaningful coherence* and come to stand discretely side by side, linked only by external factors. Time and again nowadays one encounters expressions like “atomization of history,” “cult of the bare facts,” and so forth. Even the European perspective can offer no relief.

There are signs, however, that the nadir is already past—prematurely, I fear—and that many are getting ready to place the historical phenomena in new meaningful frameworks. New? Is that really the case? In the conceptions I have discussed, and in others, a great deal is to be found that stems from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I have in mind among other things the revival of the ideology of progress.

But it is noteworthy that in all these new efforts the word *meaning* is used so frequently. We hear of meaning-structure, *Sinngebilde*, *Sinngefüge*. Noteworthy too is the meaning preferably given the word: it is no longer used for history in its entirety; rather, a *culture*, a *period*, is now a meaningful whole. Yet in this sense the concept was already applied by Troeltsch and Dilthey, when the belief in world-history as a meaningful whole had perished in relativistic historicism: Troeltsch in his idea of the *jeweilige Kultursynthese*, 'the obtaining cultural synthesis,'²⁹ and Dilthey in his notion that meaning is attributable only to the individual period as a *Wirkungszusammenhang*, a self-contained 'dynamic system.'³⁰ It is the common conviction of structuralists and integralists³¹ that the meaning of history in all ages is a structural coherence, an inner order, albeit not of world-history but of a period or civilization.

Accordingly, a *reduction of meaning*—but is this admissible? Can meaning be reduced without being destroyed? And so our epilogue issues in the problem of the meaning of history, but then as a problem in the first instance for the practicing historian.

Notes

1. See H. Fichtenau, "Karl der Grosse und das Kaisertum" [Charlemagne and the Empire], *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Oesterreichische Geschichtsforschung* 61 (1953): 257-334.
2. D.Th. Enklaar in *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 6 (1951/52): 240f.
3. Thus Lucien Febvre in his *Combats pour l'histoire* (Paris, 1953), referring to Marc Bloch's *Strange Defeat* (Oxford, 1949) [Eng. trans. by K. Folca, ed. by Peter Burke, *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 27-43].
4. Thus Charles A. Beard and Alfred Vagts, "Currents of Thought in Historiography," *American Historical Review* 42 (1936/37): 460.
5. Thus James Harvey Robinson, *The New History: Essays Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), p. 5. For this and the following paragraphs, see [Fritz] Fischer, ["Objektivität und Subjektivität—ein Prinzipienstreit in der amerikanischen Geschichtsschreibung," in Alfred Hermann, ed., *Aus Geschichte und Politik: Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Ludwig Bergsträsser* (Düsseldorf, 1954), pp. 167-82].
6. Cf. Conyers Read, "The Social Responsibilities of the Historian," *American Historical Review* 55 (1949/50): 280: '... the ivory tower: we have erected for our private enjoyment, if they are to survive, must be converted into research laboratories. Learning without reference to social living has no more claim upon social support than any other form of self-indulgence.'

7. See F. Braudel, "Sur une conception de l'Histoire sociale," *Annales* 14 (1959): 308-19.
8. Cf. Lucien Febvre, *Combats pour l'histoire*, p. 20.
9. Othmar F. Anderle, "Arnold J. Toynbee und die Problematik der geschichtlichen Sinndeutung," *Die Welt als Geschichte* 20 (1960): 143-56, esp. 147.
10. A. Tenenti, *La Vie et la Mort à travers l'art du XVe siècle* [Life and death in fifteenth-century art] (Paris: Armand Colin, 1952; Cahiers des Annales, no. 8).
11. F. Braudel, "L'Apport de l'histoire des civilisations," *La Table Ronde*, no. 137 (May 1959): 65f. [Eng. trans. by Sarah Matthews in *On History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 210.]
12. Othmar F. Anderle (see note 9), p. 146.
13. F. Braudel, "Les responsabilités de l'histoire," *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 10 (1951): 16.
14. L. Febvre, "Pro Parva Nostra Domo: Scolies sur deux articles belges," *Annales* 8 (1953): 514.
15. F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949), p. 721 [cf. 2d rev. ed. (Paris, 1966), II, 223; Eng. trans. by Siân Reynolds, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), II, 901]. But [for a trenchant critique] see G. Ritter, "Zur Problematik gegenwärtige Geschichtsschreibung," [in his anniversary collection *Lebendige Vergangenheit. Beiträge zur historisch-politischen Selbstbesinnung. Zum 70. Geburtstag* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1958), pp. 255-83].
16. J.C. Boogman, *Vaderlandse geschiedenis in hedendaags perspectief; enige kanttekeningen en beschouwingen* [Dutch history in present-day perspective: Some glosses and comments] (Groningen, 1959), p. 4.
17. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), vol. 8 (3d ed., 1962), p. 6.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
19. *Ibid.*, vol. 7 (2d ed., 1958), p. 290; see also vol. 5, p. 9.
20. *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 234.
21. See Gerhard Krüger, *Freiheit und Weltverwaltung: Aufsätze zur Philosophie der Geschichte* (Munich: Karl Alber, 1958), pp. 125, 138, 140.
22. Karl Löwith, *Die Weltbegriff der neuzeitliche Philosophie* (Heidelberg, 1960), passim.
23. Karl Löwith, "Die Dynamik der Geschichte und der Historismus," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 21 (1952): 217-54, esp. 244.
24. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1949), passim. Similarly Gloege ["Vom Sinn der Weltgeschichte. Ueberlegungen zum Thema 'Heilsgeschehen und Weltgeschichte,'" *Lutherische Monatshefte* 2 (1963): 112-22; reprinted in Gerhard Gloege, *Heilsgeschehen und Welt. Theologische Traktate*, Vol. I (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), pp. 27-52].
25. Karl Löwith, "Natur und Geschichte," *Die Neue Rundschau* 62 (1951): 65ff.
26. [See Smit's paper of three years later, chapter 10 in the present volume.]
27. Robert J. Fruin, *Verspreide Geschriften*, vol. 9 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1904), pp. 337-42.
28. Lord Acton, "On the Study of History," inaugural lecture reprinted in *Lec-*

- tures on Modern History* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1906; repr. 1926), p. 17.
29. Cf. Ernst Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck, 1922), pp. 71-72, 175, 188.
 30. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7, pp. 152-60, 172.
 31. For integralism, see esp. Jan Marius Romein, "Integrale geschiedschrijving" [On the writing of integrated history], in *Eender en anders; Twaalf nagelaten essays* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1964), pp. 25-42.

The Meaning of History

[1963]

THERE ARE CONCEPTS WE use facily but find difficult to supply with a definition or even description. The very moment we say what we understand by *meaning* we sense that our circumscription misses precisely the essence of *meaning*. Try as we may, all our attempts to approximate meaning more closely will fail. Why? Because *meaning* is of such a fundamental nature that no single verbal delimitation has the capacity to express its true content. Much rather, it is only in the light of meaning that other concepts disclose their content.

In recent decades there has been a veritable flood of writings bearing in their title: *the meaning of history*. Certainly this problem was addressed time and again in the nineteenth century as well, but then in another way and in another climate. At that time many knew from conviction what the meaning of history was. There was the reassuring certainty that history had a meaningful course and that one knew where it was headed. This reassurance provided a sense of security; history was not experienced as an *alien* power but as a power to which man could entrust himself. History had an anonymous course, true, but that course was meaningful.

This belief has been profoundly shaken in the twentieth century as a result, many say, of the two world wars and the crises of the interim period, which brought to light the wickedness of which man is capable while history itself disclosed the malignities and horrors it bore concealed within it.

To my mind this explanation is too facile, too obvious; hence it arouses suspicion. But whatever the cause may have been, it is certain that what in the nineteenth century had been counted as *meaningful* and had held a powerful fascination for people lost its validity in the twentieth century, and I am thinking here in particular of the idea of progress. When the problem of the meaning of

history is raised as persistently as it is today, then such is the result, I think, of people's no longer knowing what *meaning* is while at the same time sensing that they cannot live outside what is called the meaning of history. And so we get the bizarre situation that in many circles there is a turning away from history—"Do we not live in a new, entirely different age?"—while at the same time there is an intense desire to know whether history has meaning; people are prepared to exchange scientifically established facts for mythical tales if such a trade-in can resolve the all-decisive question concerning the meaning of history.

It is also noteworthy that the "meaning of history" is usually mentioned in one and the same breath with the "meaning of human existence" and the "meaning of life." To be sure, there is definitely a connection, too, between the meaning of love or of justice and the meaning of life; but it is undeniable that modern man senses as if by intuition that the question concerning the meaning of life is answered in the meaning of history. This commands our full attention inasmuch as it is precisely modern man who is disposed to turn his back on history, but when he wants an answer to the question of meaning, he turns by preference to philosophy of history.

Thus a number of points are established, but why all this should be so is still unresolved.

A historian constantly asks *why* things are, but also *whence* they originate, and thus he also deals with the *question of meaning*; in this he does not differ in principle from the non-historian. Only, he makes it his profession and devotes his entire life to it. The authentic historian is so obsessed with the questions of the why and whence that for their sake he is even prepared to lead an ascetic life. His concern in these questions—often without his being clearly aware of it—is the *meaning* of the phenomena: I believe there is an indication here that *meaning* and *origin* have something—yes, a great deal—to do with each other. In fact, could it be that the question concerning the meaning of life, the meaning of my existence *hic et nunc*, is the same as the question concerning the origin? Should this be so, then that is still not to say that the meaning of life arises from history, for it is possible to conceive of living from the origin while circumventing history. I say: it is conceivable, but is it also possible?

Let me put it plainly: to find the meaning of history or of life, one is obliged to return to the origin of all meaning, for there is the

source; but history is the means, the channel whereby I participate in meaning here and now. If this be true, what power history has, and how extremely important is the work of the historian! And what is more: if the meaning of living from the origin reaches us by means of history, are we thereby not brought into *dependence* upon history; to participate in what is to be cherished above all—meaning—are we not made to live in *servitude*? Have we not here discovered the source of modern man's ambivalence towards history: his enduring concern, even now in the middle of the twentieth century, is with the meaning of life, but to attain it he is obliged to let the whole past of thousands of years come over him with all its outdated notions and institutions, with all its false paths and failing solutions. Moreover, how shall history ever provide *meaning*, for is history itself not finitude, impermanence? Can we not, so modern man inquires, bypass history to discover and attain the meaning of life?

With our questions we have posed no *hypothetical, abstract* problems but have provided rather a sketch of what deeply perturbs the philosophy of history both in the nineteenth century and today.

The whole problem pertaining to the meaning of history can be provisionally focussed in the *origin of meaning*. Various positions are taken with respect to this all-dominating question.

It is widely held that life, the entire course of history, does have meaning, but that this is more a matter of philosophical reflection, of subjective conviction, especially of *belief*, with which we can do very little in everyday life, in science especially; only the brash will presume to speak about meaning with scientific certainty, and history has taught at least this, that not only *pride* but also *presumption* goes before the fall. Time and again you can hear it claimed, by Karl Jaspers and Oskar Köhler among others: How can we say anything sound about the meaning of history as long as the historical process has not yet reached its end, for only in terms of the end can it be known what, at bottom, has determined the course of history.

Meaning, some protest, is a mystery, and to want to disclose it is to violate the mystery and lose meaning. On this view, the seeker can do little else (and the historian in particular needs to be mindful of this) than restrict himself to the outside, the surface, the outlines of phenomena; it is simply not given him to penetrate to their ground and reason of existence.

Now, a most remarkable thing occurs with regard to this widely held and unquestioned view. Many of its adherents—I dare say: *all* its adherents—are untrue to it: in an unguarded moment they pose the question of meaning after all, and are often extremely positive in their answer. This curious inconsistency should give us pause, and I venture to suggest—very tentatively as yet—that not a single question, not a single historical investigation, nor yet a single historical phenomenon is able either to exist or to be known if meaning is excluded from the picture. Willy-nilly, we are thrown into the problem of meaning, and therefore every person, certainly every historian, cares deeply about the meaning of history. Indeed, who would he be if he no longer cared about *this*?

Once we have recognized as an illusion the view that history has no meaning or that its meaning is unknowable to us, we can concentrate all our attention on the *where*, *the wherein*, and *the whence of the meaning of history*. Although we may now land in a veritable witches' cauldron of mutually contradictory opinions, happily these can be reduced to a few models.

In modern times—taken in the larger sense—the conviction has become predominant that the meaning of history is located in history itself and arises from it; to this type I also assign Hegel's philosophy of history.

From the Renaissance and the Enlightenment until today there has been almost unanimous agreement amongst modern people that the meaning of history is *progress*. Especially of late, many Christians have become adherents of the idea of progress and come to regard it as the fundamental difference between the Christian view of history and pagan *mythical* thought. I mention here only the 'progressistic' doctrine of evolution of Teilhard de Chardin's and the great influence it has had in recent times.

Let us examine this mode of thought more closely.

1. Its decisive point of departure is: meaning is *in* history, is *of* history, *arises from* history. This implies, however, that man seeks meaning in something which itself is limited, fleeting, finite, relative, which is to say in something that does not have the ground of its existence within itself. The only sense of seeking meaning in

history consists in finding something that is *exempt from relativity*, something absolute and abiding that can offer ultimate ground and rest to the fleeting-historical. Well now, the riches that history exhibits may be ever so abundant, but its distinctive quality is that it can never offer a place of refuge from transience and relativity. And thus understood, history repels meaning. None the less, modern man seeks meaning *in* history. To find meaning he shall have to go beyond history, yet there is no path around but only a path through history.

In his quest for meaning, man is thus always thrown back again into the historical process. Who can fail to sense here the profound tragedy of modern man who in his wrestling with the meaning of history is driven onward by the injunction to remain faithful to history?

2. When meaning is sought *in* history, another no less serious difficulty presents itself. Hegel's philosophy of history can be used to demonstrate this, but I would emphasize that what I am about to say applies equally to other conceptions of history.

The meaning of history, according to Hegel, lies in the fact that the World Spirit unfolds its entire rich content, its substance, in history. The Spirit employs historical manifestations, national spirits, states, great individuals, to demonstrate what is most essential in it, namely, its freedom. Reason advances through history, and in its sovereign course it works out—progressively—its own freedom. The nations, the great individuals think that they pursue their own ends, hence that they are free, but in reality they execute the will of the World Spirit.

There it is: the nation, the *Volk*, the individual person is subservient to the will of *the spirit* (read: *the meaning*) of history. But suppose the individual, concerned above all for his personal freedom, withdraws from the sovereignty of the spirit: what happens then? In that case he places himself *outside the meaning of history*, whereupon his lot becomes a *meaningless and purposeless* existence. Man cannot step outside meaning, upon penalty of landing in nothingness. But will he not gladly sacrifice his individual freedom, for what treasures does he not gain in exchange?

And so it has gone in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the idea of progress. Progress is a sovereign, anonymous power

which endows individuals with meaning apart from their individual wills, since implied in the process itself. Why would one reject it, given the happiness, the fullness of life which it brings? Yet, however one looks at it, *man has been surrendered to and made dependent upon the stream of history*. Nor can he escape this even from a Christian standpoint by joining Teilhard de Chardin in proceeding from the unproven assumption that the universe brings forth consciousness, for here too man is subject to a supra-individual controlling principle.

Nevertheless, this whole mode of thought is so typical of the modern Western mind that most historians frame their questions in terms of it, even when these are purely scientific in nature. It is remarkable that a historian always desires to inquire into the *rise* of a phenomenon and almost always does so by looking for external influences. There are but few, for example, who regard the courtly culture of the twelfth century as a spontaneously grown historical phenomenon: historians are almost compulsively in search of the origins of this culture, of both its forms and its ideas, either among the Cathari, or the Arabs, or in the West itself. Evidently, it is an ineradicable propensity of the Western historian to understand historical events and persons in terms of historical development and to see their meaning in their having been of significance and consequence for subsequent events and periods. Thus the ninth to eleventh centuries are valued as *preparation* for the Renaissance, which in its turn was the foundation of modern times. Indeed, history "under the spell of history"¹ — with as consequence that the significance of a historical phenomenon or period *in itself* recedes entirely into the background.

Our conclusion must be that both in philosophy of history and in historical science the *individual event*, the *individual person has become subservient to the historical process*, and he cannot circumvent it since in that case he would forfeit the meaning of history. *Man is at bottom determined by history*. We have at the same time shown how essentially meaning and freedom are interrelated. And most harrowing of all: there is apparently no way out.

A way out has been passionately sought, in order to escape the overpowering force of history. The magic word for this quest is *freedom*, *liberation*. Yes, but from what? Certainly not from meaning, yet in

any case from the iron sway of the anonymous historical process. The basic question perforce has become: Is it possible to escape history and yet retain the meaning of life?

This passionate struggle to emancipate man while retaining the fullness of meaning guided both philosophy of history and historical science in their heyday in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and has reached its peak in recent years. It should accordingly not surprise us that the struggle for freedom is fought out in the field of philosophy of history no less than in the political and socio-economic fields. Hence Professor Richard Schwarz of Vienna is not exaggerating when he says that there are at bottom but two attitudes towards history: either history is absolute necessity in which the individual is no more than an organ in and through which this world process realizes itself, or else history is the individual's freedom unto responsibility; *and in both attitudes the deep, moving force is the meaning of history*: either people desire to be nothing more than organs in the historical process in order thus to participate in meaning, or else they want to be fully free in order thus to actualize the *meaning* of their existence.²

For the moment I have said enough about the dominance of history. Now its counterpole, freedom.

Must we not put it as follows: we need not be so anxious about this dominance, for it is mere appearance; *history itself brings emancipation*; is it not the essence of history to be *freedom*?

For, consider this model paradigm: you find yourself in a particular situation, you are conditioned on all sides by *this* situation, which is to say you are *bound* by it; where in this situation is your freedom? Nor is that all. This very situation is in turn fully determined by historical circumstances, and so I can go back indefinitely: everything speaks of *determination*. On the other hand, history itself appears to break all ties and thus to be freedom through and through: after all, history is finitude while impermanence, complete independence while relativity; in history, after all, everything sooner or later *perishes*; history executes judgment upon itself by withering what is budding or what has already blossomed; nations groan under the yoke of a tyrant: have no fear, just be patient, for the tyrant will vanish from the scene one day; or to stay with our model: in your situation you are bound in a hundred ways, but what hap-

pens?—the situation vanishes, sinks away, and you are free; granted, you do become the prisoner of a new situation, but this situation too must in turn release you. In short, history constantly throws its tentacles around the individual, but it can never hold him permanently; scarcely is the individual bound before he is released again in virtue of the rhythm proper to history, as by a process. Accordingly, freedom is guaranteed by history itself.

But is this not necessarily accompanied by the loss of meaning? For *meaning* was said to lie *in* history and to arise *from* history alone, while the individual person and the particular fact constantly detach themselves from it and from its meaning. From what source, then, can they still derive meaning?

Because in this sort of liberation *meaning* perishes, I mistrust this *liberation*. The way of freedom that I have just sketched is the way that has been shown by historicism and existentialist philosophy. They have shown that according to the prevailing view individuals, events, and facts derive their meaning from without, from an intellectual world or from the immanent historical process; that historical things are thus subordinated to an external power, to the tyranny of an alien—which may then ever so nicely be called 'meaning'.

To counter this, historicism and existentialism have asserted: particular persons, things, and events have their *meaning* in themselves and on account of this are at bottom *free*; they do not derive meaning from without, not from a transcendent world nor yet from a historical process, but meaning springs from the particular person or event and in this manner announces its own original existence and fullness.

The solution is astoundingly simple: things *are free* and *are charged with meaning*, and they are so in an entirely original way.

From the existentialist side this denouement is proclaimed a *Copernican revolution* in philosophy of history, in particular in the *problem of meaning*.³

Only, one may claim that the individual person and the particular event have their meaning entirely within themselves and from nowhere else, but this is no more than a naked assertion. There is nothing whatsoever in the world that exists just like that, without basis—not even meaning: meaning must *arise from something* or

else meaning is a nothing. But now for a most remarkable turn: even according to the existentialistic conception meaning does arise from something after all! Just listen: "*the authentically existing man projects his meaning himself, and the event brings forth its own meaning—on its own authority.*"⁴ Thus it is entirely independently of a center of history or of an eschatological goal that man actualizes himself and therein the meaning of his existence and his autonomous freedom.

So what appears to have been the point to this positing of meaning? The point was to be able to assert man's absolute autonomy, his being entirely himself. And the last tyrant to be fended off was history.

However, is this second view much different then, in the final analysis, from the first one, which favors the superiority of the meaning of the historical process? In the one case, meaning derives from history; in the other, from the individual. Nevertheless, *both are enslaved: the one to the historical process, the other to . . . himself.* The latter is constantly engaged in projecting himself, attending to his freedom, perpetually preoccupied with self-interest.

I go still one step further: this entire historicistic and existentialistic position is impossible. For how could I ever have received my existence and with it the meaning of my existence except through history? Without history I would have no being. This is acknowledged, too, despite the inner contradiction. Bultmann, for example, says: only the individual face to face with God is of importance, whereas the cross of Christ is a mere historical fact hence without significance, yet, "paradoxically," how could anyone ever appear before God without that cross of some two thousand years ago and without the transmission of the Gospel through the historical labors of the church?⁵

I need not summarize. Every road we have travelled thus far deprives us of meaning or of freedom or of both.

And still there is hope and we can close in the spirit of Advent, provided we allow meaning and freedom to arise neither from world history nor from the "existing" person. Meaning and freedom alike can arise only from God.

In asserting this, however, I must be sure to avert two misunderstandings and deadly perils:

1. The first reasons as follows: Ah, so God is the meaning of history, or the Kingdom of God—but these have nothing to do with our terrestrial history, they are far above us, entirely *supra-historical*; and only human *hubris* can involve them in our history, in which case, however, their divine nature is at once compromised;

2. The second deadly peril is the contrary of the first. It concludes that God is co-mingled with history, even identical with it—in which case the historical process itself assumes a divine character.

God, the meaning of history—this means that history has meaning in that it is totally and in all its elements and phenomena, in all its agents and principals, *related to, directed to* God. He has created the world in relation to Himself—and relation here does not mean some external connection but a relation such that one side of it finds its total fulfillment in the relation. History finds the ground of its existence exclusively in its *Meaning, which is God*.

That means for history not only fullness of meaning but also freedom, since for its meaning it is not dependent on the historical process, nor on the autonomous person. The meaning-relation was called into being by God Himself, namely, *when He created man in His Image*.

The creation mandate, the supreme historical commandment *to have dominion over the earth*, cannot be primary. What takes precedence before all else, rather, is the reality of being created in God's image, of *being placed in relation to Him: and man can never fall from this relation however deep he indeed may fall*, which is to say that man can never lose or escape the meaning of history (see Romans 1).

