

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE AGE OF THE GODS
PROGRESS AND RELIGION
THE MAKING OF EUROPE
CHRISTIANITY AND THE NEW AGE

ESSAYS IN ORDER: NO. 8

THE
MODERN DILEMMA:
*THE PROBLEM OF EUROPEAN
UNITY*

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THE MODERN DILEMMA

I. *THE EUROPEAN TRADITION*

THE following essay mainly consists of a number of talks contributed to a series that was broadcast by the B.B.C. last autumn under the title of *The Modern Dilemma*, in connection with their general programme of talks on the forces of change that are transforming the modern world. Consequently they do not attempt to deal directly with religious or philosophical problems, save in so far as these are involved in the practical issues of the present situation. They are an answer to a definite question : How are we to adjust ourselves to the vast movement of change which is sweeping over the world, tearing the old civilisations away from their traditional moorings and threatening to wreck society both spiritually and materially ?

This movement of change was visible enough even in the last century, but it was then still possible to entertain the comfortable illusion that it was nothing else but an inevitable tide

of progress which was bearing humanity onwards to the shores of Utopia. There was no need for any effort to chart a course, while to row against the tide was mere waste of time. And so Europe and America drifted cheerfully along into the twentieth century, and then came the War and the Peace and the Russian Revolution and the Economic Crisis ; and still we continue to drift, but now unwillingly and with a growing sense of panic.

To-day our illusions have disappeared and there is a danger that a pessimistic fatalism will take the place of the old optimistic faith in the inevitability of progress. There is a general feeling that our civilisation is drifting to destruction, but nobody knows what is to be done about it. The economists and the statesmen seem equally helpless, and the only people who are confident that they can find a solution are the fanatics and the extremists—the partisans of militant nationalism or social revolution. But they are not likely to help us, since war and revolution are just the dangers that are most likely to destroy civilisation altogether. The fact that we have lost confidence in the ship's officers is no reason for entrusting its navigation to people who believe in wrecks as a matter of principle or who make a business of piracy.

Of course, if we are fatalists by conviction, there is nothing more to be said. The only dilemma is that which Herr Spengler has stated in his last essay—the choice between an honourable death and cowardly surrender.

“There is only one world-outlook that is worthy of us,” he writes, “the Choice of Achilles. . . . We are born into this time and must bravely follow the path to the destined end. There is no other way. Our duty is to hold on to the last position, without hope, without rescue, like that Roman soldier [at Pompei] who died at his post because they forgot to relieve him. That is greatness. That is what it means to be a thoroughbred. The honourable end is the one thing that can *not* be taken from a man.” *

This is very magnificent, but those of us who are not fatalists may be pardoned for refusing to regard our doom as inevitable. We have landed ourselves in our present predicament by our own acts or our own failure to act, and it is only by resolute action that we shall get out of it. It is true that we cannot undo the results of a century's neglect by an Act of Parliament or a couple of international conferences. We shall have to undertake a long

* *Man and Technics*, by Oswald Spengler, p. 104.

and laborious effort, but if we once recognise where we have gone wrong, the ultimate recovery of social control and economic prosperity is by no means impossible.

Now there is a general recognition in Europe today of the root of our present malady, however much the doctors may differ as to the immediate economic remedies to be applied. Through all the schemes for world disarmament and economic reorganisation, at Locarno and Geneva and Lausanne, two facts have become increasingly clear; first that the greatest dangers that threaten our civilisation, whether military or economic, spring from the spirit of exclusive nationalism, and, secondly, that the old national state-system is incapable of meeting the needs of the modern world. Unrestricted nationalism brought about the War, and, instead of learning the obvious lesson, the peace settlement prescribed nationalism in still larger doses as the one cure for Europe's wounds. No doubt it gave us the League of Nations also, mainly in deference to President Wilson's humanitarian idealism. But the League of Nations by its very constitution was a consecration of nationalist principles and involved the artificial crystallisation of the European state system at the moment when it was most completely disintegrated by national particularism.