If, however, man thus receives the meaning of his existence *directly* from God, independently of history, then does that not do away with the importance of history, hence also with the meaning of history, and does history not remain of significance only for all kinds of earthly cares? Is the direct relation with God not purchased at the price of history? No, for in its total course and in its separate events, history is comprehended, is centered in this direct relation to God. Thus when *this* relation was disrupted by sin, all history fell, and when communion with God was restored, all history was saved.

None the less, does history still retain a *meaning-full* function?

We come now to something unique in our conception of history, something that is only to be found in the Christian view:

The meaning of history was saved by an historic act, by a purely historical fact, and the meaning thus preserved comes to the individual person, comes to the historical fact, also with the aid of history.

To be sure, the meaning of our life is a matter directly between God and ourselves. Yet God still uses history for it: there would be no communion with Him without the historical suffering and resurrection of Christ and without the preaching of the Gospel now for almost two thousand years.

History is the channel, as it were, along which meaning is supplied. Meaning is granted directly, immediately, but again not without the means of history. And so we can say that every fact has a twofold origin, but that both "origins" are intertwined with each other.

History comes to us because meaning comes to us, powerfully but not *overpoweringly*. We are *confronted* by the past, which inescapably bears down upon us because it conveys meaning towards us; yet meaning does not realize itself apart from us.

Every generation, every individual is asked what it (or he) will do with meaning, and no one can get away from that by saying, "You have to go along with your times" or "It can't be helped." In this confrontation with the past, an awesome responsibility is laid upon *everyone*. It is from the past that one must receive the *meaning of life*, and nothing will change that for there can be nothing greater in world history than the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. But then this *historical meaning* must be *realized in every age and in every life in an original way*.

Notes

1. [Allusion to a book by P.J. Bouman, *In de ban der geschiedenis* [Under the spell of history] (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1961).]
2. See Richard Schwarz, "Die Frage nach dem Sinn der Geschichte," *Wissenschaft und Weltbild* 14 (1961): 161-79, esp. 177.
3. Cf. Pierre Thévenaz, "Événement et historicité" [Event and historicity], in *L'homme et l'histoire; Actes du VIe Congrès des Sociétés de Philosophie de langue française* (Paris, 1952), pp. 217-25, esp. p. 220. [An expanded version of this paper appeared in Pierre Thévenaz, *L'homme et sa raison* (Neuchatel: Baconnière, 1956), pp. 121-28.]
4. [This quotation (by Heidegger? Sartre?) could not be traced.]
5. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, "Zur Frage der Entmythologisierung. Antwort an Karl Jaspers," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 10 (1954): 81-95, esp. 93-94.

New Perspectives for the Christian View of History?

[1965]

IN THIS PAPER I PROPOSE to discuss to what extent a Christian view of history has received new impulses from recent publications by Herbert Butterfield, Henri-Irénée Marrou, Peter Meinhold, Fritz Wagner, and Reinhard Wittram. Only three problem areas will be dealt with: (1) history and its knowability; (2) God and history; and (3) the individual and the universal in history. We shall not always be able to respect the boundaries between these areas: before long it will become clear, for example, that the first problem is present in the second and third as well, that the third is present in the first, and so forth. Moreover, other problems no less fundamental in nature are involved as well, such as: history and freedom; whence does history constitute itself; how is history possible; the relation of continuity and discontinuity; history and nature.

There are reasons for not taking up these other questions. In the first place, our authors do not intend to write philosophy of history but simply to reflect on the remarkable phenomenon that history *is* and that man remains interested in his past.

I have a second reason for restricting myself to the three problems mentioned. They have a foundational and a referential character. Foundational and referential: the two belong together and mutually presuppose each other. In thinking about history, the successive problems are not isolated topics or separate chapters but are implicit once the foundations are laid.

With regard to a number of writers to be dealt with here, however, a serious problem arises, especially in the case of Marrou. They begin somewhere, but nowhere do they explain why they consider their chosen *point of departure* to be the correct one — perhaps

because it seems to them to be self-evident, or because it is accepted by many historians and philosophers. The consequences of this omission are far-reaching because in the choice of the point of departure is also decided the manner in which the road will be travelled.

(1) History and its knowability

First we want to talk about history in an unproblematical sense, to pose the question in a very general way whether history is knowable and, if so, *how*? For the moment, we avoid raising the problem whether the *meaning*, the *essence*, and the *goal* of history are knowable, let alone whether we can get the relation God-history in focus. We shall see how long we can remain within the bounds of our questions.

We must, indeed, set these restrictions if we wish to be able to listen attentively to Marrou, for it is with him in particular that we shall have to deal.

Naturally, Marrou too asks the question, What is history?—but in raising this question he does not wish to concern himself with the essence of history, for the answer he gives is “History is the knowledge of man’s past.”¹ The word “knowledge” is chosen by Marrou in order to exclude numerous misconceptions and to include the rigorously systematic methods of operation of this knowledge. Knowledge concerning the *essence* of ‘man’s past’ is not sought: that is done by the “philosopher of history”—Marrou adds, “our worst enemy.”²

Why this fierce hostility toward the philosopher of history? For Marrou, the very mention of Hegel’s name suffices, and he expresses alarm at the Hegel revival of our days. But why this alarm? Because the philosophers of history chain the historians to their “laws” and make use of the results of historical science without asking that science, *How* do you know it? The philosophers of history, moreover, are without excuse. Did Hegel not live in the very age when the real scientific approach to history blossomed, as a result of the pioneering work of Niebuhr and Ranke? Yet, observe how Hegel deals with that: he knows Niebuhr’s work but refers to it only in order to criticize it and heap sarcasm upon it. Hegel knew very well how to find the weak spots in Niebuhr’s *Roman History*, but what

escaped his notice was "all that was really new in this systematic application of critical methods to history."³

From Marrou's various writings it is clear that he is here not concerned with an isolated instance. Rather, in Hegel's rejection of the awakening science of history, the basic defect of the philosophy of history manifests itself: namely, its dogmatism.

Now, it has not escaped Marrou—he often returns to the matter in his many writings—that historical science is experiencing difficulties in our days. It is believed that the historian can do anything and will defend anything with his material. As a result, a skepticism regarding the results of historical science prevails as never before. Worse yet, historical science has descended to the level of erudition and history has vanished from people's everyday attitudes, so that a gap exists between the world of the professional historian and that of living culture.

But now the paradox. People are turning today to the solutions of "our enemy," the philosopher of history. However much Marrou may regret this, he finds it understandable: in our time people are more conscious than ever of *man's fundamental historicity, his confinement in history*. This explains the great place occupied by the question concerning the 'Meaning' of history. This question is not posed and pondered in some sheltered corner but arises from *Angst*, from the existential anxiety of being delivered up to history. The vexed person of our time desires certitude, hence in the first place certitude about the *meaning* of history. Historical science, however, has grown *uncertain* about the past, whereas philosophy of history has not. The philosopher offers his perspective and solutions, without concerning himself about the uncertainties of the historian's methodical, empirical inquiry.⁴ Such, in a nutshell, is the background to Marrou's ideas about the way currently being followed: confinement in history, anxiety born of that, the passionate search for the meaning of history, the inadequacy of scientific historical research, the intervention of philosophy of history—rejected by Marrou as a flight from authenticity into a dogmatic scheme.

Many of these terms are familiar to us, familiar from existentialism, but we also miss a few customary notes. Marrou edges towards existentialism, even embraces it, but then backs away. It seems to me that the best way to characterize his thought about history is to call it *existentializing*.

But is this not a question of terminology, which we could better

leave aside? Not really; for Marrou himself often calls attention to his appreciation for existentialism. More importantly, however, the various difficulties that Marrou has encountered in solving the problems by which he sees himself confronted all converge, as it were, in the term 'existentializing'.

Marrou's ideas have been opposed by many scholars, but they have also been welcomed by many others with approval. The book *De la connaissance historique* has enjoyed great success, entering its fourth printing in 1964. One can consider this surprising, for his ideas contain little that is original. In seeking an explanation for this success, one must keep two things in mind:

a. The arresting, often playful manner in which Marrou is able to explain difficult, apparently abstract problems. I imagine many a reader must have thought: many things that I have been thinking about for a long time are made explicit here in a wonderful way; in studying this book one constantly has the feeling: here at last is a historian who takes up *my* questions and those of our time.

b. In the second place, the great influence of Marrou's book is attributable, I think, to its being a French book. It has had great success in France, better the Romance world. That German historical science required no such book will be clear from what follows.

I return to the question of originality. Marrou made no pretense to it, aware as he was of standing in a tradition, one which must be sought primarily in Germany. His authorities are Dilthey, Neo-Kantians like Windelband, Rickert, Simmel, but also phenomenologists, finally Jaspers and Heidegger. And then, as well, there are a few English and French thinkers. He calls attention especially to Raymond Aron—remarkable, as it will appear. But indeed, it was Aron who, shortly before the Second World War, was the first to fully inform French historians and philosophers about that German tradition that we can characterize with the slogan: *the critique of historical reason*.

Aron published his two theses in 1938. Their titles say a great deal: (1) 'Introduction to the philosophy of history: An essay on the *limits of historical objectivity*'; and (2) '*Critical philosophy of history: An essay on contemporary German theory of history*'.⁵ The original labor of this critical philosophy of history was done in Germany by Dilthey and others, adopted by Aron in France, and accepted and elaborated by Marrou. In other words, Marrou does

recognize a philosophy of history, in fact his book *De la connaissance historique* is filled with it. As he states, historians have suffered for too long from an inferiority complex with respect to philosophy.⁶

How can this be squared with Marrou's sally against "our enemy," against Hegel and company? Well, Marrou aspires to a formal or *critical* philosophy of history, one that incorporates a critique of historical reason [a justification of historical knowledge].

We have now—following Marrou's path—gone into both the rejection and the affirmation of philosophy of history at some length because his entire critical philosophy, and with it his view of history, rests on the assumption that it is *possible*, indeed even mandatory, to account for history critically *without* involving *material* or speculative philosophy of history in the process. We follow Marrou with bated breath: will it be possible to establish a critical philosophy after first having shown philosophy of history the door, for in so doing he also eliminated the question of meaning.

Marrou summarizes the result of his critical philosophizing, the substance of the *connaissance historique*, in a few pithy remarks and formulas: (1) history is a mixture, indeed an indissoluble *mélange*, of subject and object; (2) history is inseparable from the historian; and (3) history is a relationship between two *p*'s: between the past (i.e., the historical object) and the present (i.e., the present of the historian).⁷

At first glance these formulas appear quite innocent and they suggest nothing new. Every positivistic historian—to whom Marrou is fiercely opposed—could accept them. They mean, after all, that all knowledge of history presupposes a subject, someone who knows; and the act of knowing involves the present, the current situation in which the investigator of history finds himself. Historians have always known that however empirically and critically they may go about their work, subjective elements can never be avoided entirely. Only, they always seek to reduce the present to a minimum in their critical inquiry; such is the very purpose of historical criticism.

However, in his formulas Marrou says much more than all this. He sees it as his task—as the aim of critical philosophy—to open historians' eyes to the presence of the subjective, of one's own present time, in the *scientific* activity of the historian, not in order to warn against it but in order to furnish it its *legitimate* place.

We recall what is Marrou's greatest concern: that history is vanishing from the general attitude of contemporary man. Now,

Marrou believes that the break with history can be repaired if the historian—followed by contemporary man—personally enters into history *with* what he has, not just to open himself to it—no, the historian actively forms and shapes it both with the constrictions and with the capacities of his mind. Although Marrou continues to use the term 'subjective,' the word *existential* expresses more satisfactorily that act of entering into history with one's entire intellectual baggage.

Marrou's critics have charged him with skepticism—which is just. He has defended himself—which is also just, for while history is undeniably a mixture of subject and object, he himself is on guard against overemphasizing the existential relation in the work of the historian; hence he beats an elaborate retreat and ultimately ends up at the prevailing scientific historical critique and its demand for objectivity. And if we observe the historian Marrou at work, if we read, say, his *Les Troubadours* (published under the pseudonym Henri Davenson), then we notice that little remains of the so spiritedly defended break with objective history.

Has the mountain brought forth a mouse, and can we lay Marrou's *Connaissance historique* aside for what it is, full of inner contradictions? No, we cannot do that either. He has chosen a safe middle course, it is true, but his sympathies are with the *existential* practice of history. It is from it that he expects the restoration of history in our culture. Only in its existential function can history offer help to *anxious* man.

There is irony in Marrou's predicament. It was primarily with the help of Aron's theses of 1938 that he entered the lists against the old ideal of objectivity. Yet observe what happens: he is dismayed by the consequences of accentuating the subjective in the formation of knowledge, whereupon he turns against the consequences: the excesses of relativism, which has assumed "delirious forms," the prevalence of the "dissolution of the object."⁸ In 1938 Aron felt called upon to stress the *limits of objectivism*; now Marrou seeks *guarantees* for objectivity, whereby the subjective element in historical interpretations is only a limited subjectivity after all.

Marrou's and Aron's problem is of concern to every philosopher and historian. Both Aron's conception (the limits of objectivity) and Marrou's (a middle course between the existential and objectivist attitudes) are solutions born of perplexity.

We cannot here discuss the impasse fully, but we must raise the question: How did Marrou get into it?

We have characterized Marrou's point of departure as *existentializing*. He is fond of invoking the insights of existentialists, especially of Heidegger. Now then, existentialists do not know what to do with the "history of the historian" and depreciate it, for example as secondary history. Marrou cannot follow them in this, yet what he finds valuable in existentialism he wants to make useful for historical science; but he thereby throws up barricades for himself on the way to history, while his pretension is precisely to open it up. In essence we have here the same tension as in Dilthey: in *Verstehen* we open the entrance to alien cultures of the past and are in a position to delve into them in depth and know their meaning; yet, that is nevertheless impossible, since the act of *Verstehen* is fully historically determined, which is to say that it is always the *Verstehen* of an individual subject, entirely circumscribed by a limited historical world.

Similarly in Marrou. There is an immense gap between the real course of events and the way in which the historian gives form to this! There is a qualitative and structural difference between the present as it is experienced at the time and "recovered time" as the historian brings this to life. What the historian resurrects is not history as it took place, for this is inaccessible: he encounters himself in history.⁹

For Marrou the basic question would have to be: How is it then possible, when human existence is so shackled to itself and its own present—how is it then still possible to gain access to that *other reality, which is not my existence, not my situation?*

There is more. If the way to the past is blocked by the confinement to oneself, is then not also the connection with the other, *in casu* my fellow historian, broken? Just listen to Marrou: "the image each historian gives of the past is so profoundly and so organically shaped by his own personality that the differing standpoints of historians are in the final analysis not so much complementary as mutually exclusive."¹⁰ It is in this light that we must understand Marrou's words: "I seek to convince *myself* of the truthfulness of *my* understanding of the past."¹¹ Yet for all that, Marrou protests that there is a real meeting of minds among historians, true dialogue, and so on, and he can assert this because he takes a saving leap into objectivity.

Remarkably, at least twice the restoration of the connection (with history and with historians) is expected not from the existential approach but from the object.

Nevertheless, Marrou's *Connaissance historique* is extremely important: he has expressed what many have felt and has formulated specific problems that await solutions. His middle course has been viewed by many as a way out; his exclusive subjectivism and existentialism died an early death in his practice as a historian.

But still our judgment cannot be milder than the following: no advance has been made by Marrou in the solving of problems that have engaged both the philosophy of history and the science of history now for more than a century.

I want to raise a somewhat puckish question: Has Marrou perhaps blocked his own view by excluding the philosophy of history? From his standpoint he repeatedly raises the question—he even begins with it—*How do you know it?* Should this not have been preceded by the question: *Who is the knowing subject?* A marvelous treasure would then have been discovered, in any case not that everlastingly-concerned-about-its-own-existence-and-confined-to-itself subject.

We were asked to speak about new perspectives for the Christian view of history, and what has come of our intentions thus far? Marrou does make it difficult for us. As a Roman Catholic historian he has addressed the problem on several occasions, for example, in an address of 1948 entitled "Existe-t-il une vision chrétienne de l'histoire?" (Is there a Christian view of history?).¹² And later he repeatedly returns to this theme, but—and that says a lot—not in his *De la connaissance historique*. To him they appear to be two separate worlds: that of the theology of history, alongside that of critical philosophy. In terms of his Roman Catholic stance, that is understandable: the *connaissance historique* belongs to the temporal values, and the theology of history has a supernatural, eschatological orientation.

This separation pervades the entire body of his work in theory of history, but then abruptly we are reminded that the scholastic conception, while requiring that nature and grace be sharply distinguished, nevertheless holds that the two are ordered with respect to each other as the natural-temporal to the supernatural. And that comes out unexpectedly in Marrou when he asserts that in his book *De la connaissance historique* he could not help but "cite" Augustine at every turn.¹³ We would like to see those citations from

Augustine sometime. There is, however, a tendency in Marrou's *oeuvre* that sheds light on this alleged agreement with Augustine: what he says about the relation of *Geschichte* (the object of theology of history) to *Histoire* (the reality of historical science), is to him so self-evident and correct that historical science must necessarily be ordered to the spiritual-supernatural: the connection with theology of history has come about at the natural-temporal level without the involvement of theology of history or the Christian view of history.¹⁴

Marrou did, of course, as we have seen, begin somewhere, namely with the question: *How do we know it?* And he left aside the primary question: *How do I know that this is a legitimate point of departure?* He had perforce to follow this route, for otherwise he would have had to appeal to the philosophy of history for help, or to the theology of history, which for him is concerned only with the eschatological orientation of history.

Just how decisive the choice of a point of departure is for the knowledge of history becomes very clear when we juxtapose Marrou's critical philosophy to the views of Reinhard Wittram. In Wittram we do not encounter the constant concern about human existence. To be sure, he too recognizes the value of subjectivity in the formation of knowledge about the past, and he too knows that historical existence is challenged, but—and now comes the great difference—Wittram is equally concerned about *historical reality* (thus the object) itself. His main question is not: What use or what value does knowledge about the past have for my challenged and imperilled existence? but: How does history retain its dignity?¹⁵

The subjective elements in historical knowledge, says Wittram, must not be overestimated: personal and national antipathies and social prejudices can be eliminated. But what then, when we have succeeded in achieving "correctness," when we have discovered "*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*," how things really were? Historical truth, as defined by Wittram, embraces more than that, namely, the demand of justice, and inseparable from it: recognition of the respect we owe history—which is to say that the dignity of history lies not in its relation to us or in its utility for us—no, history has a dignity and worth of its own, and therefore in our dealing with it, all arbitrary or careless treatment is a crime. The justice that must be observed by the historian is to be viewed in the same perspective, and it will only

be observed if the historian is able to touch the essence of man.¹⁶

But with that we have made the transition to our next problem.

(2) The relation of God and history

The demand to do "justice" to historical persons and phenomena would seem to defy human strength. Wittram is very much aware of this, and that is why in this connection he comes to speak of God in history. Nor does he do so only to withdraw hastily again with the excuse that we must not become guilty of vain speculations about God's activity in history.

It cannot escape our notice that not only Wittram but also Meinhold, Butterfield, Marrou, and other Christian historians deal quite explicitly with the God of history—with many reservations to be sure, and Marrou only in his theology of history, but still, it is done. There has even been talk of a revival of the problem of God in history. In the face of all the objections of vain curiosity, speculation, the unsearchableness and mystery of God, almost all the authors mentioned assert: but God *has* revealed Himself, in Jesus Christ, in history! Thus the great tension is located in what Herman Ridderbos, in speaking of Christ, once called Self-revelment and Self-concealment.¹⁷ One of the most topical themes in contemporary theology is that of God's redemptive activity in history, and we suspect that this has some bearing on the new interest historical science is showing in the relation of Providence to the historical process. It is one thing when this theme is raised in theology, however, and quite another when it receives fresh attention in so-called profane historical science.

Perhaps someone will want to interrupt and replace 'historical science' with 'historical vision.' But that, *precisely*, will *not* do, and that is why our problem of God and history is so supremely difficult and complicated.

I have sometimes asked myself why our authors—and others as well—have ventured into this hornets' nest of difficult and ultimately unsolvable problems. Two answers can be suggested. The first has something to do with renewed concern about the unity and meaning of history. When Karl Jaspers contemplates the unity of history, he knows that this unity can never be realized—history itself would always cause such unity to suffer shipwreck; yet by contemplating it,

something of this unity can be realized none the less.¹⁸ Such is also the case with the problem at hand.

Our second consideration is of an entirely different character, and in several of our authors we even come upon it in so many words: Butterfield, for example, goes into it extensively.

Like Marrou, Butterfield is struck by the fact that history is receding from the general consciousness. Popular criticism is directed against the critical method that leads to skepticism: people are dissatisfied with the ceaseless establishing of facts as a result of which academic history has become anemic.¹⁹ Christopher Dawson reports the same criticism of the impoverishment in academic history.²⁰ Many (including not in the last place young students) ask for bread and are given stones—*bread*, which in this case is *the meaning of life*.

What is Butterfield's response to this criticism? He replies that factual research will always retain the right to exist, the scientific historian can provide no elucidation of the meaning of life, the key to solving the human drama lies not in professional history but in religion: the Bible has already told of it; it is the Bible that provides clarification of and commentary upon the ultimate meaning of life—something to which the professional historian can never attain, hence he may turn directly to the study of mundane events.²¹

The boundary is clearly drawn: there are two histories, that of the scientific, "technical" historian, and that of the Bible. And so the problems have vanished.

However, this is only apparently so. Neither Butterfield nor Wittram nor Marrou is able, while dwelling in the mundane world, to let go of the God of the Bible, the more so since they have posed yet another difficult problem by emphatically calling attention to the moral dimension in history and in the historian. The ethical questions form the bridge over which God—Who, it seemed, had to go—re-enters history.

In Butterfield this happens through complicated, not always clear reflections on the Providence of God. For Butterfield, an immanent nemesis rules in history. Moral judgments belong to the essence of the historical process. Thus in both the German defeats (of 1918 and 1945), God pronounced His judgment on German militarism and things Prussian. (To avoid misunderstanding: Butterfield does not mean to say that other nations do not fall equally under judgment.) But then Butterfield partially retracts his judg-

ment: ultimately, the decision whether we can speak of a judgment of God in history is not a problem for science but a matter of conscience.²²

Fritz Wagner is quite right when he observes that there is a natural progression in Butterfield from the technical methods of history, through the existential problem, to the realm of ethics.²³ And his view of man is directly implied in his view of history: in history there is one cardinal sin that holds man bound in all other sins, namely, his self-righteousness: and (historical) judgment strikes precisely those who "think themselves gods."²⁴

These border crossings from historical science to ethics, anthropology, and personal faith are not made by Butterfield alone. Marrou, Wittram, Meinhold, and Wagner do the same, though each in his own way.

For Marrou, history is not entirely opaque. With respect to Spain in the Golden Age, for example, the defeat of the Armada meant that to God the cause of the City of God was not identical to what Philip II made of the idea. As a second example there is Isaiah 45, which reveals to us the real meaning of Cyrus's victory. Yet these are exceptions. In general, history is a mystery.²⁵

Of much greater importance, however, is the idea that recurs time and again in Wittram. He knows of the self-concealment of God in history, and "the *whole* truth of history is hidden from us." *However*, there is the self-communication of God in the person of Jesus Christ, and although this yields no commentary on world history, it does provide direction of another kind: the truth about man.²⁶ Wittram returns to this in his chapter on 'Man and the moral dimension in history'. Notice the connection. There he wants to understand man as a *creature of God*, and to prevent anyone from dismissing that as a conventional idea he adds that *man's being a creature of God* entails far-reaching consequences that indeed reach much farther than is commonly recognized. As a creation of God, man possesses a uniqueness that extends beyond his spiritual and ethical worth and is expressed by the Biblical concept 'image of God'. But this concept too, says Wittram, is all too often woefully misunderstood. With Otto Weber he sees the meaning of the concept in this, that "man has received what is the quintessence of his humanity from God" and that therein lies man's *destiny*, a destiny that will be upheld by God through all historical changes, from the earliest forms onward through the forms still to come.²⁷

What does Wittram do with this extremely important insight? He falls back again upon his other thesis that no scientifically establishable connection whatever exists between salvation history and this or that event in profane history.²⁸ With his view of man as creature and image of God Wittram has, I think, crossed the boundary from salvation history to profane history, but as we read on, the contents of faith turn out to be merely forms of religious experience—a subjective stance which none the less influences Wittram's assessment time and again: thus he can only continue to see unity in history, for example, in that man lives before the face of God.

The most important reflections are those of Peter Meinhold and Fritz Wagner. It is only a pity that these have not gotten beyond their first outlines. We have been looking forward for some time now to Meinhold's *Prolegomena zu einer Weltgeschichte*, promised a number of years ago. The risk of wanting to draw too much from Meinhold's and Wagner's provisional insights is accordingly great. However, at this stage I believe it can at least be said that Meinhold is bent on overcoming that fatal barrier between salvation history (in the broader sense) and world history (read: profane history). No longer satisfied with a subjective-religious experience of faith in the God of history, Meinhold takes a decisive next step: he confesses not only that the whole of history falls under the rule of the Redeemer in whom time is fulfilled—the historian can confess this without doing much with it—but the point that matters for him is this: *profane history does not escape the effect of the death on the cross of the Redeemer who transforms the world*—although historical science in its scientific methods is powerless to “grasp this adequately.”²⁹ Meinhold does not retract in the second statement what he has said in the first, for with him transcendence is drawn into the scientific method. We must view the preceding in the light of his image of three concentric circles: salvation history, church history, world history—the first being the core, also of profane history.³⁰ World history hereby loses its autonomy and *finds itself constantly in a “metaphysical backward connection” (metaphysischer Rückbeziehung)*.³¹ To my way of thinking, in the entire discussion of a Christian historical science or perspective *no more hopeful word has been spoken.*

(3) The individual and the universal in history

Heeding the warning of time, I shall be brief on this topic. However sharply opposed to each other philosophy of history and historical science may be, they have common interests in the theme individual-universal (or particular-general), but again, no common insights.

This third problem can also be expressed as the relation of freedom and determinism. It is certainly not a new problem. In the struggle of nascent historical science against Hegelianism and philosophical positivism the point, in essence, was always that of rescuing the individual and safeguarding freedom. But the problems under consideration are of particular interest to historians *today*. In a wide circle there is concern about an overemphasis on the particular as well as a ground swell for the category of the general in history.

The search is on again for an original coherence, for a history behind the phenomena, be it a *geschehende Geschichte*, a silently operative *structure*, or an *ordo*: all have in common that they determine man and the historical phenomena at the deepest level. Others, however, are committed to resisting the determining power of a coherence, continuity, or order, whatever it may be called (world-history, period, age, spirit of the times, structure, etc.); they are out to rescue the individual person and also the individual event from the determining power of the anonymous historical process or of one of its components.

The difficulty is, however, that no individual existence is possible without the all-embracing historical coherence, as also no historical order is possible without individual events.

And to make the relation individual-universal even more complicated: the problem of meaning can never be evaded.

All the Christian historians under consideration here are caught up in this problem, if only because they all—the one more than the other—have been affected by the existentializing mode of thought. Thus it is not at all surprising that Marrou and Butterfield should have rejected the structuralist view of history. The world-historical perspective, on the other hand, plays a large role in Butterfield and Wittram and especially in Meinhold (leaving Marrou aside here).

The tension between the individual and the universal is greatest in Butterfield. He calls attention to the many and diverse determinants: the circumstances, the environment, the inescapable situations, and the great conflicts; broadly speaking, history goes its way according to its own laws, over people's heads.³² Admittedly, within this interplay of empirical circumstances there remains an area of free decisions, and the conscious individual always manages in the end to emerge triumphantly from the coercive forces. Yet one must wonder what remains of this ultimately rescued freedom when Butterfield is forced to admit that the individual is in turn shackled to the structure of his own personality. In short, Butterfield attempts to safeguard the individual by allowing freedom a tiny but unassailable haven of refuge.³³ Will this attempt ever succeed?

Meinhold and Wagner seek the solution in an entirely different direction. (It is not impossible that this same quest is Butterfield's underlying motive.) They relate the problem of the relations individual-universal and freedom-necessity to the meaning of history, regarding which they maintain that *world-history does not bear its meaning within itself*. In this way history loses its gravity, its autonomy, and the determinants lose their coercive character. This can also be expressed in the words "metaphysical backward connection," which is why Wagner advocates resurrecting Ranke's idea of the "God-relatedness" (*Gottbezogenheit*) in all history, an idea that has become an absurdity to contemporary historical consciousness (as a result of the acceptance of an ineluctable automatism in the determinants).³⁴

There seems to be yet another way of escape, that of existential freedom, of liberation from the unity of history. On this view, the conscious individual and the historically existing man receive their meaning no longer from the universal realm of world-history, nor yet from objective events, but have meaning in themselves. This appears to be Marrou's solution. Yet how, then, can there still be interconnections between events, and how can such historical monads gain understanding of each other and of historical objects? At the very best an encounter, a dialogue will be possible, only fleetingly, for otherwise there is no escaping the overpowering force of the object.

This paper must come to an end. It has dealt with the question, "New perspectives for the Christian view of history?" In retrospect we can answer: Wittram, Butterfield, Meinhold, and Wagner are agreed in this, that these perspectives can only be found in the "metaphysical connection." The task of the future will be to draw out the implications of this idea. Meinhold and Wagner have already begun to do that.

Notes

1. H.-I. Marrou, *De la connaissance historique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1954), p. 32; Eng. trans. by Robert J. Olsen, *The Meaning of History* (Baltimore and Dublin: Helicon, 1966), p. 33.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 34; Eng. trans. p. 35.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 18; Eng. trans. p. 18.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 17; Eng. trans. p. 17.
5. Raymond Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire; essai sur les limites de l'objectivité historique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938); Eng. trans. by Geo. J. Irwin (Boston: Beacon, 1961); and *Essai sur la théorie de l'histoire dans l'Allemagne contemporaine; la philosophie critique de l'histoire* (Paris: Vrin, 1938; 2d ed. 1950).
6. *De la conn. hist.* p. 10; Eng. trans. p. 11.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 53, 229; Eng. trans. pp. 39, 54, 238.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 234, 256, 262, 270; Eng. trans. pp. 243, 265, 271, 279.
9. H.-I. Marrou, "Comment comprendre le métier d'historien?" [How to understand the historian's craft?] in Charles Samaran, ed., *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade*, vol. 11 (1961), p. 1468; see also *De la conn. hist.* p. 90; Eng. trans. p. 92.
10. *De la conn. hist.* p. 231; cf. Eng. trans. p. 240.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 229; Eng. trans. p. 237; emphasis by Marrou.
12. H.-I. Marrou, "Existe-t-il une vision chrétienne de l'histoire?" in *XXVes Journées Universitaires* (Paris, 1948), pp. 48-67. [See today H.-I. Marrou, *Théologie de l'histoire* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969); Eng. trans. by Violet Nevile, *Time and Timeliness* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1969).]
13. H.-I. Marrou, "La théologie de l'histoire." Rapport avec discussion. In *Augustinus Magister*. Congrès International Augustinien, Paris 1954; Supplement to the *Revue des études augustiniennes* (1955); III, 193-212, esp. 196.
14. H.-I. Marrou, *L'ambivalence du temps de l'histoire chez saint Augustin* (Montreal and Paris: Vrin, 1950), p. 31.
15. Reinhard Wittram, *Das Interesse an der Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), p. 30.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 27.
17. [Cf. Herman N. Ridderbos, *Zelfopenbaring en zelfverberging: Het historisch karakter van Jezus' messiaanse zelfopenbaring volgens de synoptische evangeliën* (Self-revelation and self-concealment: The historical character of Jesus' messianic self-revelation according to the Synoptic Gospels) (Kampen: Kok, 1946).]

18. Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Munich: Piper & Co Verlag, 1949), pp. 305-27; Eng. trans. by Michael Bullock, *The Origin and Goal of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 247-65.
19. Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (London: Bell, 1949), p. 20.
20. Christopher Dawson, "The Problem of Metahistory," *History Today*, June 1951, pp. 9-12; reprinted in *Dynamics of World History* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1956), pp. 287-93.
21. *Christianity and History*, pp. 22-24.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-63.
23. Fritz Wagner, *Moderne Geschichtsschreibung; Ausblick auf eine Philosophie der Geschichtswissenschaft* [Modern historiography: Prospects of a philosophy of historical science] (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1960), pp. 53-65, esp. 54.
24. Cf. *Christianity and History*, pp. 60, 104.
25. H.-I. Marrou, "Existe-t-il un vision chrétienne de l'histoire?" in *XXVes Journées Universitaires* (Paris, 1948), p. 58.
26. Wittram, *Das Interesse an der Geschichte*, p. 31.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 145; cf. Fritz Wagner, "Zweierlei Mass der Geschichtsschreibung—eine offene Frage" [A twofold standard of historiography: An open question], *Saeculum* 10 (1959): 113-15.
29. Peter Meinhold, "Grundfragen kirchlicher Geschichtsdeutung" [Fundamental problems of an ecclesiastical interpretation of history], in Asmussen and Stählin, eds., *Die Katholizität der Kirche* (Stuttgart, 1957), pp. 133ff.; discussed by Wagner (see note 28), p. 119.
30. Peter Meinhold, "Weltgeschichte-Kirchengeschichte-Heilsgeschichte" [World history - Church history - Salvation history], *Saeculum* 9 (1958): 261-81, esp. 280.
31. Term of Fritz Wagner's (see note 28), p. 121.
32. Butterfield, *Christianity and History*, pp. 94, 96. Cf. also Ritter [probable reference to Gerhard Ritter, *Die Dämonie der Macht: Betrachtungen über Geschichte und Wesen des Machtproblems im politische Denken der Neuzeit* (6th impr.; Munich: Leibniz, 1948); Eng. trans. by F.W. Pick, *The Corrupting Influence of Power* (Hadleigh, Essex: Tower Bridge Publications, 1952). I owe this reference to J. Klapwijk, ed., *De eerste en tweede geschiedenis: Nagelaten geschriften van Meijer C. Smit* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1987), pp. 159, 178.—Ed.].
33. Butterfield, "The Rôle of the Individual in History," *History* 40 (1955): 1-17 [reprinted in C.T. McIntire, ed., *Writings on Christianity and History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 17-36.]
34. Fritz Wagner, *Die Historiker und die Weltgeschichte* (Munich: Karl Alber, 1965), p. 107; see also his "Rankes Geschichtsbild und die moderne Universalhistorie" [Ranke's view of history and modern world-history], *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 44 (1962): 1-26 [For Ranke's concept of history's 'Gottbezogenheit,' cf. the following passages: "I would maintain, however, that every age is immediate to God, and that its worth consists, not in what follows from it, but in its own existence, in its own proper self . . . Since no time lies before Him, I picture God as surveying the whole of historic mankind in its totality and finding it everywhere of equal value . . . From God's point of view all the generations of mankind have equal rights, and this is how the historian too must view the matter." "On the Epochs of Modern History." *Weltgeschichte*, IX/2 (Leipzig, 1888), pp. 5f. "God dwells, lives, is to be

known in all history. Every deed testifies to Him, every moment proclaims His Name, but most of all, it seems to me, the connectedness of history in the large. There it stands, like a holy hieroglyph, perceived in its contours and preserved, perhaps, lest it be lost from sight to future centuries. Very well, whatever may come of it, let us do our part to try to decipher this holy hieroglyph! So too do we serve God, are we priests and teachers." *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53/54 (Leipzig, 1890), pp. 89f. "History recognizes something infinite in every existence: in every condition, every being, something eternal that comes from God; and this is their vital principle. Apart from the divine ground of its existence, how could anything be? . . . We need not give elaborate proof of the indwelling of the eternal in the individual. This is the religious basis on which our efforts rest. We believe that nothing is apart from God, and nothing lives except through God." From a fragment of 1835, edited by Eberhard Kessel, in "Rankes Idee der Universalhistorie," *Historische Zeitschrift* 178 (1954): 295. Cf. also, from the school of Leonhard von Muralt, the studies by Heinrich Hauser, *Leopold von Rankes protestantisches Geschichtsbild* (diss. Zürich; Affoltern: J. Weiss, 1950), pp. 20-30, 38-46, 54-59, 66-69, 82-86; and Gerhard Frick, *Der handelnde Mensch in Rankes Geschichtsbild* (diss. Zürich; Affoltern: J. Weiss, 1953), pp. 11-31, 154-59.]

The Value of History

[1966]

1. *THERE IS CURRENTLY an ambivalent attitude towards history.*¹ For quite some time now, many people have disparaged history. To their mind it has really become time past. Such people will say: we live in an entirely different age, a new era, with other problems and concerns. Moreover, we are living at such a rapid pace that we have to get free of our own present. The tie to the past still exists, *alas*: history is a burden we have to bear, a constant obstacle to us on the way to a better future. And just look what earlier generations have left behind: a Germany deeply infected by nationalism, a divided France, a “pillarized” Netherlands, etc., etc. Salvation for the present and the future must therefore be expected from a break with the past. As Alfred Weber has put it: “*Abschied von der bisherigen Geschichte*”—good-bye to the history we left behind us.

Yet we said: the attitude towards history is currently ambivalent. For indeed, are there not also numerous signs that point to a renewed interest in history, and precisely in circles where one would not have expected it, among people in technology and in the medical profession, and the like? The very ones who used to call history bunk now love history books. This is undoubtedly hopeful, but does it imply an awareness of the real value of distant and alien times?

2. *Let us look again at this ambivalence.* There is the criticism—sometimes vehement—of the history of the academic historians, and this criticism is levelled not only by outsiders or by philosophers and sociologists but just as much by the practitioners of historical science themselves. It is said accusingly that the academic historians have only themselves to blame that history has come to stand outside life and outside culture.

Just think of it: while historians pored over their difficult sources in the tranquility of their studies and penned their volumes, unperturbed by what was going on around them, a severe economic crisis ravaged the world and Hitler gained the opportunity to prepare Germany for another war. No one less than Lucien Febvre has accused the historians in the academic tradition of being co-responsible for the defeats suffered by France in 1940. And Charles A. Beard, the American historian and sometime adviser to President Roosevelt, says: the learned historian just sits in his ivory tower, is an excellent philologist, but does not concern himself with the needs and desires of modern man.

3. In contrast—again this ambivalence—a great deal of interest is being shown in philosophy of history, and particularly in *the question concerning the meaning of history*.

To be sure, all ages have known that search for meaning. The nineteenth was the century of the great philosophers of history, and interest in the question of meaning was keen throughout the period. Still, the *crisis of meaning* has become graver—so grave, in fact, that within philosophy of history a separate discipline has taken shape: *metahistory*, in which all attention is focussed directly on the essence, goal, and meaning of history.

I would venture to conjecture that people no longer expect an answer to the real question of meaning from the scientific practitioners of history and that they are now turning instead to social philosophy or philosophy of history.

Before testing the correctness of this conjecture, however, let us take note of this ambivalence in its third form.

4. *History versus the history of the historians.*

Yes, one hears the expression often nowadays: *history of the historians*, and one knows beforehand that the opinion of it is not favorable. Most academic historians are said to be still governed by a positivistic conception, not in the sense that their historical practice still slavishly models itself after the natural sciences (as in the nineteenth century), but certainly in the sense that they still swear by the old ideal of establishing facts, the *bruta facta*: if they have but learned *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist* and assigned the facts their place in the historical development, then they regard their task as finished.

But—so say their critics—it is just here that one must start. A history of the *bruta facta* is still irrelevant to the needs of contemporary man, who calls for a different history.

5. *I believe we touch here upon what lies behind the current ambivalence in the appreciation of history:* when people speak of the value of history, then the question should first be raised: *which history do you mean?*

The theme of two kinds of history has come up repeatedly in the last twenty years; in fact, in most essays on history it is *presupposed*. I should like to observe already at this juncture that the attempt to overcome this bifid unity in a genuine unity is equally typical of the current situation. But how?

6. *Just what are these two histories?* There are many of these pairs, and the remarkable thing is that they are all concerned with the same historical data: for example, Alexander the Great, but also a common Hellenistic peasant: these can all figure in a structural history, but also in a history of events, yet in each case, characteristically, the data function in an entirely different way.

But the concept of two histories finds much broader application: there is the history in the *conception* of the present-day historian, and there is the history *as this really happened*, and the two cannot really be reduced to each other: the historian after all can never say, This is how it really happened, since he will always mix in something of his own view or of his own time.

Then there is the contrast between, on the one hand, the history of the historians, that is, the narrative factual history, currently often called *Historie*, *histoire*, and, on the other hand, *Geschichte*, history *proper*, the real history, namely, the history in virtue of which I find myself in an existential relation. Thus there is the history of the philosophers, in which the question of meaning is central, and there is the factual account, devoid of the problem of meaning, since presumably *meaning is too far off, too high and too deep*.

Now, it is far from being the case that all these histories and all these lovers of history live in peace and harmony with each other, exchanging mutual assurances that they beautifully complement one another. No, reproaches abound and complaints are heard on all sides. Listen to them: Of what earthly use are all those facts, established so painstakingly and with so much scientific fervor: if well narrated, they are able at most to soothe the aesthetic senses and provide a pretty pastime; or serve in a variety of cases (their number is declining) to resolve legal questions—perhaps that is why the jurist is sometimes a more frequently observed visitor at the

archives than is the historian. However—the argument continues—if you are confronted by great problems of an existential nature, all these “brute facts” leave you in the lurch.

The reply from the other side is not long in coming: If you drag the problems and exigencies of our time into the past and put the question of meaning to history, then you are violating history, then you are imposing something on history or trying to wrest something from history that is *essentially* alien to it.

Or if you will: While the historians study, Saguntum (France, you fill it in) perishes. And the reply is: We have only to establish *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, and in so doing we fulfill our subsidiary role. Truly, matters of no little consequence are at stake as we ponder the *value of history* this evening!

The existentializing approach insists: insight into *my* imperilled existence determines *my* approach to history. Undoubtedly, one has the right, even the duty, to deal with history in an objective way, applying all the rules of scientific historical method. But, so says our existentially thinking contemporary, in this way history remains distant, fails to bridge the gap between *then* and *now*; what we need to do is to transcend the mere historical-objective and enter into a living relationship with history. And this *happens* when I *understand myself in relation to it*: the history which was at first far off—in the form of objective knowledge concerning it—is now *nigh* unto me, through its connection with my existential self-understanding.

Historical facts—the argument continues—do not have meaning in themselves but acquire meaning solely in their connection to my self-understanding and to my imperilled existence. Myriads of facts will thus be of no relevance, and so in any existentialist engagement with history a selection will be made. There is more: facts that are existentially relevant will be so only in a particular respect (according to the measure of my self-understanding).

In short: in the interpretation of a text, in the determination of the true nature and significance of an historical phenomenon or event or complex of events, what will be decisive is *the connection to, the value for, existence*.

Let me cite an example, borrowed for objectivity's sake from one of the leading proponents of the existentialistic interpretation of history, namely Gotthold Hasenhüttl. Commenting on the medieval definition of truth as the *adequation of intellect and thing*, Hasenhüttl remarks: *Today* this proposition tells us very little about

truth, and it seems to me to be devoid of *existential*[!] significance. An objective interpretation cannot do justice to the proposition in question. This definition will only take on its significance if we transpose it onto the existential language of our time, and then there is no longer any essential difference from the original medieval definition.²

Summing up, we must draw the following conclusions:

1. The difference between the objective-historical and the existential views of the value of history is not so great after all. Again and again, the *value of history is conceived and determined in terms of the ego*. History is needed that I may become myself, constitute myself. The ego is forever engrossed—whether it likes it or not—in pressing the Other into its service.

2. The value of history—and with it the importance of historical research—thereby becomes problematical. When the historically other is altered and transformed until it says what historical existence knew all along, then what value can dealing with that historically other have? And when I rewrite history in terms of my own times, as the child of my times, whom do I then meet in it other than myself? Is dealing with history in this fashion anything more than passing time in a hall of mirrors? With a variation on the words of Jesus (“he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it”), we say: He that measures history by its value for himself and his own times shall lose it.

Should we then take the side of those who advise: the historian is to do his work objectively, solely to show *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, and he must not inquire into its utility. Must we follow Enklaar when he says that the historian either is disposed or has learned to look at the course of world events, even in changing times, with neutral resignation as from a distance?³ More importantly: In our appreciation of history, how can we escape the clutches of the ego?

We recall the words of Jesus: He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it. Applying that to the appreciation of history, we realize that something important is at stake when we no longer proceed in terms of our own times or of ourselves, but in terms of *another*, the *other*: the *other person*, whom we meet with in history in myriads of forms, as well as the *other thing*—every historical phenomenon and event.

History demands of us that we transcend ourselves, by which I mean that we relinquish our ego and its interests and accept and care for all that *other*, that strange and remote, which forms no part of our world. That other and strange [person or thing] wants to be recognized in terms of its *own value*—apart from any connection to the present—and its *own wealth of meaning*; it wants to be recognized, accordingly, in all its specific details.

He who knocks thus at the door of history, with respectful disinterest, shall find there, not himself, but the real treasure of centuries: there he shall meet with love, freedom, peace and all the other fundamental relations without which no person could live: they are all “other” than in his own time, and he will not be able to say immediately what they mean for the present; they want to be recognized not only for their enduring identity but also, and equally, for their changeable, concrete historical shapes.