No doubt it may be said that the nationalities have always existed in Europe and that their modern advance is a natural consequence of normal political development. But there is, in reality, a profound difference between the traditional European idea of nationality and the modern ideal of nationalism. In the past the nation was accepted as a social fact, and men paid it a certain natural loyalty; but they also accepted the existence of Europe or Christendom as the ultimate spiritual and cultural unity. It is true that this unity was not a political one; there was no European state. But neither was there a national state in the modern sense of the word. State, nation, and civilisation were three separate things, and a man owed something to each of them—not to mention the Church, which was also a real society and one that claimed a larger share in man's life than any of the rest. But today nationality is regarded not merely as a political fact, but as a cultural ideal. It has captured both loyalties—the simple tribal loyalty of blood and race, and the higher loyalty of civilisation and spiritual unity. By identifying itself with the state it has become strong enough to disregard the existence of any higher unity and to treat itself as the one all-inclusive society which admits of no rival and no superior.

We see the consequences of this in the changed attitude to war. In the past, no doubt, war was more common than it is today and no less ferocious, but it was less *absolute*. The whole life of a nation was not organised for the conquest of another nation. Mediæval war partook of the nature of a tournament, and we even find the attempt made to submit it to regular rules, so that men fought for three days a week and were expected to keep the "Truce of God" from Wednesday night to Monday morning under pain of excommunication! No doubt this is an extreme instance, but all through European history down to the eighteenth century, except for the wars of religion, war was treated as a practical method of deciding national differences and involved neither a schism in European culture nor any fundamental desire for the annihilation of the hostile state. It is only with the coming of the cult of the national idea that things have changed. Modern war partakes at once of the nature of a racial struggle, a crusade and a conflict of cultures, and owing to conscription and the mobilisation of public opinion it acquires an absolute and universal character which was unknown to former ages.

But these changes are not a necessary development of the modern social process. They rest

not on social realities but on cultural ideals, or rather on a change in our scheme of social values. The Middle Ages idealised Christendom, the universal society, and paid little regard to nationality. We idealise the nation and disregard the wider unity of Western civilisation. And yet that unity has not ceased to exist because we have neglected it. On the contrary, it has gone on developing, and it is today more complex and more highly organised than at any time in the past. The national cultures, of which we think so much, are, in reality, of the nature of intellectual constructions or ideal abstractions; the real culture in which and by which we live is common to the Western peoples, and its development is due to a continuous effort of intellectual and economic co-operation. Not only modern science and modern industry, but European politics and religion and literature and art all enter into this process of international cultural co-operation. No nation has developed its culture independently of the rest. Whenever a new idea or a new social movement has arisen in one part of the West, it has been communicated to the rest, and the higher the development of culture the more intense has been the international movement of cultural interchange.

Moreover, the development of national parti-

cularism in the nineteenth century was only one side of the European development. At the same time that Europe was losing its internal unity, it was entering on a vast movement of external expansion. All through the nineteenth century the Western peoples were carrying on a work of political and economic organisation that has changed the face of the globe and made the world a single community with a common economic life. Nor was this movement limited to colonisation and economic penetration. It was accompanied by a process of cultural assimilation which has led the non-European peoples to adopt Western manners and dress, Western aims and military organisation, Western institutions and ideas. It is not merely that the West African negro wears a top hat and rides a motor-bicycle, or that the Asiatic smokes cheap cigarettes and goes to the cinema. It involves a change in the foundations of the social order. Republics and parliaments on the Western model have replaced the sacred monarchies of the ancient East, and in Africa and Oceania the sons of cannibals and head-hunters are discussing the rights of man and the evils of capitalism.