The moment they are assessed in terms of their meaning for a later time or are appraised as “backward” from the perspective of 1966, they close like flowers touched by the chill night breeze and wrap themselves in inscrutable silence.

Given this background, what is the value of history and of being disinterestedly engaged in it?

In history we are confronted with peace, freedom, love, etc., etc., not as abstract essences but in all their unique and irreplaceable concreteness. No one has ever designed or accounted for peace, freedom, love, etc.; man can only think them and dwell in them (or turn against them), because they are *granted* to him, *in the origin*, in an altogether original way.

Peace, freedom, love, etc., are *given to us in the origin*, but *they reach us only via history*: here lies the awesome importance of *history*.

Yet, here lies at the same time the limitation of history, namely, its *dependence on the origin*: it can only deliver (*tra-ditio*) what it has itself received from the origin. However, history does not just deliver or *hand down* what it receives, but *molds* it into the many historical shapes and phenomena.

Equally real, however, is historical freedom, which in essence is the act of transcending, that is, the possibility of detaching oneself from the concrete phenomena and returning to the origin.

In history we thus have two components: (1) that which is given to us in the origin and to which man in his historical freedom can

return; and (2) the shaping of what has been given us in an original way: what man makes of freedom, love, peace, etc.

(A number of points can be very briefly illustrated from the rise of courtly love. It has not yet proven possible to account for it in a satisfactory way from antecedent or contemporary phenomena. *However strongly it may be tied into history, it nevertheless has its own originality.* If it did not have this and if it were purely historically determined, then it would not even have had its "being.")⁴

That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? says the Preacher in Ecclesiastes—words which excellently describe the work of the historian: he shall find (if indeed he is prepared to forsake the ego-circle) what it is to be truly free, to be truly a person, and so on, *in their original meaning*. These things are far off and exceeding deep. They dwell amongst remote peoples and in ages long past. And yet, they are *nigh* unto him who knows Ranke's word: *Every age is equidistant to God.*

Notes

1. [The manuscript which appears here in translation was used, according to a note in the envelop in which it was found, in combination with parts of other lectures and syllabi that have not been included here. The full title reads: "The Value of History: Philosophical and World-view Implications." The text served as the core of a paper read to the History Club in the Catholic University at Nijmegen, spring 1966. That presentation incorporated sizable portions of a paper on "The Meaning of History" read to the Calvinist Student Society of Delft, December 1962 and of a paper on "Meaning and Historical Fact" read to the Society of Reformed Students in Leiden, fall 1964, as well as extracts from lectures in graduate courses in the Free University, 1963-64 and 1965-66. — Ed.]
2. Gotthold Hasenhüttl, *Geschichte und existenziales Denken* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1965), pp. 21-22.
3. From a review in *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 6 (1951/52): 240-41.
4. [The passage inserted here in parentheses appeared in isolation on the unnumbered final sheet of the manuscript and had been crossed out. — Ed.]

The Time of History

[1968]

BOTH ABOUT HISTORY AND ABOUT TIME a great deal has already been written, but the number of studies devoted to the time of history is not very great. There are, however, signs that point to a change—for example, the acclaim which S.G.F. Brandon received when he argued in his book, *History, Time and Deity* (Manchester, 1965) that the priority given for so long to history ought now to be granted to time.

Yet does it really make so much difference whether we accord the primacy to time rather than history? In history are we not always dealing implicitly with time, and is philosophy of history accordingly not by the same token philosophy of time? We can answer these questions in the affirmative, yet it must still be considered philosophically and scientifically important to deal explicitly with historical time, since it is here that all the problems concerning the nature of history converge and can therefore be put into much sharper focus.

Still, why is the problem of time regarded as so exceptionally difficult and why has any explicit treatment of the subject been avoided for so long and so often? Augustine wrote the well-known words: "What is time? If no one asks me, I know; if someone poses the question and I try to explain, I know no longer" (*Confessions XI*, 14, 17). Yet however unfathomable time was for Augustine, this did not deter him from engaging in fundamental reflection on the temporal. Augustine's ideas indicate, nevertheless, that he was concerned less about what time-in-itself is and much more about the relation of time to eternity, and about its inner unity despite the plurality of moments.

With that, we have posed the main question regarding time: that of the inner unity or coherence within and between the

phenomena. This is also the central theme of the periodizing of history: Does a period or phase have real unity, or do we gather a large number of facts and historical moments together under one name simply because a complete enumeration of the fragments is utterly impossible? Generally, people characterize periods and label them accordingly without first having considered the philosophical question concerning the nature of historical time, with the usually disappointing result that not all the phenomena of a particular time yield gracefully to placement in a particular, pre-conceived pattern. If, then, it is far from easy to approximate the "spirit" or the "structure" of even a term of limited duration, we may surmise that a conceivable unity of world history will confront us with still greater difficulties.

These introductory remarks suggest what should be given priority in any essay on the time of history. Time—so it would seem—works in two ways: (1) it unbinds, tears apart, disintegrates, is transient and discontinuous; (2) it binds, integrates, establishes connections, is continuous. Time—here and in what follows I mean the time of history—time causes the culture of Antiquity to perish, removing it from the flux of history, yet it is this very same time that links later civilizations to it.

Perennially, attempts are made to escape the disintegrating action and meaninglessness of time by taking refuge in some immutable substance, which is then made the bearer of meaning.

To achieve a clearer picture of the problem of time, let us go back in the history of thought.

In the theological and philosophical literature of the last decades, an almost canonical significance has been attached to the contrast between cyclical and linear views of history, and then in this sense, that an intrinsic connection is presumed to exist on the one hand between Christian belief and the linear idea of time, and on the other hand between the cyclical idea and non-Christian thought. Criticism of this scheme has increased in recent years, not only because mathematical symbols are deemed inadequate for representing historical reality, but also because both the Christian and the non-Christian conceptions of history are too complex to be placed under a single heading.

Although the current contrast may be an oversimplification, it has had a beneficial effect in that it has generated considerable interest in the relation between time and religious belief, with the result that penetrating studies have been devoted to the mythical experience of time and its meaning for present-day philosophical reflection on time. If the mythical notion of time had been the only notion of time in the non-Christian cultures, then it would not be such a difficult matter to reconstruct its precise meaning, but what makes it so puzzling and so intrinsically contradictory to us is the fact that for all its cyclical character time is still always connected somehow to successive time with its 'earlier' and 'later' and its clearly distinguished temporal moments. Mythical time receives its dynamics from creation; from some primordial event; sometimes even from an historical event—all of which, however, are in principle undatable. They do belong to a (distant) past, yet they do not occur there as past moments of successive time; they are not ordinary history, yet they can enter into it, not only as recollection or re-presentation, but exactly as they were in primordial time; creation and the mythical historical event will happen again and again, in countless, unending repetition. Language is too closely bound to successive time to permit description of what is experienced in the mythical notion of time. The word "repetition" conveys the idea best, but then the word must be taken in its original, unweakened sense, for every thought of an analogy in the repetition would already shortchange the two kinds of direction in mythical temporality: on the one hand, mythical temporality means the re-presenting, here and now, of the primordial event itself, while on the other hand it means a being transported back to that primordial past, a re-entering and participating in an undatable 'original' event.

In our attempt to clarify the mythical notion of time we have had to use concepts from successive time. This is not to be ascribed solely to *our* limited means of expression; mythical language, too, can only express the meaning of the original actuality in terms of a succession of earlier and later. Thus the two notions of time appear to interpenetrate one another even at the level of language; but they do so in another way as well: primordial time does not remain purely transcendent, since it enters into history, not of itself, as an

anonymous power, but via human acts. The act of creation, for example, is repeated in the performance of rituals, in the ascending of the throne, in the conquest of the enemy. To the extent that such actions and events repeat the 'original' event, they stand outside ordinary time—and yet they can be precisely dated in terms of successive time and people take great pains to describe them concretely, right down to the minutest details. To the Egyptian, for instance, an event was more than a datable happening; he saw it also in another temporal perspective, one that to him was the most important one, for only via mythical time could a historical action partake of the wholeness (*heil*) of the origin. In this light it becomes clear to us why successive time is persistently depreciated: it is transient and fleeting and thus can have no meaning in itself; if wholeness is yet to be its portion, then the event-from-the-beginning must be actualized in it time and time again. There was a constant anxiety here about the debilitation of one's powers under the pressure of time; the endless process of becoming and perishing was experienced as a tyrant whose dominion could be rendered bearable only by the performance of sacred rituals.

On our hasty excursion through the history of the problem of time we pass over a great deal, but we must pause to consider Augustine, and then not primarily because of his well-known notion of so-called psychological time: that is looked at too often for its own sake, in isolation from the rest of his thought, and then it seems a simple matter to point to analogies with modern insights. Fortunately, in many of the more recent studies of Augustine his view of time is considered in the context of the whole of his thought.

Augustine was much concerned with time, yet the result was never a definition or concept of time-in-itself. As I have already said, his interest was not time as time-unto-itself but rather time in relation to—in dependence upon, and in connection with—eternity. It was here that Augustine looked for a solution to the problem of time—to the extent that one can ever expect to find a solution, since temporality, despite all illuminating insights, will always remain a mystery.

It is only in relation to eternity that we know what time is: contingent and finite, creaturely and dependent, above all tending towards non-being. Yet it is precisely this threat of non-being and its

creatureliness that keep time oriented to that which is not subject to change. Thus it would appear that on Augustine's view time has a twofold orientation. In reality, however, the problem is not that simple for him. On the one hand, he relates time to eternity as immutability; on the other hand, he relates it to an event that is itself temporal, historical, namely, the Incarnation. This dual orientation of time in Augustine must not be taken to mean he related so-called psychological time to the eternal and thereby isolated it from temporality in the historical sense. It has been correctly observed that already in the *Confessions* (XI, 38) time is analyzed in conjunction with the history of mankind.¹

Nevertheless, Augustine never arrived at a harmonious conception of time; the inner tension between the modes of temporality persisted. The dualism in which he was caught can be sharply observed in his estimation of the past: on the one hand, it counts as nothing, for it is no more; on the other hand, that same past is the basis for salvation, for once upon a time an event took place in the past which was of decisive significance for all ages. Augustine does not overcome the dark side, the vanity and futility of time by discovering the eternal within time, but rather by acknowledging meaning in the temporal, visible world.

Augustine's influence on the thought of the Middle Ages has been much debated, but it is certain that it was profound. Still, we should not forget that in that middle period of a thousand years many other intellectual currents exercised their influence. Furthermore, we should remember that medieval people did not live exclusively from what they had received: they had their own originality as well, certainly in their reflection upon and experience of time. Change in the temporal sense brought them, too, to an inner conflict—which they never resolved satisfactorily: everyday life and history spoke the clear language of frailty and transience, so how could they ever be meaningful! Medieval literature abounds with complaints about the vanity of things because they are subject to change. On the other hand, it could not be denied that God Himself had willed change and that change therefore must have a positive meaning. A clear example of this ambivalent attitude towards time and history is found in the most important medieval philosopher of history, Otto of Freising. Even though he went so far as to put change on a par with sin, an essential part of his philosophy of history is based upon a positive assessment of *mutatio* in history. It is

no mean task to make clear in what way Otto of Freising, and the medieval conception of history in general, managed to see meaning in change. Medieval writers of history often baffle modern historians because they sometimes date events as precisely as they can and at other times are very careless, even to the point of placing centuries later what happened in an earlier period. What we have here is the propensity—noted also by Etienne Gilson in connection with medieval philosophy—to allow the past to be absorbed by the present, but I regard another tendency as even more important, namely, to allow the eternal to come down into the temporal. What I am referring to here is more than just a case of linking the time of history to eternity. The fact is, rather, that medieval man thought in very concrete terms about the eternal within time. He believed the kingdom of God—an eternal kingdom—was realizable on earth, although at the same time he was aware—albeit not always—that the gulf separating time from eternity never ceased to exist. I think the monastic notion of “having already in this life a foretaste of eternal life” best expresses what the medieval person had in mind: or, in more modern terms, medieval people conceived of an anticipatory relation of time to eternity, a relation which would not be of the same intensity in every period since in times of decline eternity might withdraw almost completely. In the final analysis it is not transience but the value of the eternal in the temporal that dominates in the medieval conception of time.

However radical the differences between the medieval and the Hegelian philosophies of history may be, there is an important similarity to be noted with regard to the problem of time: Hegel's metaphysics of time also has its redoubtable antipode in eternity. The World Spirit does indeed come down into history to make its dialectical journey through time in order thus to unfold its riches in all their fulness, but in its *Auslegung*, in the multiplicity of historical manifestations, it continues to be what it was: *eternal*. And here we have the main problem in Hegel's system and the core of the difficulties which eventually confronted him; for after all, how can the Spirit, which is eternal, become one with history, which remains temporal? The dilemma would be resolved if one could agree with some current interpreters who claim Hegel temporalized and thereby historicized the Logos, but there is no evidence to support

this interpretation. Granted, for Hegel history with all its infinite wealth of forms *is* an intrinsic necessity of the Spirit, but the historical development in itself is empty, deriving as it does its entire wealth of meaning from the Logos. For example, a nation, once it is abandoned by the Logos, may prolong its existence but then no longer as part of authentic history. Despite the necessary connection of the one to the other, Logos and time remain alien to each other: the former never really enters into time, but in every historical period returns to itself again, for it remains always what it was: eternal. Dialectical trappings designed to hold the irreconcilable elements together cannot, finally, conceal the negation of time.

In the century and a half since Hegel, there has been no lack of criticism of his views. There has been a strong reaction against his devaluation of the intrinsic value of time and history. In the nineteenth- and twentieth-century mainstreams, the emphasis would come to fall on the temporality of history, on the finite character—and therefore on the restricted validity—of historical phenomena and social circumstances, of religious beliefs and philosophical worldviews. All are swept away in the current of history, yet each in its time and under its own particular historical circumstances has its unique value. Opposition to Hegel was fierce among both working historians and philosophers of history. Nevertheless, the age-old problem of the eternal in time resisted relegation to the background. The initial, and thereafter growing, emphasis on the finitude of historical phenomena made way again for a renewed awareness that radical historicizing means the end of history. The search for the solid Ground, for that which is “removed from relativity” (Dilthey), has become increasingly urgent. There must be something in history that establishes coherence, that sets things in relation to each other. This is now acknowledged, though often with reluctance, so deeply rooted is the dread of dragging the banished metaphysics back into historical science. Yet neither the philosophy nor the science of history can do without an idea of a unity in historical time: some regard history as a whole composed of periods and epochs that are centered on themselves (Dilthey); others view it as a progressive development which by virtue of its inner dynamism remains the same throughout all times (e.g., positivism); still others understand authentic historical events to be a repetition

of the same existential decision (existentialism); while in the last thirty years the idea of a single, continuous, *structural* historical time has rapidly gained many adherents (for example, those connected with the French periodical *Annales*).

Meanwhile, the problem of time as I defined it above is still with us. Is it possible that in the disintegrating and integrating action of time we have two irreducible forces? Or are they themselves dependent in turn upon a higher or deeper unity?

Preparatory to dealing with these questions, we need to acquire a clearer picture of the multiformity and extreme complexity of historical time. Cyclical time presupposes, it is true, an infinite number of time movements, but in point of fact, since every later cycle is a repetition of the preceding one, nothing ever happens that is really new. Linear time, in contrast, knows but a single historical movement without repetition, so that every event appears as something unique, as something never having been before. In this perspective history is an unbroken line stretching from the beginning (Creation) through the covenant with Abraham and the center (the Incarnation), to the final goal (the consummation of all things in Christ). The linear view persisted in the modern conception of history, be it in secularized form (for example, the unfolding of the World Spirit to complete freedom; progressive evolution). This conception of time can better be called *unilinear*, in view of the fact that the many phenomena are all, without exception, included in the one historical movement of time; in fact, whenever certain events and circumstances are difficult to fit into the general development they are either placed *outside* history or else *dialectically* brought into coherence with the single world history. This reduction of things to the unilinear development is not wholly arbitrary, since time—as we saw—does indeed also join the events and times; it is thanks in part to this that history does not fall apart into fragments—indeed, that there can even be a world history, and likewise that periods, times, epochs, ages exhibit a certain unity or structure. It is for this reason that we can speak of “our time,” of “Antiquity,” and so on; in every time there must be something that distinguishes it from every other.

If one attempts, however, to grasp that “something,” that unity of a period, then it just cannot be done. Is that ascribable to the un-

fathomableness of time and hence also of the period in question? Or perhaps to a failure to appreciate the multiformity of time and an excessive readiness to revert to a unilinear conception of history? As I see it, the latter is the case. Still, I do not want to underestimate the difficulties that arise when we abandon the idea of a single continuous time as the reference point or connecting line for all particular developments and individual phenomena. The consequence seems to be that we are left with a chaotic plurality of facts. But let us see whether there is not another possibility of discovering unity or, at least, coherence in the diversity.

When we view history under the aspect of time, it presents an extraordinarily rich picture. The peoples, societies, and cultures all have their own movements of time, which vary in tempo, intensity, and direction. The differentiation goes still further: the temporal course of a nation or culture often undergoes change, now slowing down, now accelerating; and even the direction does not always remain constant. Moreover, not just the whole but also the religious, social, and aesthetic sectors know a diversity of "times." And the individualization goes still further: the single work of art, the distinct political event, the religious experience, etc., etc., all have their own specific, characteristic times. Nor does individual human life escape the rich diversity of time. If we proceed to analyze the time of, say, a particular work of art or of a certain person, we soon discover it is in turn integrated in various "times," for example in national, social, religious, philosophical temporality, in a fabric of time directions. I am calling it a fabric for the moment, in an attempt to convey figuratively the unique nature of each "time" as well as the interwovenness of the "times." The life of an individual, for example, is only in part interwoven with the history of a nation, with nature, and with intellectual currents; alongside these, the individual has time for himself and for many other relationships.

We have used the word "times" in another than the usual sense. People usually understand by it periods *that follow one another*, but what we mean by it is that every historical phenomenon, be it of shorter or of longer duration, *participates, in one and the same phase, in different times.*

That brings us to one of the key problems of temporality, namely, that in spite of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the "times," temporality still gives the impression of an inner order. Where does this order come from and what determines it? The

answer to this question is almost always sought in the one-dimensional historical time I described earlier. People attempt to locate the order that there is in time by discovering in the most divergent phenomena some common feature (called, for example, style, structure, spirit). This method often entails the unhappy consequence that whole complexes of events which essentially cannot be fitted into some concrete structure have to be depreciated, for example as a "reaction." Still more often, however, an "aberration" is relegated to history of a lower order. That which is common to the various facts and phenomena usually is reduced in that case to some formal aspects.

Our question concerning the inner order and coherence of time still stands unanswered. That that order is there despite the plurality of "times" is a source of profound wonder. But the matter cannot be left at that. In many theological discussions concerned with understanding temporality, a contrast is drawn between the way theologians view temporality and the way philosophers regard it: theologians, it is said, always see time in its subjection to God's rule, whereas philosophers regard it from the viewpoint of its immanent, autonomous movement, inexorable for man. This contrast is unacceptable. Philosophers, too, encounter in temporality more than earlier-later, more than past-present-future. They, too, cannot dispense with what I shall provisionally call trans-successive, qualitative time. Now, it is of great importance whether the concept of trans-successive time is introduced only after numerous speculations have already been made about time or whether it is drawn into the problem from the outset, as the theologians claim they do. Theologians may reproach philosophers for thinking and speaking of time as though it were an anonymous and autonomous power, but the central question to be asked is, What is the source of this power? Or in other words, where does time derive the power to be time, continuous and discontinuous? If philosophy replies that time has this power of and by itself, or that "that is simply the way things are," then I must say I find both notions inconceivable. If, however, time is recognized as deriving its power, presence, or existence from an origin, then it follows that time is what it is by virtue of that origin. The reality that time is not of itself but has *received* its existence affects it essentially, intrinsically, and for all time, holding it in permanent dependency. Both continuous and discontinuous events now lose their autonomy and neutrality in their directedness

to the origin and in their pointing above and beyond themselves. In all its modalities time remains what it was, but it is governed by another time, which because of its original relation and orientation to the Transcendent One I shall call *transcendental time*—despite the many meanings the word “transcendental” already has. From my discussion so far it may have become clear, but it needs to be emphasized again here, that what is at issue here is not one form of temporality alongside others. No, there is just one time, transcendental time—which is to say that the only time there is is rooted in, borders on, and stands in relation to eternity, albeit not as emanating from it, since in that case it would itself be eternal and autonomous.

What does the transcendental character of time really involve? To clarify that, we note its striking similarity to the perspective of prophecy. Essential for any prophecy are two things: it has the whole in view; and it obviates or at least blurs the temporal distance. Events that are said to fulfill a prophecy may occur in various times, but the prophecy speaks of them together as if they are to happen at one and the same point in time. Now, that loss of distance is also characteristic of transcendental time: past, present, and future concur and coincide, yet at the same time are differentiated into earlier and later. Again, it almost seems as if prophecy rises above the world of temporality into a distant trans-historical realm, yet in reality it remains fully temporal, not only with regard to its content but also with regard to the time it is uttered: it remains datable in every respect. The same is true of transcendental time: it is *comprehensive*, not in any external fashion but in such a way that all moments and centuries, all events and developments are brought into relation to it and given direction by it.

Just as theology distinguishes in prophecy between a temporally bound historical event, its continuation into a near and/or distant future, and its consummation (in the eschaton), so we meet with corresponding moments in transcendental time: it has an origin, it stretches out, and it returns again into itself. But this observation requires further comment.

Take such a thing as freedom. The historian will observe phenomena from various centuries and call them all “freedom.” He inquires into the causes and influences behind their inception; in short, he investigates the “history” of the various forms of freedom. But the average historian usually does not concern himself with *the fact that there is* such a thing as freedom.

To make my meaning clear I might refer to countless other phenomena and things, such as man himself, the love between two people, concord, peace, the simple fact that there is the possibility of observation, or that man can think. To a certain extent we can explain how a particular state of peace came about, how someone arrived at a particular thought, or why someone made a particular decision, but there has never yet been anyone who by himself conceived of, designed, or called into being decision-making or freedom as such, or history, or the meaning of history. The first man perhaps? But he already *was* freedom and history, and so on, before he could even think or surmise them.

Thus in every event and act, in every thing and phenomenon there is something incomprehensible, viz. the mystery of coming into existence and of existing. This mystery does not hover above history; rather, it actualizes itself anew, ever and again as it were, in every visible act and event. By the bare fact of the existence of things I do not mean some timeless essence, but rather the *meaning* of these things, the meaning of their actuality, in all their concreteness, *given* in the origin, which itself is time.