Thus the position of world hegemony that Western civilisation attained in the nineteenth century has not only led to the economic

exploitation of the world for the benefit of Europe, it has also aroused the unchanging East from the slumber of centuries. It has armed the old peoples with Western weapons and inspired them with Western ideas. Henceforward it will no longer be possible for the peoples of Europe to treat the rest of the world as the background of their national rivalries and as material for the realisation of their national ambitions. They will have to meet the economic and political competition of a world which is organised not, after the European pattern, in small national states, but in great cultural units that number their population by the hundred million. It is true that these units do claim the title of nations today, because they have been taught to express themselves in the language of Western politics, and the nationalist ideology supplies a useful instrument for asserting their political and cultural claims. But what real basis of comparison can there be between, let us say, the Irish Free State and a state like Russia, that reaches from the Baltic to the Pacific and from the Arctic Circle to Persia? Or between the teeming millions of China and India, each of them a world in itself, and pocket-republics like Esthonia and Latvia. The case of India is peculiarly instructive: for the relation of the peoples of India to the Indian unity—call it

nation or culture or what you please—is entirely analogous to the relation of the peoples of Europe to the European unity. If anything, the unity of Europe is greater, for there is a far wider division of race and culture between the peoples of North-western India and those of the Dravidian South than there is between Scandinavian and Latin or between German and Slav. Oriental nationalism will be a blessing in disguise, if only it makes the Western peoples realise their fundamental community of culture and the suicidal character of their present national politics. It is obvious that a Europe that is rent by the military and economic rivalries of twenty-four separate nations can be no match for the gigantic powers of the ancient East and the New West, when once these have acquired an economic and military organisation proportionate to their size and population. Unfortunately the danger from without only provokes the conservative elements in the West to fresh outbursts of militant nationalism, while the more liberal and progressive elements meet it with an appeal to international idealism and the saving merits of the League of Nations. But there can be no true international world order without an international world culture that does not as yet exist, while the League of Nations, valuable as it may be as a medium of

international relations, is quite inadequate to deal with the conflict of civilisations. A system which treats China and Belgium on the same footing, as equal or even comparable social units, ignores the very existence of cultural divisions and cultural unity and consequently fails to represent sociological realities.

Any genuine world order must be intercultural as well as international. It must recognise the existence of the five or six great world cultures and base its organisation upon them. But the world is not yet ripe for such an order. Whatever order and unity the world already possesses is due to the hegemony of Europe, and if that hegemony disappears, it means not world order but world anarchy. The internationalist assumes that when once the pressure of European imperialism and economic exploitation is removed, the non-European peoples will spontaneously carry on the work of world organisation according to the best traditions of Western democracy and humanitarianism. Unfortunately we have no reason to make any such assumption. The oriental peoples, cast adrift from their traditional cultural moorings and equipped with all the resources of modern industry and modern armaments, will be more exposed than ever to the dangers of militarism and economic

exploitation. We have seen the firstfruits of this process in the military anarchy of China and the economic and military imperialism of Japan. No doubt the internationalist admits the need of some form of control and realises the need of the more backward peoples for protection both against themselves and against their more powerful neighbours. They dream, like Mr. Wells, of an organised rule of Humanity, embodied in a world government, to protect the weak against the strong. But the realisation of this dream seems as distant as the millennium, and meanwhile there is no reason to suppose that the negro or the Polynesian would stand to gain anything by exchanging the rule of the British Colonial Office for that of the Egyptians or the Japanese.

The fact is that the internationalist is an unconscious imperialist, and conceives his world state in the form of an idealised and universalised British Empire. And this is natural enough, since imperialism and internationalism are parallel movements and both alike are expressions of the modern world expansion of Western culture and Western ideas. Where the internationalist is wrong is not in his desire to purge the Western movement towards world organisation of national selfishness and economic exploitation, but in his belief that it can be

entirely separated from its historic connection with European culture and based on abstract ideals without any detriment to its effectiveness. All the living forces that are moving the world today, whether scientific, economic or political, have their roots in European culture and would wither if that culture were to break down. Even the United States, which alone stand on an equality with Western Europe in material and technical organisation, are not in a position to take the place of Europe and carry on the work of world organisation. For it is not merely that the world is indebted to Europe for the scientific inventions and the economic technique that have changed the external conditions of human life ; it also owes to her the ideals of political liberty and social justice that have brought a ferment of change into the stationary societies of Russia and the East. Even the bitterest enemies of Europe borrow from Europe the weapons and the ideas that they turn against her.