I believe that the idea of transcendental time can help point out the *vitium originis*, the original fatal flaw, of historicism. Historicism knows, indeed, of a meaning in history, notably of the meaning of a period or a single event, but it simply *assumes* this meaning without grounding it in and relating it to a meaning given in a transcendental origin. This meaning, too, does not derive from man's designing it, or assigning it; rather, it is given directly in the divine act of creation. And by virtue of the unity of the historical moments in transcendental time, every moment of human history is involved in the meaning of the whole of history — which was already present in the beginning. (It needs to be noted that the beginning is something else than the situation at the beginning.)

Now the meaning of history (and the meaning of freedom, of love, etc.) has been entrusted to man, has been placed as it were in his hands. He dwells in it — there is no escape — in face-to-face confrontation with the original freedom and love. Certainly he can turn against it, ignore it, or try to restrict and repress it, but he will never succeed, for he remains bound to what is given in the transcendental meaning. It is beyond his capacity, for example, to destroy freedom, for as long as he is man he is freedom.

Transcendental time is both unity and diversity; it goes out from the origin and returns to it again. So essential is the origin that I can even say time stretches out within its confines, for to go beyond the confines of the origin would mean for time to lose all meaning. In the discontinuous manifestations of freedom and love, for example, in all the diversity of forms and acts throughout the whole of history, there occurs both a re-actualization of and a return to the original meaning of freedom and love.

Time moves in one direction only, it is often said; in recent decades this has been said especially by the group of the *Annales*. In contrast I have several times now employed the expression of time's going out and returning again. Man is so fascinated by the *succession* of events that he has no eye for the countermovement in history, and yet he participates in it from moment to moment, for how else would human life be possible if it were not for this act of returning, and the act of re-actualization that goes with it! How countless are the times we enter into the facts and events of a hundred or a thousand years ago!

The going out and the return again of time is likewise the avenue by which history has meaning and value for the present. Without the coinciding of the times in transcendental time there would be no access to the meaning of existence in all its aspects: man would be as one who has lost his memory: totally bewildered.

The question concerning the meaning of history and life has been posed countless times. The answer that Christian belief offers is simple, but let us never forget that this meaning, in order to reach us, has had to travel the long road of history. It does not just force its way into time as a stranger every now and then; it takes its departure in historical events of decisive significance. Therefore the question concerning the meaning of history should also be understood to entail the question: *What end is served by the fact that history exists at all?* Our answer would be that the meaning of life needs a channel, within the confines of transcendental time, along which to come to people and things.

We should also turn *consciously* to history, to its meaning. Doing so requires a decision on our part, the most important and most far-reaching decision we can make in this life. We evince no true sense of history if we entrust ourselves to some sort of (progressive) evolution, or if we romantically try to revive the past, or if we comb history for models and examples to help solve the problems

of our own day. Let us face the fact that we live in another time and that yesterday's solutions no longer apply; let us face the fact above all that in the discontinuous-continuous flux of history as such there is no solid ground to be found. Many look for the significance of history in its ability to highlight the transience and relativity of things. But surely we do not need history to tell us that! Its value and its power are far greater. History constantly sends us *out towards* and *back to* the house of meaning; there is no other power than history—in its transcendental directedness to its Meaning-giver—to keep us in the origin and the center of life.

Note

1. Ulrich Duchrow, "Der sogenannte psychologische Zeitbegriff Augustins im Verhältnis zur physikalischen und geschichtlichen Zeit," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 63 (1966): 269.

Philosophical and Theoretical Approaches to the Reformation

[1970]

IN THE FIELD OF HISTORY of the Reformation and likewise both of the period to which it belongs and of the fourteenth century that preceded it, many, very many topical studies and monographs have appeared in recent decades. Happily, the history-writing with respect also to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries has not been limited to specialist studies, as time after time historians have felt themselves called to describe the Reformation in its broader and deeper connections in works of synthesis. Bernd Moeller, one of the most knowledgeable scholars of the Reformation and its antecedents, finds however that these works lack the originality and maturity of earlier historiography. We ask: Is the history of the Reformation no longer manageable for any one author, or is there an absence of a broad vision, a prerequisite for the construction of any grand historical design?

It is not surprising that philosophers and theoreticians of history should have taken a great interest in the Reformation. True, the continuous course of history does not leave philosophy of history unmoved, but its interest does go out primarily to the great events and turning points of history.

Working historians as a rule do not welcome philosophical reflection on, say, the fall of the Roman Empire or on the Renaissance and Reformation and the like. They fear philosophy will result sooner in confusion than in clarification. Philosophers of history, on the other hand, claim to give insights that elude the professional scientific researchers but that are essential none the less for an understanding of the historical phenomena. The pretension extends even further: wherever deeper interrelationships are en-

countered in history, philosophical and theoretical interests are at stake.

From the above one might draw the conclusion that professional historians and philosophers of history are ranged against each other along sharply defined fronts. Outwardly, that is indeed the case; in reality, however, the two parties are heavily reliant on each other and employ each other's materials—often without realizing it—with the salutary result, in any event, that they stimulate each other to formulate new problems.

The reason why the Reformation has held such a tremendous attraction for philosophers of history is not solely that it represents one of the great crises of world history. More importantly, in the Reformation there is a coming together of many of the general problems of history.

For example, is the Reformation as a whole simply a component part of a historical development and therefore intrinsically determined by it, or is what is unique about it related also to its origin? Must the Reformation be accounted for in terms of social, economic, political factors, or is it a strictly religious phenomenon? Does the Reformation form a structural unity with the sixteenth century or with the period 1450 to 1550, or does it rather break through the mutual interconnections of the phenomena and events of this period? We are obliged to introduce a more difficult formulation: Does the Reformation perhaps partake of both the continuity and the discontinuity of history? Is the Reformation, while essentially religious in character, nevertheless not inseparable from socio-economic and political factors? Does the Reformation—this is the main question—despite its participation in the one, continuous history as well as in the structural unity of the emerging modern period, not also have *an originality of its own*?

These are the problems that constantly reappear, if only implicitly, in the many studies and interpretations of the Reformation, a few of which we shall now have a look at. Within the framework of a short article it is of course impossible to do justice to the rich variety of approaches to the Reformation; this remark will alert the reader to the fact that our subject is more complex than might appear from what follows.

[An approach from a philosophical position]

Let us begin—at first blush rather arbitrarily, yet not without good reason—with Hegel.

For Hegel the Reformation (along with the Renaissance) is one of the great moments in the dialectical progress of the Spirit through world history: in the fourth Age, which includes the Reformation, subjective and objective Mind or Spirit, the spiritual and the secular, arrive at a new unity, at reconciliation. Through its triumph over the Middle Ages, the Spirit takes a decisive step forward towards its goal, namely, towards coming-to-itself; it is still only a breakthrough, and many centuries will be required for the full realization of its freedom.¹

In Hegel's philosophy of world history the Reformation thus assumed a meaningful place, forming an inner unity not only with the sixteenth century but with the entire modern age, as well as with the Middle Ages, albeit dialectically. But whatever became of Luther? Not that he was never mentioned in Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, but the world-historical coherence so preponderates in Hegel that both the *individual* figure of Luther and the *intrinsic* value of the Reformation are lost from sight.

Leopold von Ranke saw this and reproached Hegel for it. It is not illegitimate to apply Ranke's famous dictum, "Every age is immediate to God," to the Age of the Reformation, but then one must also note the words that follow immediately: "and its worth consists, not in what follows from it, but in its own existence, in its own proper self."² This time the danger was very real—though not in Ranke personally—that the emphasis would fall so heavily on the irreducibility of the Reformation that its world-historical connections would be ignored. In Ranke's ideal of discovering "the unique value of every epoch," a whole problem comes to a focus: How can recognition of the unique and intrinsic value of the Reformation be combined with [a proper recognition of] the world-historical coherence without which it is inconceivable?

Generally, the Reformation has been considered in its more limited connections. Its relations to the national histories, to the character of the sixteenth century, and to the Middle Ages have

been painstakingly scrutinized. However interesting all this may be in connection with our subject, we shall have to leave it and go on.

[An approach from a theoretical position]

In the *Revue Historique* of 1929 there appeared an article by Lucien Febvre that has since become famous. The title alone is sufficient to suggest we are dealing with a feisty author and an altogether different approach to the Reformation: "Une question mal posée: les origines de la réforme française et le problème des causes de la réforme" (A badly-put question: The origins of the French Reformation and the problem of the causes of the Reformation).³ It is not my intention to discuss here whether the pretension of an "altogether different approach" is historically correct. When we try to take the above-mentioned writer's conception as a whole—which one will probably never quite achieve in the case of Febvre, who thinks in leaps—then we get a picture of the Reformation and the Reformation era in which all the problems I described in my introduction come together.

1929—that was the year in which the *Annales* was founded, a journal which, initially under the leadership of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre and later under that of Fernand Braudel, earned a position of dominance in French historical science. The "school of the *Annales*" is commonly characterized after the central significance it attributes to the "history of structures." Excessive use of the term *structure* did not please Febvre, however. More in harmony with his intention is the use of terms like *social ethos* or *social history*, but then it is essential to explain at length what the term *social* meant to him. That being the case, I will just use the word *structure*, since it is so supple that it can express Febvre's intentions.

At first glance the doctrine of structure is clear and not very complex. Upon delving a bit deeper, however, one discovers that its adherents could not avoid the great problems of theory of history. The difficulty is that they deal with these problems only superficially and become entangled in numerous contradictions. One gains the impression that they are so convinced of the correctness of their own conception that they regard philosophical and theoretical reflections as superfluous.

What, now, is the altogether different approach to history

taken by Febvre and others that we wrote of above? He reproaches traditional history for seeing only separate events, at most their causal connections; traditional history regards historical phenomena only in their short term—nor can it do otherwise because “things” interest it only “on the surface.” According to the basic idea of the “Annales,” history—thus including also the apparently separate events—is determined by the “history of structures,” by the one “social” history, by supra-personal forces of long duration and protracted efficacy. This “one history” in which all the elements are interrelated is operative at a deeper level, silently yet imperiously.

The “annalistic” conception of history takes the whole of history as its field of research, so it is noteworthy that it has always felt attracted in particular to the Reformation and the period 1400 to 1650.

The Reformation is for Febvre a broad historical movement that must be grasped *at the same time* and *in the same way* on the political, economic, social, moral, and cultural levels. We must understand the Reformation in terms of the needs of the age, an age which was undergoing, socially and morally, a “rapid and fundamental transformation.” The proclamation that faith alone justifies “provided a new and powerful means of satisfaction for certain deep-seated tendencies.” The Reformation was supported primarily by the middle class; well now, this very class had a new attitude, was ambitious for independence; the burghers had climbed up by their own efforts and were therefore no longer prepared to accept anything that “smacked of mediation or intercession” (for example, by the church). Behind the Reformation there operated a crisis of exceptional proportions, which emerged even before 1517; the best people of the age attempted to find a religion appropriate to them, a “faith adapted to their needs.”⁴

The “one history” recognizes no boundaries between the nations, for the Europe of the early sixteenth century formed a unity of religious aspirations. Nor does it recognize any partitions between the Middle Ages and the Reformation, for both were incorporated in the great, uninterrupted current of events, in the continuity of the Christian world of thought and feeling.

Hence the Reformation according to the structuralist notion was in a number of respects universal, but is this position tenable? As I see it, the school of the “Annales” has capitulated on at least two essential points.

First, it presupposes an inner unity between the Middle Ages and Modern Times, a structural entity that maintained itself for many centuries. But likewise essential to it is another integral coherence, that of only one or two centuries—in this case of (approximately) the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—and this coherent whole is clearly set off against the times before and after it. How are these two structural entities to be harmonized with each other?

Secondly, Febvre and his colleagues are always—entirely in agreement with their basic theme—concerned with the one history, a “total world,” the common “style” of a given period. Yet it is also a basic theme of theirs that the national identity (of France, for example), remains the same right through all the structural differences between the periods. The nationalistic streak in Febvre’s thought even grew stronger, especially as a result of the Second World War. Here again we must put our finger on the collision of two different structures.

The problem we have sketched around the Reformation involves the old question of the relation universal-individual (or: general-particular, universal-unique). Historians have refused to regard the Reformation as an isolated movement. Yet the question must be posed: Why has this caused them so many difficulties? Because—let us come right out and say it—as the result of an over-emphasis on the universal, the individual event or unique phenomenon (in this case the Reformation) can no longer be itself and so loses its *own originality* and is no more than an expression of this historical development or of a structure.

To reject this approach does not mean to drive the Reformation into an a-historical or supra-historical isolation. One of the great problems with regard to the Reformation—and with regard to every historical phenomenon—is that it is incorporated in a totality, in a comprehensive reality, and at the same time has an originality all its own.

Notes

1. [G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (1837), *Vierter Teil, Dritter Abschnitt, Erstes Kapitel*; Eng. trans. by J. Sibree, *The Philosophy of History* (1899), Part IV, Section III, Chapter I.]
2. [Leopold von Ranke, "Ueber die Epochen der neueren Geschichte" (1854), in *Weltgeschichte*, IX/2, 5. See also Chapter 10 above, note 34.]
3. [Lucien Febvre, "Une question mal posée . . ." *Revue Historique* 161 (1929); Eng. trans. by K. Folca in Peter Burke, ed., *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 44-107.]
4. [Ibid., Eng. trans., pp. 71, 75, 88.]

Reflections on History and the Time of History

[1970]

THE FOLLOWING REFLECTIONS will have a bearing not only on my lectures of 1968-69 but on all the problems I have raised for discussion in recent years. These problems were not dealt with in isolation but in the context of currents in historical science and philosophy of history. Among these currents were Hegelianism, historicism, and existentialism, but also positivism, cultural morphology, structuralism, and others.

These currents as such will no longer occupy the place of central importance in my reflections; I turn rather to a number of the great questions of the theory and philosophy of history. The currents I mentioned served to afford a better view of the true nature and significance of such questions as: What is history and what is historical time? Is world history possible? Is all history ultimately world history? How does history relate to its meaning? Are there structural relations in history? What is one to think of continuity and discontinuity in historical development and of the relation between the science and the philosophy of history?

Such are the problems that will now, as I said, occupy the place of central importance. With respect to the different approaches to these problems I shall, for the time being at least, adopt a position only implicitly. Of course, I will allude to them from time to time, since controversies can, indeed, lead to clearer insights. In any positive exposition, the element of critique will be constantly, if tacitly, present.

Moreover, it should be taken into consideration that I have gathered numerous problems into my reflections without expressly identifying them every time. This has been possible for me because on my view history coincides with the meaning of history and

historical time with history itself, and the answer to the question concerning development and progress must be contained in the view of the meaning of life. Of course, it is not sufficient simply to say this; the case should be developed through extensive demonstration (I cannot provide that here); after all, the relation between, for example, meaning and history ranks among the cardinal questions of philosophy of history.

What is history?

In view of the fact that this question will be a matter of constant concern in what follows, a single remark can, and must, suffice here.

Karel Kuypers has pointed out that Augustine never dealt with the question.¹ And H.-I. Marrou has observed that a definition is only a pedagogical device, that a definition can never present the essence of history a priori.²

Why is a definition powerless in the face of the essence and meaning of history? Because history ranks among the fundamental givens and phenomena behind which man cannot penetrate and from which he can only *pro-ceed*—which is to say that history is not derivative but entirely *original*. What we can do, of course, is to make explicit what is implicitly present in history as such—and that, to be sure, is the constant enterprise of the theorists and philosophers of history. (Any attempt at defining history, in contrast, does engage in derivation, and in so doing defeats itself; see Jan Romein's definition: history as fact "embraces in one way or another everything that has happened to people in community."³)

In the last decades it has become increasingly common to speak of a twofold history—for example, of history in a primary and in a secondary sense; of *Geschichte* and *Historie*; of history as meaning and as fact; of history as events and structural history. I too shall work with this terminology, but my idea of this twofold history will have to be quite different.

The first history

It is exceptionally difficult to express in words what the essence and meaning of the first history is; it is difficult because modern man has grown almost entirely insensible to the first history, even though he lives in it and with it every day. It is especially as a result of the rational analytical way of thinking and working of modern science that the first history has vanished from present-day awareness. In the process, science itself has sustained a loss (on this, see Erich Fromm on Ibsen's story about Peer Gynt's search for his self: layer after layer is peeled off, as from an onion, until it appears he has no core, and hence no unity; like the onion, man is held together by mere cohesion).⁴ Science has become a knowledge of foregrounds in their external coherences. Yet, happily, science is incapable of taking a single step without taking the backgrounds (the deeper unity and coherence) at least implicitly into account.

Scholars in various fields of science have noted this. I mention only a few, starting with several natural scientists. E.J. Slijper, a zoologist who passed away in 1968, came to the conclusion that all events on earth must be guided by some divine power or fixed plan which one encounters precisely when penetrating more deeply into the mysteries of matter and evolution. W. Heitler, physicist and natural philosopher, not only has observed that an electron behaves in accordance with certain laws but also has felt compelled to go on and raise the question *why* an electron behaves like that.⁵ Max Hartmann, too, is overcome by awe at the "pre-established harmony between thought and the rationally comprehensible part of nature"; it compels him to the belief in an omnipotent Meaning-giver.⁶

Thus there is still a great deal of attention for the incomprehensible—that the things and the phenomena are there! Indeed; but this insight is *too* incidental, and—most importantly—how little it is taken into account scientifically!

Now then, what appears here only incidentally must become the very cornerstone of my further reflections. What is the cause of an electron's behaving as it does? Do physical laws accomplish that? But in that case, how do these laws come to be what they are, and how is it that this relation exists between the laws and the electron? By chance? Assuming that such a thing exists, then it still has to

work with whatever there already is, and 'chance' itself implies a remarkable convergence; to whom or what is this attributable? Inner necessity? This, however, is itself in need of explanation.

Among the practitioners of historical science too there have been, and there are, those who have had an eye for what I have called the first history. Ranke observed that there is an unfathomable mystery to things and that the human mind is incapable of fully understanding the historical process; he professed to be conscious of an element that could not be *empirically* grasped — to him, it was as if there were an occult power working in the events to establish unity, interconnections, meaningful wholes. Herbert Butterfield speaks of being keenly aware of a "kind of history-making which goes on so to speak over our heads"; the historian, for all his penetrating analyses, never arrives "at the bottom of the well."⁷

Ranke, Butterfield, and many other historians have perceived the problem of what I have called the first history, and they have also been conscious that it has a profound effect on the professional study of history. And yet, for all that, the question is still with us: In virtue of what are the facts, events, or phenomena what they are; what ultimately establishes inner coherence, unity, the mutual relation of things to each other, the connection between the factors, the historical order — and what accomplishes all this *without infringing upon the originality* that is proper to all events, phenomena, and people in themselves? Is it Mind, the state, society? Or is it perhaps *history itself, in its totality*, for is not history more encompassing than all the others, in virtue of its spanning and penetrating all ages? Or is that not the whole answer, and are we obliged to say something in addition which will be decisive?

The first history would seem to be very vulnerable and quickly brushed aside. Accordingly, I want to approach it with the utmost circumspection. To this end I shall select an eminently historical (!) category, that of justice (I might with equal justification have selected love, power, peace, or one of ever so many other fundamental concepts). I have purposely spoken of justice and not of "right" or "law" because we must at all costs avoid restricting it to positive law. By justice I mean to refer to something which man ought to observe in all his relations. I have already said that I consider justice a *historical* category; this is in order to cut off every thought of justice as an idea outside concrete historical reality.

Man can live in justice, promote justice, contemplate justice;

yet, no one has ever succeeded in designing *justice itself* or calling it into being. But surely the first man must have devised and established what justice is, and his posterity must have built upon it for generations? Impossible, for even before the first man realized it, he found himself in relations involving justice.

Take another example. It is sometimes said that the supreme historical category is *decision*. Agreed, man can make many decisions, including some of broad historical significance; yet, *decision-making as such*, in all its richness and individual variety, has not been called into being by man. All man can do is avail himself of it and work with it.

Man can *love*; but the *possibility of loving* is a gift and not of man's invention (of course, man can reflect upon love, justice, and so forth—that is, upon that which already is).

And—to add no more—there is *history* itself: man lives in it. Deprived of history, he is deprived of life. Yet, to history's *being there* he has been unable to make the slightest contribution; it has fallen to him in an entirely incomprehensible way.

Thus there is something in all things and phenomena which cannot be traced back to human activities and decisions, or to causes and effects, and which I therefore call incomprehensible. Yet it is this very thing which makes the life of the foregrounds possible at all and which is therefore the most precious of all, even while it is approachable only in ontological wonder.

History in the first sense is, in short, that things and phenomena *are*, that they exist. It is for this reason also that we can say that history is in every thing and in every phenomenon. Yet, why call this history? We call it history because existence (*be-staan*) implies genesis (*ont-staan*) and genesis implies the origin (origin is not the same as the original state of affairs); for things exist just as they have come forth from the origin. The genesis, the coming into being, is not restricted to a single point in time, somewhere in the beginning; rather, it actively asserts itself in every phase, in every moment; for things remain what they were in the origin. Justice, for example, in all its richness—thus not just formally, empty of content—remains “original” in all its historical forms.

I repeat, why call all this history? It is history in the primary sense that things have come to presence, that they are *not of themselves*: *history is the power that maintains things in their relation to the origin*; remove history and they cease to exist.

Who, or what, is the origin? When I say *God* is, I do not do so via the classic proofs of God, however much they may suggest themselves here; with proofs one never arrives at God but at an extension of created existence. It remains a matter of faith. But is it any less correct on that account? At issue is a state of affairs which, in order to be truly "seen," has need of the connection to faith. Faith has a dual connection: to the Origin, and to history. And with that duality, faith enters into science.

This primary history I call transcendental history or transcendental time, because this history, or time, is directed to the *transcendental Origin*; it is characterized by the encounter of time and eternity (note, however, that in this directedness and in this encounter, time remains time, as history remains temporal history). This directedness is intrinsic to time and history, and it is actively present throughout the whole of history, which is to say it is determinative for history to its very core.

(To avoid misunderstanding I need to say that the attempt has been made to interpret 'transcendental' in my concept of transcendental time as 'transcendent.' Such an interpretation would be quite wrong, since the transcendent by definition can never become temporal or historical. The misunderstanding does not surprise me, however, since in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries 'transcendent' has acquired a sense that locates it within this world; consequently, since Kant, the term 'transcendental' too has undergone a change of meaning: beyond the boundaries of experience, lying outside the boundaries of the natural world, etc., etc. One can summarize by stating that in the modern sense, transcending is going above or beyond one area to another—yet, always intramundanelly.⁸)

When I speak of the transcendental or original relation I do not mean something external or accidental, or something that was there in the beginning but is now gone; I mean rather that in which (historical) reality is permanently caught up, that by which it is intrinsically conditioned. All our understanding and interpreting of reality must include, or at least assume, its intrinsic conditionedness. In our ordinary conceptual knowledge this intrinsic conditionedness is *implicitly* and necessarily present; after all, without it (it is the first history) the thing or phenomenon has no existence. The matter is simply one of making what is implicit explicit and putting its correctness to the test.

This implicit knowledge (that of the first history) is not—the term says as much—a knowledge alongside but is rather a knowledge within ordinary empirical and conceptual knowledge.

By keeping the primary or transcendental history in mind, it is possible to overcome the difficulties in which Hegel and Heidegger landed. Nevertheless, the problems that confront us here are not resolved at a single stroke by the notion of the transcendental history. For one encounters here the extremely difficult question concerning unity and coherence in history and in the whole of reality and the whole of life. I would inquire cautiously, in the footsteps of a number of philosophers, including Hegel: *Is it perhaps (the first) history* that establishes this coherence in the myriad number of facts, events, circumstances, institutions, etc.? The answer to this question must become the touchstone for the correctness of what I have said so far and of what is to follow.

Hence I return to justice (in the comprehensive and profound sense in which I took this concept above) and for the time being confine the problem of unity to it, leaving aside for the moment the coherence of history in its totality.

Now then, justice is present in every age (always imperfectly realized, often violated, and constantly threatened though it may be); yet it is never the same from one phase of history to another. Justice is constantly changing in form; yet it retains its identity throughout all the changes it undergoes.

How is this to be grasped? It will be helpful to turn for a moment to another field of science, biology. Jules Carles has argued that the organism (plant, animal, man) renews its energetic material many times, sometimes a number of times a day; meanwhile, even the minutest detail can have repercussions throughout the entire organism. With this in mind, Carles points out that whereas Heraclitus still argued from the basis of the stability of the body, we know that the living being (including man) is itself a constantly changing stream; thus, it can be argued that for this reason as well, one cannot step into the same stream twice. Modern physiology justifies our saying, after the words of the Comtesse de Noailles, "Never again shall we have the body we had this evening." And yet, our organism endures, "retains its identity" (Carles), remains what it was, throughout all the changes it undergoes. The central question is then: What is it that sustains the identity of this plant or that particular body in spite of numerous, incessant changes?⁹

The problem is an ancient one. Carles seeks the *unité du vivant* in *finalité*, in being goal-oriented, in having a destination. The matter at issue bears comparison, I think, with the scholastic notion that the individual is ineffable (*individuum est ineffabile*), for the same can be said about the *unity* of the organism, the unity of justice, the unity of history as a whole. Furthermore, what Carles adds is of no less importance: this *unity* can never be by-passed, for it so happens that apart from this unity the living being cannot be grasped; it is the basis from which we proceed and to which we must constantly return.

The same thing is true of justice and the other historical phenomena and modes of being. Justice is subject to constant change, yet it retains its identity. The usual pairs of opposites will not suffice here; we must reach beyond 'mutable-immutable' to a better way of expressing the matter. It is best to speak of the *unity* of justice, since this includes its being different again each time.

This being different is no inconsequential matter. It involves being different among different peoples; different in different times; and, indeed, justice even differs from case to case (no two court cases, for example, are ever identical). And yet, *unity*: this is the ultimate, limiting concept of justice, and it leaves the dynamic multiformity intact. None the less, the question remains: What guarantees the unity throughout all the changes?

Various replies are forthcoming. Often it is said that the guarantee is located in the *essence* (of justice), but that is a restriction on the dynamic variety; essence is an abstraction and is in essence unchangeable; hence in this answer change is shortchanged: change is made subordinate and accidental. Again, it is said that the guarantee is located in the *structure*. In this reply too, however, there is a narrowing of the horizon. A third reply invokes the *form*; this too is an abstraction.

What constitutes and guarantees the unity is the meaning. It is the meaning that expresses the origin, the ground, the inner richness, the value, and the directedness of the phenomena. Meaning is only accessible, however, to our *implicit* knowledge.

Meaning is often equated with value, or with purpose or finality. Incorrectly so, for these are but aspects of meaning. Meaning is not exhausted in them. More accurately, the fact that things, etc., have value or purpose stems from their being meaning.

Philosophy of history is often defined as the science that in-

quires after meaning as final purpose, while historical science would seek meaning as value; hence the conflict between the two.¹⁰

No, that concrete, individual thing or phenomenon has meaning, not owing to a final purpose, nor yet owing to a rigid, immutable essence or being, but owing to the transcendental relation that sustains its unity in all its dynamic mutability.

I return to justice as one of the many historical modes of being, invulnerable to fugitive, nihilating time, changeable, certainly, but ever retaining that most essential element: *its meaning*—and yet, *it is in time, and is itself time.*

Here we encounter *another time*, a time which is neither discontinuous nor continuous, a time for which neither earlier nor later obtains, a time which makes continuity and discontinuity possible in the first place: transcendental time; or, to put it in other words, here we encounter the *unity of time* in which past, present, future, and all phases and periods of time coincide (not: converge)—these are all present in this time in their full diversity, yet together they constitute a *unity of meaning*.

A comparison with prophecy may help to clarify what I mean. In ancient Israel, or in the case of Jesus, prophecies sometimes pertain to what is to happen presently and *at the same time* to what will happen in the period to come; they pertain to what is to happen at Jesus' coming into the world and at the same time they pertain to the latter days (from Pentecost onward); yet in the words of the prophets, these times all coincide.

Thus far I have dealt with unity and coherence mainly as they pertain to historical modes of being, separately considered. Now, do this unity (namely, unity of meaning) and coherence also exist in the historical world considered as a whole, from the beginning right on down to the present and in any given time frame (a period or a phase)? I will have to return to these questions, but at this point I would already affirm the following: every thing, every mode of being, every discrete reality is woven and written into reality as a whole and can only exist by being incorporated in the encompassing reality, through which everything is so connected with everything else to the very depth of existence that if just one of the fundamental modes of being were taken away (for example, justice), the others too would no longer exist.

Now, what is the power that lends coherence to this total reality? That power is the primary or transcendental history, which is not susceptible of further definition since it is the prime given, yet which can be approximated in this way: *It is the state of being suspended between the origin and every later moment.* This means that each and every thing or mode of being in all its concreteness is permeated by the total historical reality. Yet it means at the same time that the mutable, the ever different, the singular, the unique can exist only within this total unity-coherence. It is irreducible, it is unique, *and* it is interwoven with all that is.

The second history

Little can be said concerning the second history in itself, since in the absence of coherence with the first history it has no existence. Inversely, the same is really true of the first history as well, which for its realization is dependent upon the second history. What we have done here is simply what philosophy and science normally do: we have separated what is given as an integral whole. This procedure is necessary for gaining deepened insight, albeit such insight only becomes possible when what is thus broken up is viewed concomitantly as an integral whole.

The first history is placed in man's hands, as it were; we can even say that it is dependent on that. It is the 'inner *dynamis*' of the first history to enter into the designs and deeds of man; and that is what constitutes the second history.

This coherence of the first and second histories—we may even speak of their being "in each other"—poses serious difficulties to our understanding and powers of expression. On the one hand, the first history is independent of man; on the other, it cannot come into being without man. (It is not the case, as in Hegel and Heidegger, that Spirit or Being imposes itself by superior force on the subjective will of the individuals.) The transcendental history is independent of the designs and deeds of man insofar as its coming into existence is concerned; yet, in its existence it is ineluctably bound to these designs and deeds.

I said just now that the *original history* delivers itself up to man! Actually, this is not entirely true. It can indeed be acknowledged, followed, obeyed, as well as ignored, transgressed, violated, fiercely

combatted; in other words, this original history is of a *normative* character, which is to say that it does not impose itself deterministically or by superior force, but rather that it enters into the freedom and responsibility of man, imperilled by many dangers. But escape it man never can—he abides in it to all ages, for without it no life is possible.

The primary history comes towards us as the *meaning* of history, justice as the *meaning* of justice—so meaning is not far away in some unassailable height or depth or endtime; no, it is the meaning of history (of justice, and so forth) that *gives itself* to man. It enters into the freedom of man. The converse is also true: since man can never step outside meaning, a struggle is going on within the very meaning itself of history, of love, peace, etc.

This *struggle within* the meaning and *for* the meaning both of history and of the discrete phenomena and of individual human lives is *the warp and woof of history*, in two respects: (1) as embarking on or being engaged in a quest for meaning (please take note that this pursuit is not an isolated activity, nor mere reflection upon it—rather, it permeates, usually unawares, all everyday thought and activity; in short, this quest is itself history); (2) as realizing meaning, by *going back* or *returning* to the transcendental history.

Yet what is the provenance of this struggle for meaning? The question presses: To view man as living in meaning in all his designs and deeds—is that not a highly optimistic view, and why then is the struggle still necessary? To meet this objection it is necessary to posit that the meaning of the primary history demands a return to *integral* justice and love, and it demands the *integral* meaning of history or of the individual.

What does 'integral' mean? Is this the integralism of Jan Romein or the integralism of structuralism? No, for that would only mean having things in their proper place or order with respect to each other. I mean integral in the term's first sense, 'integrity,' from the classical Latin term 'integer'—namely, 'not touched,' which in turn means 'unviolated,' in the sense, then, of 'whole,' 'complete,' or 'undiminished.' That which is integral is complete. It is whole. It possesses 'integrity' or 'integrality.' Now then, I am talking about *integral* justice, and so forth, which is to say that the struggle pertains not just to meaning but to the *integrity* of meaning.

In this struggle there are *at least three great dynamic forces* at work.

1. Firstly, the positive predominates: it is the process of "returning" to meaning.

2. Secondly, the whole of the second history can be summarized as a responding to the first history, as a reacting to it. Try to picture it: in every moment of history, be it of the world or of the individual person, there is an *irresistible coming* of integral meaning, which knocks at the door of time. The great question confronts man ever anew: Should he open, should he answer—and how? Open he must, but he is free to choose *how*: What one usually witnesses is this: the reaction is a real *countermovement*. Against meaning? We shall come to that in a moment. At all events, the reaction is a *countermovement to what still is and what shortly before still was*.

On the one hand we say: How fortunate! for with that, absolutized goals and objectives are removed; *on the other hand*, we must say: Alas! for with that, people become estranged from *essential values*, which may indeed live on, but only in a pitiful state: it sometimes takes centuries before these values are rediscovered and reintegrated into a culture. The constantly renewed attempts at realizing meaning involve, among other things, a disregard for and a displacement of earlier realizations of meaning, since in the new "returning" it is not integral meaning itself but only a particular aspect of meaning that is being realized.

So much is this the familiar picture of the dynamics of history that it gives us every reason to believe we are on the track of *one of the essential features of history*—including, in that case, the *renaissances* and *reformations* (thus not only those of the fifteenth, sixteenth, twelfth, and tenth centuries), for they occur in every age; they are "returnings" to what was once rejected as intrinsically foreign and is now being resurrected in some cases more than once.

From theory, let us turn now to practice for a moment. For my first example I go to the beginning of Modern Times.

In the Middle Ages man was so much a part of a richly variegated multiplicity of connections and organic relations that very little room was left for individual worth and personal freedom; as Huizinga has shown, to set a personal goal for one's life remained virtually foreign to the Middle Ages. In the Renaissance, however, in part out of reaction, attention came to be focussed on the dignity and freedom of the individual. In every field the individual began to feel free and independent; the formation of the personality now

became the supreme ideal, to such a degree in fact that there has even been talk of 'the discovery of man' (*découverte de l'homme*)¹¹ — which is to say that there is dignity in the human person as such, quite apart from the communities. Undoubtedly, this marked an important gain. Yet, as a countermovement it entailed the consequence that the awakening of the self-determining personality was all too deficient in the *social, altruistic components* (Huizinga); the Renaissance saw an externalizing of numerous social relations that interrupted for more than a century what had been a hopeful progress towards a better form of society.

As a second example, I refer to the history of love. In the classical Greek period, *eros* predominated; in the primitive Christian era, *agape*; in the courtly world, erotic love; in Romanticism, sentimental love. This history implies not that *agape* vanished from courtly culture but that it became *subordinate* to *eros* and so suffered loss with respect to its original richness.

What is remarkable in both these examples is that the meaning of community, of personality, of love does break through, but not their integral meaning as given in the transcendental history.

My third example is taken from the world of philosophy. There are many indications that existentialism and the philosophy of existence have passed their peak; yet, even those who reject both of them on principle must acknowledge that they have conveyed important insights, which even now are already in danger of being lost for lack of appreciation.

My fourth and final example concerns Romanticism. At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, Western Europeans fell under the spell of Romanticism. After that it went underground, from whence it reappears from time to time and place to place, often when least expected. Will man ever escape the tension between intimacy, privacy, security, on the one hand, and the yearning for infinity, the boundless horizon, the universal on the other?

3. Thirdly — to move on to the third of the three great dynamic forces to which I alluded — I have already argued that the transcendental history does not go its own way, over the head of the second history, but that it realizes itself only through responsible action in the second history. This assumes that the first history remains hidden in part — that it is never fully disclosed — since there is a power at work in the second history that continually holds itself in

readiness to ward off the irresistible coming of the transcendental history. That is the second *countermovement* and the third great dynamic force of which I spoke.

Yet why such resistance? If the second history were to allow the first history to enter unobstructed, would it not, as we have seen, stand to gain participation in the *integral meaning* of history? Is it a question of powerlessness on the part of the second history to realize integral meaning, as something beyond its capacity? No, not in the first instance. What it comes down to is this: the second history is ruled by a polarity—it is dependent on the first history for its existence but at the same time tries to escape from it; the first history belongs to the essence of the second, yet the second experiences the first as the other, as a foreigner: *to the second history the first history is the transcendental stranger*.

However, we must inquire further. Why this polarization in the second history, this withdrawal into self, this countermovement *against* the first history, this experiencing of it as the transcendental stranger? Because the second history wants to remain by itself, wants to withdraw into itself, and believes it is sufficient unto itself. Just look at historical science, for instance: whatever cannot be established according to rigorous scientific methods must, we are told, be left out of consideration since it only undermines the certainty of scientific results.

Nevertheless, the *irruptive force* of the transcendental history does not allow itself to be broken—but neither does the *countermovement* of the second history. Here, then, is *the struggle within the meaning of history* to which I alluded above.

History can teach us what is going on here. In the Gothic we experience such a breakthrough of the first history—in particular, in the classic cathedrals of Chartres, Amiens, Reims. Thereafter, this style of architecture set the trend; the attempt was made to perfect it; certain forms were elaborated and over-accentuated; no longer was there a direct returning to the origin; rather, the form which derived from it *became the norm*.

In the Reformation, too, the counterforce of that will to self-containment took hold. In the field of church and theology one need mention only the growth of rigid orthodoxy—although it must be remembered that, just as in the case of the Gothic, the first history remained present, if underground.

In summary, real history is: being constantly open to the

original history, listening to it, acting on it; there is a mighty and unrelenting élan at work in the original history by which the absolutizations and substantializations—including all forms of self-sufficiency—are perpetually undermined and in the great crises of world history are permanently overthrown.

At the same time, this unrelenting dynamic force (of the first history) sees to it that whatever the countermovement drove out, despite its real value, is brought back again from exile—sometimes after many years, sometimes after centuries.

Again, a few examples:

Take the concept of 'misuse of the law' (*abus de droit*). Already known to the Romans, it became an important principle of law in the Middle Ages and from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Yet it was discarded in the nineteenth century, under the influence of liberalism and positivism. It was reintroduced into the legal order, however, in the twentieth century, as "law behind the law" (Scholten).¹²

Similarly, in recent years there has been a marked and *rapidly growing positive reappraisal of the nineteenth century*, expressed most notably in various forms of neo-Hegelianism, neo-anarchism, neo-romanticism, the updating of positivism, and so on. Particularly remarkable (what a contrast to just several decades ago!) is the higher rating being accorded the neo-Gothic: people are again impressed especially by its clear creation of space and its spatial unity and simplicity.

Citing examples can create a misunderstanding—namely, that the matter is one of incidental cases. The opposite is true: the first history is unrelentingly at work to bring to light the neglected, the discarded, that which has been relegated to the subterranean stream. This process, however, does not happen in a uniform way.

There are a number of general characteristics to this process of return, and they are aptly illustrated in the example of the neo-Gothic: the Gothic revival is not concerned with *imitation*, or restoration, or retrieval of all the historical particulars; its concern is, rather, with the recovery of fundamental principles—principles which, for all that they have validity in different times, are neither timeless nor ahistorical: on the contrary, they are *fully historical*, standing in a *particular historical context*, and they acquire *historical validity* again in *another* historical context. Thus, in the fifteenth century Brunelleschi found his examples in the classical

world and even made precise measurements for that purpose, but how severely the nineteenth-century critics rebuked him for having deviated from the classics!

So the process of return is not a simple matter, nor does it follow a uniform pattern. Notice, for example, the place of technology throughout history. The technological history of the early Middle Ages appears to be of little relevance for today, and yet it is as topical as could be: the present high level of technological development is bringing ever more clearly to light man's powerlessness in the face of typically human problems (including man's alienation from the world and from his next-door neighbor). I consider it a matter of the greatest importance that we immerse ourselves in a world in which technology still played an almost negligible role—not in order to adopt a negative stance but in order to get on the track of the essential relations of man and *techné*.

I would emphasize again that what returns, what is reborn, is not a timeless essence or a timeless model; it is fully and dynamically historical: it is subject to historical mutability and is often so altered that it is not even recognized as a historical given (as is happening, for example, in the current [evaluation of the] neo-Gothic).

The following question necessarily arises: If then the return is such an important factor in the great movements of history, why is it just *this* possibility—*this* particular one rather than one of ever so many others—that comes to life again? I will come back to this question later, but the following point should be made right now: what is surprising is that the return, as initiative or creative moment, usually does not emanate from the professional historians; granted, they *contribute material once the irruption of the past has occurred*, but, I repeat, the irruption is usually not attributable to them.

Historians are well aware that it is not they who make fresh openings to the past; after all, how often have historians themselves not said that history must be studied and written anew again and again, from the new perspective on one's own time!

Among the principal results of the preceding reflections are the following:

(1) In the first history, with which the historian usually does not work explicitly, we have found the real source and orientation point

of the second history (which is the history of the historians); at the same time, it is the first history which brings to presence again that which once was.

(2) My reflections conflict with two principles which in the last centuries have become cornerstones of the "history of the historians," namely, that of *continuity*, and that of *historical causality* or, more mildly, that of "*how it came about*"; for, in spite of much sharp opposition to the causality principle, a historian does not rest until he has discovered the causes, origins, and influences involved in an historical event or phenomenon; for example, the courtly culture, which arose in a relatively short period of time, occasioned the production of a whole library aimed at explaining this unique historical phenomenon—whether it was a product of the West, of Catharism, or of the Arabian world, etc. The same is true of ever so many other complex phenomena. Meanwhile, for all the recognition of the unique, what has become of the element of originality?

The purport of my discussion, by contrast, has been *not* to explain the phenomena wholly and exclusively from the "continuous history of the historians" but to appeal equally to an *original* history which breaks through this continuous history in a twofold way: (i) in virtue of its unremitting irruptive force, and (ii) in virtue of its detaching itself from the context of its own and the immediately preceding time in order to reach back through the centuries to the meaning of earlier thinking and acting.

At this juncture, however, we must take into account an unavoidable complication—for continuity is not lost altogether: the coming of the courtly culture, for example, may have been unique and original, but the change in the social structures was already taking place as if in preparation for receiving it.

Thus an event, a phenomenon, a state of affairs, etc., is embedded *in the continuity*; at the same time, however, it possesses *an originality entirely its own* (note that this is something quite different from discontinuity). Once again we are placed before a penetrating question: How can both occur in one and the same fact at the same time—do they not exclude each other?

The question is even more complicated than that: facts (or phenomena) participate at one and the same time not only in both continuous and transcendental time but also in the universal, in the national, in various groups, and in addition are individual, and

each of these has a different time and rhythm of its own.

Historians—and theorists and philosophers—are disposed to explain the facts, etc., in terms of one aspect or one 'time,' but the real question is: What datum, what time is it that integrates all this into the unity of the fact, or the unity of history as a whole, and what is it that ultimately establishes its internal coherence?

Precisely the same problem arises in connection with periods. Take the sixteenth century as an example. It has been correctly asserted that certain characteristic features of the sixteenth century are genuinely medieval; on the other hand, one can discern in it a prelude to the following centuries. And there is more. Was there not a great deal in that century that was borrowed from the time prior to the Middle Ages, from classical Antiquity and from the age of the Early Church Fathers? The Middle Ages were simultaneously carried forward and passed over. Moreover, how much, indeed, was there not in that period that is universally human and proper to any age in world history!

This problem is customarily resolved by speaking of the structure or the spirit of a period or phase of history, but this usually means that one or more specific facets are allowed to dominate while whatever seems not to fit is relegated to a place of subordinate importance. It is a point in favor of this method, however, that where historians decline to use it, the facts and periods seem to disintegrate beyond hope of remedy. I agree: there is unity to the events and the times, but the real question, once again, is: Whence do their unity and coherence arise?

Answer

I have referred again and again, as if it were a matter of course, to returning to earlier times; and no one ever seems to make a problem of it. Actually, however, the matter should arouse profound wonder! *For how can such a thing be?* By virtue of the continuity of time perhaps? Impossible, for that is broken in many ways. If, then, temporal continuity cannot open the way, still it must be *time* that brings us into contact with the events and circumstances of centuries ago.

Philosophers especially have a tendency to reduce past, present, and future to one. Augustine, for example, attempted to

overcome the disintegrating power of time by letting all three converge—in the soul, at least—in the present, so that the past as remembrance and the future as expectation are also the present.

I agree with the intention. Yet an objection arises. If the three 'moments' of time, past, present, and future, converge in one of the three, we remain enclosed within continuous-discontinuous time, with all the irresolvable difficulties which that entails (witness Augustine). This continuous-discontinuous time cannot be accounted for in terms of itself. It needs a basis, which can be time, but not mathematical time.

At issue here is another time, transcendental time, since it alone is original time; as the concentration of all meaning, it remains what it was and at the same time is different in all temporal moments. Here language fails and thought reaches its limits. It is transcendental time that makes language and thought and likewise the continuous-discontinuous course of history possible at all. *Transcendental time deploys itself in the discrete moments and in the phases and periods of time, and it is due to transcendental time that unity and coherence reside in the facts and epochs of world history.*

It is this transcendental time that *makes history possible*, in the precise sense that history can *be*, and it is this transcendental time that *also makes possible* (a matter of no less importance) *our ability to acquire knowledge concerning history*; for, to be able to acquire knowledge about history, too, the historian requires unity and coherence.

Transcendental time accordingly has a twofold characteristic (keeping ever in mind that it is fully time): (1) all temporal moments—past, present, and future—*coincide in it*; or, if you like, they are all concentrated in it or participate in it; and (2) *it deploys* time into the various temporal moments, phases, and periods of history.