But if Europe is, after all, a benefactor to humanity, why is not humanity more grateful ? The answer is obvious enough. Western civilisation is morally discredited, and even the Western peoples themselves no longer possess any faith in its spiritual value. National particularism has deprived Western culture of

its moral unity and its common spiritual ideals and has left it naked before the world as a purely material effort of economic exploitation and predatory imperialism. It has to meet the revolt of the subject peoples and the internal danger of social unrest and revolution with no spiritual resources and no higher appeal than self-interest and practical expediency.

The ancient world passed through a similar crisis in the age of the Civil Wars that marked the decline of the Roman Republic. Then also the power of the West was threatened alike by the revolt of the oriental world and by its own disunity and social discontent. Rome, like modern Europe, had conquered and organised the world and lost its own soul in the process. The ancient Roman, no less than the Victorian Englishman, had been a man of strict, though narrow, moral ideas, who had inherited from his peasant ancestors an ideal of duty and devotion to public interests under the sanction of traditional religion. He was firmly convinced of his moral superiority to the clever and immoral Greeks and the idle and superstitious Orientals whom it was his business to conquer. A type like the elder Cato with his forbidding appearance—"all teeth and red hair," as a contemporary observed

—his moral censoriousness, his sense of duty and his devotion to money-making, has much more in common with the makers of the Industrial Revolution than with a modern Italian or an ancient Greek. But it was the fate of this society, like our own, to destroy the foundations on which its strength rested. The old Roman virtues withered away when the peasant republic became a capitalist oligarchy, based on a mercenary army and a horde of tax-collectors and money-lenders. The small holdings of the citizen farmers were absorbed by the great estates of the new nobility, worked by cheap slave labour imported from abroad, while their former owners drifted away to become mercenaries or to join the ranks of the urban proletariat who lived on State doles and were ready material for revolutionary agitators. The successors of the Catonian tradition were millionaires who accumulated vast fortunes by the exploitation of the subject peoples—like that model republican, Brutus, who forced the cities of Cyprus to borrow money from him at a rate of 48 per cent. in order to pay the war indemnities that had been levied on them. Even Cicero, who represented all that was best in the liberal republican tradition, was not ashamed to defend the cause of "those most worthy and distin-

guished people, the financiers * and to advocate a war "in defence of national glory, public revenue, and private investments," with a naive effrontery that even a modern politician might envy.

This orgy of exploitation called forth an equally violent explosion of revolutionary feeling. It expressed itself in the revolt of the subject oriental peoples and the Italian allies, in the risings of the slaves, and above all in the movement of social revolution which attempted to destroy the rule of the oligarchy by the confiscation of the great estates and the proscription and massacre of the capitalists themselves. Thus in the first century B.C. Roman society was faced by a revolutionary crisis, complicated by the rebellion of the subject nationalities and the horrors of class war. It seemed as though society would tear itself to pieces, and that the complete collapse of ancient civilisation was at hand. If the Roman Empire had fallen in the first century B.C., instead of five hundred years later, the history of the

* "*Publicani, homines honestissimi et ornatissimi*" *Pro lege Manilia*, vii, 17. He goes on to point out that Roman credit is dependent on the safety of their investments in Asia, and that a military failure would produce a collapse of the money-market at Rome. "*Haec fides atque haec ratio pecuniarum, quae Romae, quae in foro versatur, implicata est cum illis pecuniis, Asiaticis et cohaeret; ruere illa non possunt, ut haec eodem labefacta motu concidant.*"

world would have been changed, and European civilisation, as we know it, would never have come into existence. But she succeeded in surmounting her difficulties at the cost of immense effort and suffering, and thanks to the Augustan achievement the Roman organisation of the world became the basis of a new order on which the whole later development of Western civilisation has been based.