The meaning of transcendental time as I have thus described it is made marvelously clear, I think, by the words of the apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans [6:4,8]: being 'dead and buried *with Christ*' must be understood, as Herman Ridderbos has said, not mystically but *realistically and historically*; it means: *at that very moment to be comprehended in Christ*, sharing in what was happening to Him; but at the same time there is the distinction, the time difference.¹³

History implies being related not only to the origin but also to the center and to the consummation of time. These are the three great *concentration points* of world history, in which the meaning of life contracts into the integral meaning of history.

Concentration points should be distinguished from *crystallization points*. Actually, every fact and every age is a crystallization point, but some are more so than others. In them, the first history lays hold of the progression of time, sometimes for centuries. In them, the past and the future are compressed. Nor are these crystallization points any longer susceptible of elimination; of course, I do not mean this deterministically, for they are ever freshly entrusted to man in a normative sense. Examples are innumerable. I mention only: 1066, Bramante's arrival in Rome, the Industrial Revolution, the Dutch struggle for independence.

Many important problems have been omitted here, but there is one I cannot pass over even though it can only be dealt with extensively in the context of hermeneutics: If it be granted that this first, transcendental history cannot be forced into the background but that it occupies an all-controlling position, then *how does one get a view of it?* How does one discover the integral meaning of history, the meaning of justice, of love, of power, and so forth, but also the *integral* meaning of the irruptive events and phenomena—for example, of the imperial coronation of A.D. 800, of the Renaissance, of the supranational unification of postwar Western Europe, of the second Industrial Revolution? And how is the historian supposed to deal with these questions?

To take the last question first: the historian can lay these questions aside and claim to restrict himself to the "*history of the historians*," which is to say to the *continuous history*, to the "*how it came about*." To persist in this ideal of a so-called *objective historical development* entails the consequence that, as a historian, one adjusts oneself to it, keeping scrupulously to that which history has brought into view. It is expected of the historian that he will bring to light what once was, and how that came about; that he will borrow the standards for evaluating the culture he studies from the culture itself; *but no creativity is expected of him*: this is assigned to philosophers, poets, sociologists, and the like.

Hence the question becomes all the more urgent: How does one

get a view of the first history in its relation to the "history of the historians"? For *creativity* issues from the first history, and *from it alone* issues, time after time, that which is new.

A first requirement is that historians free themselves from their isolation and their exclusive commitment to the second history and be ready to go to the place where the philosophers, moralists, theologians, jurists, etc., are, where the representatives of all times and all nations gather, where the walls between the ages and the cultures have to give way, where in often emotional discussions the questions are addressed that affect all alike. The contributions of the historians to these discussions will not be any less important than those of any other group: historians in particular can know how meaning (in its contest with anti-meaning) has already for thousands of years and in countless places found its way through history.

Whom do we find there? A Plato, Augustine, Alberti, Poussin, Adam Smith, but also the Hellenistic peasant, the feudal lord, the oppressed slave, also Ranke, countless others. *In the perspective of the continuous second history it is impossible that they should all be present at the same time, yet the first history enables them to be always each other's contemporaries, even while it remains obvious from what age, from what nation, from what town or village, from what milieu they come.*

Yet, will they find the *integral* meaning? The answer is in the first place a matter for hermeneutics—at least if this be taken to be not a set of rules for the interpretation of texts but a philosophical discipline; for via the interpretation of texts, hermeneutics penetrates to the facts and to history itself.¹⁴

Notes

1. Karel Kuypers, "Die Frage nach dem Sinn der Geschichte" [The question of the meaning of history], *Verspreide Geschriften* (2 vols.; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968), I, 239. [Reprinted from *Philosophy and Christianity: Philosophical Essays Dedicated to Professor Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd* (Kampen: Kok, and Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1965), p. 113, citing Wilhelm Kamlah, *Christentum und Geschichtlichkeit: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des Christentums und zu Augustins "Bürgerschaft Gottes"* (2nd rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1951).]
2. H.-I. Marrou, *De la connaissance historique* (1954), pp. 31ff.
3. Jan Romein, *In de hof der historie; kleine encyclopedie der theoretische*

- geschiedenis* [In the garden of history: A short encyclopedia of theoretical history] (Amsterdam: Querido, 1951), pp. 56-57.
4. Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1947), p. 73.
 5. Walter Heitler, "Kausalität und Teleologie in der Sicht der heutigen Naturwissenschaft" [Causality and teleology from the perspective of modern physics], *Universitas* 21 (1966): 10.
 6. Max Hartmann, *Naturwissenschaft und Religion* (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1940), p. 11.
 7. Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (1949), p. 94.
 8. See Otto Dirk Duintjer, *De vraag naar het transcendentale* [The quest for the transcendental] (Leiden: Universitaire Pers, 1966).
 9. Jules Carles, "L'unité du vivant," *Etudes Philosophiques* 41 (1966): 38.
 10. See K. Kuypers, *Verspreide Geschriften*, I, 241 [p. 115 in *Philosophy and Christianity* (see note 1)].
 11. ["La découverte de l'homme": phrase first used by Jules Michelet to describe the Renaissance in his *Histoire de la France*, vol. 7 (1855).]
 12. See W.B. Helmich, *Theorie van het rechtsmisbruik*, dissertation, Nijmegen, 1945.
 13. [Cf. Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paulus: Ontwerp van zijn theologie* (Kampen: Kok, 1966), pp. 58f, 181-83, 415; Eng. trans. by John Richard de Witt, *Paul, An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 60f, 168f, 372.]
 14. [These "Reflections" were first presented as lectures in the Theory of History course, sessions of April 26, May 10, Oct. 13, Nov. 3 and 17, 1969. Professor Smit then made the text available in stencilled form for discussion in a special graduate seminar, which met five times in the spring of 1970. — Ed.]

On Knowledge

[excerpt from a paper of 1980]

KNOWLEDGE IS INTRINSICALLY historical. It is not only *in* history, but is itself history. Or as Hegel put it: “. . . what we are, we are at the same time historically”¹ (only to be untrue to it himself). So, too, knowledge (here I shall always include scientific knowledge) is *essential* or *original* knowledge (so that faith is not merely an aspect in the process of knowing).²

I must continue as follows: in this mutual interpenetration, ethical dimensions, empirical observation, rational demonstration, etc. all have their place. One who desires to know things can *ap-prehend* them only as furnished with a complicated coherence. He need not fathom all this, for in acquiring knowledge concerning social reality, for example, he will plunge inevitably into the depth-layer of reality.

What is it now which ultimately holds all this together?

It is a meaning-coherence.

It is when we turn to reality that we discover that complicated unity, that fullness, and *meaning-coherence*, which we cannot step outside of for a moment, either in the formation of knowledge or in our everyday living. We exist, think, and act in a coherence of countless circumstances, decisions, intuitions, events, etc., etc. and at every moment of history this results in an interconnectedness between things, phenomena, etc., a coherence of a sort that no one has ever designed or would ever be able to design. (And now I have not even stated what is essential: there is a coming-into-existence of the world that is our work, but there is at the same time a coming-into-existence that has been—and is continually being—granted to us and that makes the former possible at all; this situation of being granted, of being instituted, as Buber says, is the *fundamental given* of existence.) It is in this interconnected whole that man is situated

as knowing and acting being—and, as must follow from the argument just made: in this situation he also is *engulfed* by the infinite multiplicity and the unfathomable totality.

That is the way matters are dealt with in most theories of science; perhaps it has never been noticed, for man can never be kept in the grip of the totalitarian unity. An example for clarification: On the one hand, we have to affirm that history forges ahead from the past as a mighty *uninterrupted* whole and that man is caught up in it and swept along with it; on the other hand, this same history is found not to advance purely and simply—rather, there are clear differences between alternating times, even between successive days. And that does not go on independently of man's freedom.

We can express this by saying that the totality of reality, of history, is transcended by every man at every moment, in the direction of the origin.

This prime given of *belonging* to being in countless interconnections while nevertheless *transcending* that same being must inform all our accounts of reality and knowledge, unless, abstracting, we place ourselves outside it.

To round off my reflections, I would bring up one additional consideration: What, now, is the meaning of all this for the practice of science and philosophy? I have said myself that science in unguarded moments does raise the *question*, among others, of justice; more we can hardly expect of it. We no longer live in the age of an Augustine (the fifth century) or a Ranke (the nineteenth century) who said that every period is immediate to God: since then the process of secularization has rendered science immune to what I have defended. Ranke's remark is historically interesting, of course, but *out of date*

Then, however, I come across this remark in Vossler (made in 1979!): "it is not enough to say 'every age is immediate to God,' but the adage should be: *every act in history 'is immediate to God.'*"³ And this is possible—for him—through recognition of history as *meaning*, which in turn is grounded in an *absolute*. Vossler says this in the context of historical science—more accurately: of science in general—for he no longer has any confidence in philosophy of history; I will come back to this.

"Every act 'is immediate to God' "—and that said right in science

—that is *quite something*, for it means that the coherence is broken through from moment to moment by the transcendental relation.

The coherence broken through, a coherence sacred to the scientist and in the absence of which no scientific analysis is believed possible! I have just posed the question what meaning my reflections have for scientific practice. Well, that will have to be evident from the problem I now broach by way of example. It is that of the causal coherence or nexus. (I take *causa* not in the Aristotelian-Scholastic but in the modern, functionalistic sense.) I spoke of a *sacred* causal coherence, for according to common opinion the “scientific” status of a discipline depends on its ability to explain ideas, events, phenonema, etc., in terms of their causes. Ideas are then the product of circumstances or else the circumstances are the deposit of ideas—there appears to be no escaping the dilemma of idealism or materialism. Often, thinking in terms of causality is mitigated and the talk is of circumstances, influences, relations, but it is no less strongly causal in its starting point!

But what to think, then, of hermeneutics with its *Verstehen*, intended precisely as a convincing counterweight to causal explanation? Hermeneutics is indeed friendlier, but its method is no less causal-totalitarian: it tries to understand things and phenomena from the spirit of the times, from the structure, from the nation.—But is not structuralism a reaction against that game of factors? To be sure, but the structure imposes its will, silently and imperiously. Seldom has there been a time in which science was as totalitarian as in our own: *the socio-economic way of thinking has affected the whole of reality*: the origin of religion, the progress of philosophy, expressions of art, the developments and deformations in the psychic area—to mention no more—they are all in the grip of the anonymous power of the economic-social structure. This is all swallowed so easily because the common man never saw it otherwise: he always “knew” that a family in which the relations are amiss will inevitably produce criminal behavior

The fight against causal thinking must be directed against its totalitarian claims—that sounds harsh, so let me remind you of the words of Barraclough (alas, he does not repudiate it): “the nature of anything is *entirely comprehended* in its development.”⁴

He says this while basing himself on the hermeneutical method. I repeat, science and hermeneutics are not to be outdone by each other in this matter of such overriding importance.

How could it be otherwise? From early times man has asked the *why* question, and he continues to do so; only, the question has wrapped itself in a scientific cloak. In dealing with the *why* question science has an enormously broad field; here empirical method and rational thought rule supreme, and the ultimate goal they so eagerly pursue is the formulation of causal laws.

The manner in which I speak of causality and the *why* question brings out quite clearly that I regard the sacred causal coherence as open to challenge.

Is there a link to be made here with philosophy? Philosophy can be mentioned only in hushed tones: it has lost its significance almost entirely and must live within the narrow confines allowed it by science. The great significance of philosophy for the sciences—I have yet to see it. I prefer to speak of the *isolation of philosophy*. And philosophy has only itself to blame for that, for in its docility vis-à-vis the scientific mode of thought it has missed a unique opportunity to bring openness into the closedness of the causal order: the *why* question, and the search for the *archè*, have been its worst problems even in the best of times. I therefore hark back to the essence of philosophical thought if I assert that there are givens that are inaccessible to the causal-scientific, structural mode of thought.

Language and law, art and social context, economy and religion—to take just a few examples from the countless many—are *intimately interconnected*—yet *not* in terms of an autonomous causal order, for that can never exist of itself: it points back towards the original, transcendental coherence. There has never been anyone who has designed and realized the coherence in history; and yet it is the case that all people and things are in it and have being and life within it alone.

But surely, then, in a causally interconnected way? To be sure, things cohere in reality in many ways. But there is one coherence that is *fundamental and original*, and that we call *meaning-coherence*.

And thus do life, culture, freedom, peace, the individual and the general enter into the scientific concepts of scientific practice, and the controlling starting point for science can be no other save the acknowledgement that they all *were* already there before they were taken in hand by man, and before they entered into human

knowing—I mean this not chronologically but *ontologically*. In the current scientific climate, this is inconceivable.

Again to use an example: when historians inquire into the origin and essence of the Renaissance, they are asking about the factors that led to its birth and that account for its essence. In contrast, I emphasize: the Renaissance *was* there already (again speaking ontologically) *before* the factors could exercise their influence. It *was*, before man's forming and deforming work could begin and could revolt against what was given in the meaning of the Renaissance.

It is the task of the philosopher both to redirect the question concerning the origin and ground of things (in this case the Renaissance) towards the divine creativity and also to have a never flagging interest in the daily renewal in creation (of which the Renaissance is an instance).

If you find it offensive that I bring the divine creativity and the Renaissance so close together, let me put your minds at ease by using different words (*and here I summarize my entire way of thinking; and I cannot emphasize it enough*): People always say: phenomena, ideas, are *timebound*. I turn it around: *time is bound, the times are bound to the transcendental dimension*, and the world, the fullness of life and history are not opened up until this dimension is laid bare.⁵ To promote insight into this is the task of Christian scholarship.

Notes

1. ". . . was wir sind, sind wir zugleich geschichtlich." *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, (abridged ed. by F. Nicolin, 1959), p. 12.
2. [In the preceding, the author has argued that traditional science represents an intolerable reduction of knowledge: both the older, analytic-empirical and the more recent, causal-genetic conceptions of science stop short of the question concerning the origin of things by debarring from the process of knowing any acknowledgment of a ground of being that transcends historical relativity. In these final pages of his paper Professor Smit draws his main conclusions, namely that all true knowledge is pervaded by historicity and religious belief and involves a plurality of modes of knowing. The paper was read at a session of a research team studying the relation of 'faith and (theoretical) thought.' The complete text appears in J. Klapwijk, ed., *De eerste en tweede geschiedenis: Nagelaten geschriften van Meijer C. Smit* (Amsterdam: Buijten en Schipperheijn, 1987), pp. 180-206. —Ed.]
3. Otto Vossler, *Geschichte als Sinn* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), p. 158.

4. Geoffrey Barraclough, *History and the Common Man* (London: The Historical Association, 1967), p. 10 (italics added, MCS).
5. Cf. the writings of H. de Jong [*Brood in Bethlehem* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1974); *De twee messiasen* (Kampen: Kok, 1978); *Bron en norm: Een bundel bijbelstudies* (Kampen: Kok, 1979)].

Epilogue

**In Memoriam M.C. Smit:
Philosopher of Integral Meaning***

By J.A. Aertsen

DURING THE SUMMER vacation last year, on July 16, 1981, Professor M.C. Smit passed away. Since 1955 he had been connected with the Free University in Amsterdam, where he was charged with a twofold teaching task: initially as professor in medieval history and the theory and philosophy of history; later, in 1970, he exchanged the first part of that assignment for that in medieval and modern Roman Catholic philosophy.

In various ways during the past academic season attention has been devoted to Smit's departure. Now that we are gathered together here as a Central Interfaculty, it seems to be fitting and meaningful that we should pause to dwell more extensively on his work. I will try—also for those who knew Smit scarcely or not at all—to present in brief a few of the central motifs in his reflections and at the same time to bring across something of the enduring legacy which is to be found in what he has thought for us and left to us.

De verhouding van Christendom en Historie in de huidige Rooms-katholieke geschiedbeschouwing [The relation between Christianity and History in the present-day Roman Catholic view of history (English tr., vol. 2 of the present publication)] was the title of Smit's doctoral dissertation of 1950. In the introduction he sketches the profound changes that have taken place in Roman Catholic thought. (Smit had a special antenna for shifts in the intellectual climate.)

There is in the first place a striking concern for the *concrete*. The traditional philosophy, Scholasticism, is criticized for having paid almost exclusive attention to the abstract essence of things. One who would really learn to know things, however, must deal with them in all their concreteness. From now on, what matters in the formation of knowledge is not so much the abstract essence of things as their full concrete reality.

This concern for the concrete was fraught with two consequences. The focus on the (immutable) essence of things, according to Smit, leads to a static view of reality. Development and the historical are secondary and accidental. One who directs his attention primarily to the concrete, however, will at once come face to face with the dynamic nature of reality. Not until now, then, has Roman Catholic thought really discovered *history* as a substantial element of concrete reality.

Closely associated with the "discovery" of history is the rediscovery of the *religious* as an essential ingredient of reality. The view according to which the natural order is purely the passive substratum for religion no longer satisfied. In the period following the First World War the notion grew within Roman Catholicism that on every side nature is intimately connected with religious reality.¹

The shift from the abstract to the concrete in knowing, the discovery of the phenomenon of history, the acknowledgement of the religious as an essential ingredient of reality: I dare say that these three moments were also the crux of Smit's own concerns. This triad forms the constant in his thought. Their mutual interplay engaged him in all his questioning and seeking.

Now, the plan of this lecture is as follows. I want to work out these three moments, and their mutual coherence (1). For they do not exist side by side in isolation but converge in the concern for the integrality of reality, the being-whole of things. Smit's thought may be characterized as a philosophy of integral meaning. Then I want to relate this basic position to his occupation with medieval philosophy (2) and to the development of his own philosophy of history (3).

(1) Central moments

The first moment is *the critique of theoretical thought*. This is a familiar theme in Reformational philosophy, but Smit worked it out in an original way.

In the second part of his inaugural address [*Het Goddelijk Geheim in de Geschiedenis*, Kampen 1955: English tr., ch. 4, above] Smit presents a sharp critique of current historical science. Cornerstones of its practice are the principles of continuity and causality. The ideal of the historian is to explain phenomena from their becoming and development. The historian does not rest until he has discovered the causes of a historical event. But there is more, according to Smit, than this inner-worldly determination, more than this "sacred" causal coherence. The history of the historian is in reality an abstraction, because he ignores what is most elementary, the connection with the Origin of things. The historian writes history *as if* the world rests and exists in itself. If, however, the Transcendental relation constitutes the facts to begin with, then it is impossible to understand intramundane relations without taking that relation into account.²

This critical view broadened in the course of the years into an assault on what Smit called the "fortress" of science as such. There has taken place in Western science an inadmissible reduction of reality. Terrains that are inaccessible to the logical-rational approach, such as the individual and the religious, are excluded. Through the abstracting and analyzing method proper to science, reality is broken apart and coherences are violated. In discursive thought things are wrenched loose from their coherence and set apart and examined in themselves.³ At the very starting point of thinking or the formation of knowledge, a break, a "separation," is made. Two of these dualisms in particular engaged Smit, and they show just how much this critique of science is motivated by the other two moments I have mentioned: the historical way of thought and the religious conditionedness of reality.

The first is the opposition between the universal and the individual, between the continuous and the discontinuous. According to the traditional concept of science derived from the Greeks, scientific knowledge is concerned with the (abstracted) general as that which is valid everywhere and at all times. But it is precisely this fun-

damental assumption that is challenged in modern (historical) thought: it is sensed ever more sharply that the individual, unique and mutable cannot be derived from the universal and permanent. They possess an authentic value of their own.

A second dualism of which Smit never tired of speaking was the separation in epistemology between fact, the result of objective scientific research, and meaning. The latter, it is commonly maintained, is a matter of belief or worldview, is a subjective pre-judice, for in it something is expressed that is extrinsic to the objective fact. Through this rejection of the question concerning the ground of things, science has become a knowledge of the foregrounds and their external coherences.

However, oh ontological irony, the question of meaning refuses to be suppressed. The scientist cannot for a moment escape the problem of meaning, since meaning presents itself in the facts which he investigates: the facts are found only in a coherence of meaning and do not constitute themselves outside meaning. To abstract from this is at the same time to say: ignore that whereby alone the facts are "whole."⁴

Smit's entire effort was devoted to overcoming these bifurcations, the "fatal" abstractions. The extent to which this was a constant motif in his thought can be seen especially from the second part of his inaugural address. It has generally received less attention than the first part, dealing with the Hand of God. But in the second part we already find a plea for a "re-ordering of the theory of knowledge," i.e., for recognition of the fundamental unity of faith, philosophy, and the special sciences. Reality itself demands, for full disclosure, an adequate method of approach.

Smit seeks to offer science and philosophy a new orientation to the totality, to the comprehensive; he desires a "Copernican revolution" towards the "integral."⁵ In his syllabus *Beschouwingen over de geschiedenis en de tijd der geschiedenis* [English tr., ch. 14, above] he employs this term and goes on to say that by "integral" he means "the first sense of the Latin term *integer*"—namely, 'not touched,' which in turn means 'unviolated,' in the sense, then, of 'whole,' 'undiminished.' In the face of that, rational conceptualization falls short. The re-cognition of the integral requires the totality of the human activity of knowing. For this reason Smit had a special affinity for those thinkers in the Western tradition in whom he thought he recognized this concern: for Augustine, for whom know-

ing and loving are related; for Dilthey and his method of "Verstehen"; and, more recently, for Polanyi. In connection with this "integralism" we may also think of one of the French philosophers discussed by Smit in his dissertation, Blondel, who called his philosophy a "philosophie intégrale" in contrast to Thomism, which concerned itself with the essence of things, isolated from the mutable.

Reality must be re-cognized as an integral whole, but — and for Smit this is an essential qualification — on the condition that things have their own originality and authenticity. To understand this, we must turn to the second basic moment: *the phenomenon of history*.

At the close of his address, *De moderne Protestantse visie op de geschiedenis* [*The modern Protestant view of history*], Smit assails historicism, "which, by absolutizing the historical mode of being, dissolves history in a normless and purposeless process embracing the whole of reality." He concludes, "It is the great merit of the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea to have shown that . . . the historical is but one particular mode of being."⁶ Gradually, however, Smit moved away from this conception, which seeks to overcome historicism by restricting history to a modality. He took historicity in a more radical and more fundamental sense: the whole of reality is historical to the core.

This insight places Smit squarely in modern culture. In the words of the historian Meinecke, the rise of the historical way of thinking in the nineteenth century was one of the greatest spiritual revolutions ever experienced in Western thought. This turnabout ultimately culminated in Heidegger's notion that being (*Sein*) and historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) are identical. The being of classical metaphysics is thoroughly historicized. Ontology becomes philosophy of history.