Modern Europe stands today very much in the same position as that of the Roman Empire in the first century B.C. Like Rome it has conquered and organised the world. By destroying the old tribal separatism and breaking down the barriers between East and West, it has laid the foundations of an incipient world order. But its work, like that of Rome, has been vitiated by its lack of spiritual purpose and by selfishness and economic exploitation. Our civilisation stands in no less need of moral and social reconstruction than that of the ancient world in the time of Augustus, though the task of restoration is infinitely more difficult than it was then. Augustus attempted to save civilisation by a return to the traditional religious and social foundations on which the life of the Roman family and the Roman state had rested. He transformed Roman imperialism from a destructive and predatory

militarism into a constructive power that gave peace and prosperity to the ancient world for more than two hundred years. But though he succeeded in restoring the moral prestige of the Roman Empire, it failed to recover its spiritual vitality. A genuine return to the peasant simplicity of the old Roman religion was impossible, and the spiritual salvation for which the world waited was destined to arise not from imperial Rome, but from a remote and despised oriental province. Nevertheless it is a mistake to regard the religious policy of Augustus as a mere piece of political expediency. If his attempt was ultimately a failure, that was due more to the intrinsic poverty of the tradition to which it appealed rather than to lack of conviction and of high motives. Nor was it entirely fruitless, for it inspired the highest spiritual expression of the Roman genius. After the arid puritanism of Cato and the scientific pessimism of Lucretius, there comes the profoundly spiritual and catholic genius of Virgil, who embodied the ideals of the Augustan movement in one of the world's greatest religious poems.

The task of European restoration is at once more difficult and more hopeful. Rome at least possessed the materials of a political unity and the unified military control with which

to realise it. But we have no political European unity and no hope of creating it by the direct means of a centralisation of military power. If Europe ever achieves political unity it will be as an international federation, not as a centralised empire; and this can only come about by the slow and difficult process of social and economic co-operation.

But on the other hand, Europe possesses an infinitely richer spiritual heritage than that of ancient Rome. The Roman world empire was an artificial unity with no common spiritual tradition behind it, whereas modern Europe rests on the foundation of an age-long community of religion and of intellectual culture. If we could recover that tradition and become as conscious of our European community as we now are of our national particularism, international co-operation would cease to appear as an insoluble problem and would become natural and almost inevitable. This is why I have insisted in the following chapters that the problem of Europe is fundamentally a spiritual one. The true foundation of European unity is to be found not in political or economic agreements, but in the restoration of the spiritual tradition on which that unity was originally based.

But is this possible? There are many who

regard it as no less hopeless than was the attempt of Augustus to bring back the urban plutocracy of imperial Rome to the religion of Numa. The past, they say, is dead, and it would be better for us, instead of grubbing in the cemetery of history, to look for light to the new world of scientific organisation and mass civilisation that is coming to birth in Moscow and Detroit. But it is one thing to say that we cannot return to the past, and another to maintain that a society cannot return to the spiritual tradition on which it was based. The former is a truism ; the latter is a fallacy that history has refuted again and again. A culture that loses its spiritual tradition does not become younger or more vital ; it merely becomes spiritually impoverished. Europe has not escaped from its past, for nationalism is itself a proof of the hold of the past on the European mind. What has taken place has been a concentration on certain elements in that tradition to the detriment of the rest. European culture has been undergoing a process of secularisation and materialisation which not only has destroyed its unity but ultimately threatens it with barbarism, since it means a return to the ethics of the tribe, and the reduction of democracy to mass-dictatorship and of science to a kind of utilitarian magic. It is not surprising that such a civilisation should

have become discredited and should lose its hold on the allegiance of the individual conscience. But what has been discredited is not the old Christian European tradition, but the modern secularised nationalist compromise that is neither Christian nor European.

If we consider the modern movements of revolt, however hostile they may seem to be to the spiritual traditions of European culture, we shall see that they are not primarily directed against those traditions, but rather against a movement that was itself a revolt from them. Thus Socialism revolted against the materialism of nineteenth-century bourgeois civilisation, not against the Christian social order that it never knew. Wellsian Internationalism is not an attack upon Europe, but upon the nationalism that has destroyed the European unity. And the moral rebellion of D. H. Lawrence is directed not against Christian morals, but against the post-Christian ethical compromise, which is an illegitimate substitute for them.