The reevaluation of historicity in Smit is especially connected, I think, with the ontology that is implied in the historical way of thinking: the unique value of the individual. This, as we saw, was precisely the critical point in the traditional idea of science. In the historical way of thinking a basic assumption of Greek philosophy, which is at bottom unreconcilable with the Judaeo-Christian tradition, is reconsidered:⁷ in the historical way of thinking the individual and unique are apprehended in their authenticity.

The other side of this reevaluation, of course, is that the question concerning the integral unity and coherence of things becomes

more acute. For with the historicizing, reality seems to break up into loose fragments, into monads. The world-historical coherence between the phenomena, cultures, and periods vanishes. What ultimately establishes unity, the being directed to each other?⁸ Characteristically, total historicization is often not carried through consistently—a phenomenon that Smit called the “anti-historicism in historicism.”⁹ Refuge is again sought in thinking from the universal (the continuous, the constant structure) in order to escape uniqueness and finiteness.

Understandably so! There can be no individual phenomenon in the absence of coherence. Smit seeks to honor the essential historicity and at the same time to preserve the integrality of reality. Yet not through half-hearted flight into the universal. The way (out) that he indicates is to connect the individual thing to the transmundane meaning-coherence. The concrete “has meaning, not . . . owing to a rigid, immutable essence or being, but owing to the transcendental relation.”¹⁰ That brings us to the third basic moment: *the religious*.

The first time that I came into contact with Smit was when he spoke about “Medieval Culture and the Character of the Middle Ages” as part of a university lecture series. This address, which was never published [English tr., ch. 5, above], made a deep impression on me as a student. Now, more than twenty years later, I am still able to recite passages from it. To summarize his exposition here would carry us too far afield. Let me report just this thought: the Middle Ages were marked by the religious, by the connection to the divine. The medieval ideal was to bring all aspects of human existence into connection to Transcendence. The Middle Ages sought the absolute.

Smit was existentially involved with this ideal. Here his philosophy of integral meaning finds its deepest motive. For in this dimension rests the being-whole of things, that is, salvation. In his lecture *Cultuur en heil* [English tr., ch. 6, above] he says: “the immediacy of culture before God . . . expresses the meaning of culture: nearness to God is salvation, is the meaning of life in all its expressions.”¹¹

The religious does not have to be imposed upon historical reality from without. Reality is intrinsically conditioned by the transcendental relation or relation to the origin. In his own way the great German historian of the last century, Leopold von Ranke, expressed this in his celebrated dictum, “jede Epoche ist unmittelbar zu Gott.” With the relation to God, a category is introduced that

transcends the opposition between the individual and the universal. The immediacy before God extracts the historical from determination by the universal, but also from the isolation of discontinuity.

Smit concluded his inaugural address with the words of Blondel: "God must not be left out of our affirmations of the concrete." The transcendental relation is the *dynamis* of Smit's thought. With ever increasing sharpness he posits, over against the prevalent causal mode of thought, the necessity of thinking from the Origin. Science and philosophy have not thought originally (enough). Smit's intention is to understand history and culture from the relation to the divine Origin. This relation characterizes their meaning and being.

To summarize the three basic moments in Smit's thought: he elaborated a critique of theoretical thought in connection with the phenomenon of history. Through the historical way of thinking, the individual and unique are discovered but reality at the same time threatens to disintegrate. The integrality of things is to be thought from the Origin. Coherence of meaning, and unity are guaranteed by the transcendental relation.

(2) Medieval philosophy

The basic moments thus noted also determined the themes Smit dealt with in his study of medieval philosophy. That can be seen from the topics he lectured on after taking over S.U. Zuidema's teaching responsibilities in 1970: The problem of a Christian philosophy (1970/1), The problem of nature (1971/2), Time and mutability (1972/3), The problem of the individual (1975/6).

In general it can be said that what engaged Smit in medieval philosophy was the "dichotomy" that he saw running through Western thought. I have the impression that in regard to the Medium Aevum he did not come to full clarity about that "dualism." It is not easy, for example, to say what his overall view and final assessment of Thomas Aquinas's thought was.

The dichotomy (*duplex ordo*) which according to Smit ran through medieval philosophy can be described as autonomy versus Christianity.¹² In the discussion of it that follows, I will focus on the relations of nature and grace, faith and reason, ontological and religious approaches.

In his essay *Nationalisme en Katholicisme* [English tr., ch. 3, above] Smit defends the thesis that the secularization of the rising national consciousness found fertile soil in the development of Roman Catholicism:

. . . it is here [in the Thomistic philosophy] that the separation of the profane and transcendent worlds began . . . with the secularization of the national communities as the result . . .

With Thomas Aquinas . . . the temporal is no longer valued merely as a means for the supernatural but is also recognized for its own sake, independent of its relation to the religious. True, it remains ordered to the supernatural, but in such a way that it is granted its own, autonomous existence . . . Once Thomas had recognized the intrinsic value of the profane, the way was free for a long process: . . . people tended in increasing measure to regard the profane as a self-contained, self-sufficient order.¹³

One can ask if the natural and the religious are not too strongly separated here. In any case, in a later [unpublished] syllabus, *Wijsbegeerte in de Middeleeuwen* [Philosophy in the Middle Ages] (1971/2), Smit expresses himself with greater caution and nuance:

The natural-supernatural scheme seems simple, in reality it is extremely complex: on the one hand it has a dualistic character, on the other the two terrains remain integrated in each other . . . In the acquisition of independence by worldly life (which includes thought) vis-à-vis faith, there is undoubtedly a secularizing force, but that force of secularization could not prevent the basic direction from remaining theocentric. (p. 5)

In present-day Roman Catholic thought there is the tendency, as Smit has signaled in his dissertation, to relate nature and grace more closely than was for centuries the case. This tendency was thought to be in continuity with the medieval view. An interesting specimen of this approach is Gilson's interpretation of medieval philosophy as a Christian philosophy. It was characterized by Smit as a heroic effort to overcome the boundary between the natural and supernatural.¹⁴ To penetrate deeper into the problem of Christian philosophy as such was one of the main reasons for Smit's engagement with medieval philosophy.

The last time that Smit was with us in our subdiscipline unit was in the fall of 1980. On that occasion he presented a paper entitled *Bespiegelingen over de eigen aard van de middeleeuwse wijsbegeerte*

[Reflections on the distinctive character of medieval philosophy]. Medieval philosophy, he said there, aspired to apply discursive, or rational, thought in all its purity. Of course this is implied in the enterprise of philosophy as such. But specific to medieval philosophy is its effort to bring what seems inaccessible to rational approach—the religious, the supernatural—within the reach of demonstrative reason. The preeminent example of this is the proof of God's existence. This is the rational basic form of medieval thought, the touchstone for assessing medieval philosophy. For what God is here proven?

This theme had already engaged Smit earlier, in an interfaculty lecture from the year 1959: *Het bewijs in de geschiedeniswetenschap* [Evidence in historical science]. There we read, "The question which most interests us is this: Starting from the experience of reality, does one indeed arrive at God via natural reason? Or is the distance between the reality we can experience [and God] in fact bridged not by reason but rather by faith?" Thomas concludes every proof of God's existence with words such as, "This men speak of as God." Yet is that really God, that is, the only true God? Or is it no more than the final terminus of an argument, the God of the philosophers? "To my conviction, the living God is no longer recognizable in the proofs." That the proof still has something to do with this God is solely because of the presupposition of faith from which one has started in the demonstration.¹⁵

It is noteworthy that Smit does make a distinction between the proofs. Some medieval thinkers acknowledged at least implicitly that in a decisive way faith is present in the demonstration. He thinks such an affirmation is to be found in Anselm of Canterbury's renowned ontological proof of God.¹⁶ I think that this assessment is no coincidence. Anselm lived in the eleventh century, that is to say, in the period before the rise of the universities, and he is perhaps the thinker most representative for the monastic milieu. Smit had a greater affinity for the so-called monastic theology than he did for Scholasticism. In monastic theology, he believed, the purity of the mystery, "the divine mystery," was preserved.

I shall resist the temptation to go into the discussion we had in our subdiscipline unit about Smit's paper. I should like however to emphasize that Smit's attitude towards medieval philosophy is more complex than his thesis that the proof of God's existence is the basic form of medieval thought would lead one to surmise.

In line with this thesis we find in the syllabus *Wijsbegeerte in de Middeleeuwen* the view that "the root of the neutrality postulate in Western science [lies] in the Middle Ages" (p. 4). Nevertheless, Smit felt that in Reformational circles there is a tendency to speak too easily and with too little nuance of autonomous thought in Thomas. For he perceived in medieval philosophy still another directedness, which was gradually pushed aside in the thought of the modern period: the metaphysical inquiry into the primary and foundational, the interest in the question of the origin. Smit felt a close affinity here; he saw the future of philosophy in the return to this question.

The real depth of Thomas's thought is expressed in his idea of *participation* in being. It is remarkable that Smit calls attention to it already in his dissertation, when the great renewal in Thomist studies brought about by the introduction of this theme had yet to occur. The general tendency in the Middle Ages to view things in relation to the divine is given philosophical form in Thomas in the doctrine of participation. For the issue is that of the relation between God and the world. Whatever is created has received being; it is being through participation. God *is* being, in virtue of His essence. Through participation an intimate bond is laid between divine being and creaturely being.

The first thesis appended to Smit's dissertation reads: "It is in the doctrine of participation, applied to the relation of God and creature, that the Roman Catholic view of history reaches its deepest point of disagreement with the Reformational view." The further elaboration of this thesis is found early in the first chapter of the dissertation. Roman Catholic thought understands the connection between God and created reality to be an *ontological* one, that is, a relation *within* the unity of being. But the Word-revelation "teaches us to understand the relation of the creature to the Creator as a *religious* original relation that is inaccessible to further analysis and as a *religious* directedness to or apostasy from God."¹⁷

I discussed this opposition with Smit frequently, because to my mind this is a false dilemma. The religious *dynamis* is different from the ontological, to be sure, but these statements need not necessarily exclude each other, since they are made at different levels. The way of the Christian is a pilgrimage involving the whole man. *Adoro te devote* is the opening line of a famous hymn by Thomas Aquinas that has also received a place in the *Liedboek* of the Protestant

churches in Holland. The ontological dynamics is a movement of *thought*, not separate from but likewise not in inevitable competition with the earlier movement.

I believe a shift can also be perceived in Smit himself, although his reservations about Thomas's thought, in particular his epistemology, remained fundamental. On November 23, 1973, during a lecture session, we had a discussion about the character of medieval philosophy that focussed on the notion of participation. In the course of that discussion Smit stated that it must be called a religious act on the part of Thomas that he drew God into the question of being: God is the deepest ground of being. The basis is religious.

I want especially, however, to call attention to Smit's own development as reflected in his philosophy of history. In thinking through how historical reality is intrinsically conditioned by the transcendental relation, Smit developed an ontology which in no sense abridges the religious directedness. It is about this philosophy of history, finally, that I should now like to speak.

(3) Philosophy of history

The conclusion of Smit's inaugural address, "The Divine Mystery in History," is, when all is said and done, mainly negative. For it issues in a double denial, on the one hand of the idea of the Hand of God, that is, of the fragmentary supernatural acting of God in history, and on the other hand of the restriction of historical science to intramundane relations: historical facts are constituted only in their relation to God. "It is the historian's task," he says in closing, "to rethink the philosophical problems raised by history from the viewpoint of the interlocking of intramundane and transhistorical reality."

Smit made this task his own. For years he brought his powers of thought to bear upon this problem. His publications about it, alas, remained scarce. In 1970 a stencilled exposition appeared under the title, *Beschouwingen over de geschiedenis en de tijd der geschiedenis* [English tr., ch. 14, above]. Its central ideas recur in a lecture presented during a faculty colloquium in 1977: *Historie en Metahistorie* [History and metahistory (published by the Central Interfaculty)]. On the basis of these two papers, I shall first sketch, in three points, the main contours of his view.

1. Smit would distinguish two histories. The first history (or metahistory) is what makes history as human thinking and acting, i.e., the second history, *possible*. The primary history is that things and phenomena—particularly the basic values of life such as justice, love and peace—are there. The first history is “that which is thought and realized in an original way by no man; it is thought itself, observation itself, freedom, truth, love . . . as such.”¹⁸ In short, the first history is that things and phenomena are come into being.

This “being instituted” is, as Buber says in his *Gottesfinsternis*, the ground datum of being. Things are not of themselves but have received their existence, their being-thus, from the transcendental Origin. The primary history Smit therefore desires to call the transcendental (or original) history, because it keeps things in an enduring relation to the Origin.

2. The first history is the answer to the threatening disintegration of historical reality. It establishes unity and coherence in the mutability of things. To clarify this, I borrow an example from Smit. Take one of the many modes of being, love. It is realized in history, each time differently. It varies with the diverse cultures and periods. In the Greek world eros dominates, in the early Christian era, agapé; in the courtly love of the medieval troubadours it acquires a different form than in Romanticism. In fact, love even differs from case to case. Yet even in the most extreme individualization, love retains its essential identity. What guarantees the unity of love is the meaning of love: this expresses the origin and directedness of love or, in general, of the phenomena. Things have meaning from the transcendental relation, which keeps its unity in the dynamic multiplicity.

The crucial point, however, is that this unity of meaning is in time and itself is time. Yet it must be kept in mind that this is a different time than that of the continuous and discontinuous. Smit calls it transcendental time.¹⁹ This time is one: in it, all temporal moments—past, present, and future—and all periods coincide. But at the same time, metahistorical time deploys itself in the diverse temporal moments, phases, and periods of history.

3. It seems to me not inappropriate to employ terminology of the late medieval thinker Nicholas of Cusa for the relation of the first and second histories. The second history is the unfolding (*explicatio*) of what is enfolded (*complicatio*) in the primary history. In that sense the first history depends on human action; true, it is independent of man in its origin, yet it cannot be actualized without man.

The first history has a normative character, which is to say it does not impose itself coercively but delivers itself up to human freedom and responsibility. The entire second history is a response, as it were, to the original history, a reacting to it. Generally, this reaction is a real countermovement against the integral meaning. For in the second history, anti-meaning asserts itself. The second history prefers to remain by itself—a formulation directly reminiscent of what Augustine called the “love of self” (*amor sui*), the driving force of the “earthly city” (*civitas terrena*). This struggle in and over the integral meaning makes up the content of history.

The first history breaks into it time after time; its dynamics assure that what was expelled by the countermovement returns. This returning to the transcendental history constitutes an essential characteristic of history. It is in this way that the numerous renaissances and reformations are to be understood.

This view of history has fascinated me from the outset. Why? In a recent essay, “History and Truth in Nietzsche and Heidegger,” Professor Van der Hoeven has called attention to the emptiness in many modern philosophies of history.²⁰ Unlike these, Smit’s view is far from empty. That is a result of his thinking “originally,” in the sense that he founds the things and phenomena on the relation to the Origin. Constituted by that relation, history has eminent value. It is via the first history that everything given in the origin is conveyed to man. It is via history that man retains access to the meaning of life, the basic values of existence.

Speaking of his own perspective in his lecture *Historie en Metahistorie* (p. 8) he confesses: “that [is what] I have tried to do with the things and phenomena: to go to their ground, to discover the depth-layer in which they are rooted: to trace the things, the beings, to their origin.” Anyone who has taken the trouble to follow

Smit in this endeavor will never be able to free himself from that perspective.

However, precisely because Smit has taught us to go to the "bottom" of things, I cannot refrain from posing a question or two with regard to his view of history. I will raise one that is more epistemological in character, while another is primarily ontological.

The first question concerns the initial distinction of two histories. With this distinction Smit seeks to link up with current parlance. Thus we know of the distinction between the history of facts and the philosophical interpretation of their meaning, between the history of events and the history of depth-structures, between *Historie* and *Geschichte* in the philosophy of existence.

Still, it is remarkable that Smit too proceeds by setting things apart. He says only this of it himself: "What we have done here is simply what philosophy and science normally do: we have separated what is given as an integral whole."²¹ Yet this point would be in need of fuller explanation, for as we saw, he sharply criticized precisely this analytical method of science. It breaks reality up into fragments and puts things on their own.

Here the lack of a systematic account of the formation of knowledge, of a hermeneutics, makes itself felt, and although it was purportedly in the offing, Smit was no longer able to supply it. In his paper to the conference on "Systems theory and societal problems," he poses the question: Is the split in being given with reality or is it brought about by the human subject?²² The drift of the argument is that it is the latter which must be affirmed. The integrality of reality demands integral knowing. Yet Smit does not explain whether, or how, such comprehensive knowledge is possible for (finite) man.

Left unclear as well is the exact substance of the "re-ordering of the theory of knowledge" advocated by Smit. An example. When in his "Reflections on History and the Time of History" he comes to the relation to the origin, he asks: Who/what is the origin? His answer is: God. He adds: this remains a matter of faith. "At issue is a state of affairs which, in order to be truly 'seen,' has need of the connection to faith." But does this "connection" really bring about the unity of theoretical thought and faith that Smit intended? Does it not rather leave theoretical thought unaffected?

The second question is: Is Smit able to integrate what is put asunder into the first and second histories? Here the central question is, I think: Is metahistory history? That is—I concur with a remark

once made by Sander Griffioen²³—does Smit succeed in giving the first history a genuinely historical character?

The primary history is that things and phenomena *are*. Yet—Smit himself asks in his “Reflections on History and the Time of History”—why is this called history? “Because existence implies genesis and genesis implies the origin . . . , for things . . . exist just as they have come forth from the origin.”

Does this answer suffice? Why is this being-from-the-origin called “metahistory” and not simply, in keeping with tradition, “metaphysics?” Smit would let this being be fully time, history, albeit a different history from that of the historians. In this other time the dimensions familiar to us are “superseded” as it were. The characteristic of transcendental time, as we heard, is that in it, all temporal moments—past, present, and future—coincide. This is strongly reminiscent of the way in which eternity is defined in classical metaphysics.²⁴ The first history has a “higher” way of being (of being time).

In the first history are all times. Thus Smit can arrive at the surprising pronouncement: the Renaissance *was* there already (ontologically speaking) before man’s forming and deforming activity could begin its work. However, was the Renaissance there already *as Renaissance*? That is difficult to conceive, because then the categories of “sooner” and “later” would be introduced into the first history. I cannot escape the impression that with the separation of first and second history the correlative being of both recedes into the background and a problem arises which is akin to the discussions concerning law and subject in the philosophy of the cosmomic idea.

I close. Smit published relatively little in the past fifteen years. If anywhere then here, however, quantity is certainly not the index of mastery. Allow me also to remind you here of what Plato said in the *Phaedrus* (274b-277a) about writing, his distrust of it, and his preference for oral discussion. In dialogue Smit was for many a master who taught them what philosophy is and how one ought to philosophize. Through his private seminars he inspired a wide circle of students. For what he has given us we will remember his person and work always, with profound gratitude.

Notes

*Text of a speech held during the annual spring closing conference of the Central Interfaculty of the Free University in Amsterdam, May 17, 1982; here translated from the Dutch version as published in *'Philosophia Reformata'* 47 (1982): 121-33.

1. *Christendom en Historie*, pp. 18ff.; "Crisis in het huidige Rooms-katholieke denken," *Mededelingen van de Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte* (July 1951): 7-9 [ch. 1, above].
2. *Het goddelijk geheim*, pp. 23ff. [ch. 4, above]; *Christendom en Historie*, p. 174. Cf. the syllabus *Beschouwingen over de geschiedenis en de tijd der geschiedenis* (1970), pp. 21ff. [ch. 14, above].
3. Cf. "Tendensen in de huidige filosofische en culturele situatie," in *Systeendenken en samenlevingsproblematiek*, ed. S. Strijbos (Amsterdam, 1981), p. 8.
4. Cf. "Geschiedenis en Heil," *Mededelingen van de Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte* (May, 1960): 3.
5. Cf. "Tendensen in de huidige filosofische en culturele situatie," p. 5: "Now if philosophy were (became) what in virtue of its nature it is, namely, a 'total explanation of man and world,' how its appearance and its value would change!"
6. In L.J. Rogier, et al., *De zin der geschiedenis voor geloof en rede* (Heerlen, [1951]), p. 245.
7. Cf. "Tendensen in de huidige filosofische en culturele situatie," p. 8.
8. *Historie en Metahistorie* (stencilled publication of the Central Interfaculty of the Free University, 1977), p. 9.
9. "Historisme en Antihistorisme," in *Wetenschappelijke bijdragen voor prof. dr. D.H.Th. Vollenhoven* (Franeker, 1951), pp. 171ff.
10. *Beschouwingen over de geschiedenis en de tijd der geschiedenis*, p. 11 [ch. 14, above].
11. *Cultuur en Heil* (Speech delivered at the 7th Lustrum [35th anniversary] of the Oratorical Society A.G.O.R.A. of the student union of the Free University, 10 November 1959), p. 30 [ch. 6, above].
12. Cf. *Christendom en Historie*, p. 155.
13. In *Christendom en Nationalisme* (Lustrum volume of the Gezelschap van Christelijke Historici in Nederland; The Hague, 1955), p. 103 [ch. 3, above].
This essay evoked a sharp critique from his eventual successor in the Sub-faculty of History, A.H. Bredero: "Een mythe der Middeleeuwen," *Ter Elfder Ure* 4 (1957): 40-55 and 78-88.
14. See also *Christendom en Historie*, ch. 7: "The Problem of a Christian Philosophy."
15. "Het bewijs in de geschiedeniswetenschap," in *Het bewijs in de wetenschap* (Kampen, 1959), p. 64.
16. See the syllabus "Wijsbegeerte in de Middeleeuwen," p. 4.
17. *Christendom en Historie*, p. 35; cf. p. 90.
18. *Historie en Metahistorie*, p. 7.
19. See also "De tijd der geschiedenis," *Bulletin van die Suid-Afrikaanse Vereniging vir die bevordering van Christelike Wetenskap* 12 (January 1968): 16ff. [ch. 12, above].
20. Cf. Johan van der Hoeven, "History and Truth in Nietzsche and Heidegger," in Henry Vander Goot, ed., *Life is Religion: Essays in Honor of H. Evan Runner* (St. Catharines: Paideia, 1981), pp. 61-82, esp. p. 72.

21. *Beschouwingen over de geschiedenis en de tijd der geschiedenis*, p. 13 [ch. 14, above].
22. "Tendensen in de huidige filosofische en culturele situatie," p. 8.
23. In *'t Kladschrift* (Faculty bulletin of the Central Interfaculty of the Free University in Amsterdam), academic year 1981/2, number 3, p. 33. [See today S. Griffioen, "Nabeschouwing: Meijer Cornelis Smit als mens en als geleerde," in J. Klapwijk, ed., *De eerste en tweede geschiedenis: Nagelaten geschriften van Meijer C. Smit* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1987), pp. 208-20, esp. p. 214.]
24. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* I, 15: ". . . totum esse suum simul habens. In quo ratio aeternitatis consistit"; Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae* V, prosa 6.

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