The ordinary man has not consciously denied the Christian tradition ; he has simply lost sight of it in his concentration on material progress. His loss of faith is due not so much to a change of belief as to a change of attention—a turning away of the mind from spiritual to temporal things which causes a blunting of the

spiritual perceptions and a darkening of the soul. We have attempted to combine a material organisation of the world, more scientific and elaborate than any previous civilisation has known, with a disregard of spiritual values and a denial of the need for spiritual order. The real significance of the present crisis is that it marks the breakdown of this attempt, a failure which every Christian must regard as the obvious and inevitable conclusion of a development that was inherently self-destructive. And the only way by which our civilisation can recover its balance and stability is by the restoration of the spiritual element that is no less essential to modern culture than it has been to the civilisations of the past.

But, even when the need for this spiritual restoration is admitted, there are still difficulties to be met from the side of the representatives of the Christian tradition itself. The social disintegration of the European unity was accompanied, and even preceded, by a process of religious disintegration. For centuries religion has been a cause of division rather than the centre of unity, and the development of national particularism was associated with the development of religious particularism, which manifested itself in the growth of sectarianism and the formation of national churches. Even

Catholicism, which by its very nature is universal and which by its traditions is bound up with the ideal of European unity, has not been immune from these influences. For though the Church as a whole has preserved its supernatural character and its spiritual universality throughout the centuries of division, the particular Catholic peoples have often made their religion a mark of their nationality and a justification of their racial and historical prejudices.

And thus we have Catholic imperialists who regard their wars of national aggrandisement as crusades for the defence of the Catholic culture ; and there are the Catholic nationalists who dream of the creation of a national culture which will be an island of Catholic civilisation in an apostate world.

Far more fundamental than these, however, is the religious absolutism that rejects any compromise with modern civilisation and puts its hope in a purely religious solution that transcends all temporal forms. The religious absolutist is prepared to agree with the secularist that modern civilisation has gone too far to turn back, but so much the worse for modern civilisation. Europe is under sentence of death, but Christianity will not perish with it. It will turn to the new peoples and find fresh oppor-

tunities for its spiritual mission in the civilisations of the future.

Now it is true, as Maritain insists so forcibly in the first of these essays, that Christianity is supercultural as well as supernational, and that it cannot identify itself with the fortunes of any particular civilisation. In principle, no doubt, there was nothing to forbid an entirely different development to that which has actually taken place. The Church might have taken root in the East, instead of the West. St. Peter might have founded his see at Purushapura or Pataliputra in place of Rome; Kanishka might have played the part of a Constantine; and the Catholic philosophy might have borrowed its intellectual tools from the Vedanta instead of from Aristotle. Actually, however, Providence decided otherwise. It chose Rome instead of India as the temporal vehicle of its purpose and caused Catholicism to express itself through the medium of Western cultural forms. And if today these forms seem moribund, this does not mean that Christianity must leave the derelict edifice of European culture and make its home elsewhere. If Christianity is defeated in Europe it is not likely to be victorious in Russia or America or China. For the other world cultures are no less spiritually derelict than Europe—indeed they are even weaker and more open

to the invasion of anti-spiritual forces, as we see in Russia today.

The crisis of Europe is the crisis of the world. In Maritain's words, "A new world is emerging from the obscure chrysalis of history," * but it is only in and through Europe that this new world can realise itself. Europe has been led, as it were in spite of itself, to break down the barriers that divided peoples and cultures and and to sow broadcast through the world the seeds of a new order. It is true that without spiritual leadership this movement may cause the enslavement of mankind to economic machinery and thus produce an inhuman and anti-spiritual order which is nothing but a kingdom of Antichrist. But it is equally capable of serving a higher end. The material organisation of the world by European ideas and Western science is a necessary preparation for that spiritual unification of humanity which it is the mission of Christianity to accomplish.

More than a century ago Joseph de Maistre, the last representative of the old pre-nationalist Europe, an exile in the city of Peter the Great and Lenin, discerned with almost prophetic insight the meaning of the revolutions that had destroyed his own happiness and broken down the traditional order of European life which he

* *Religion and Culture*, p. 55.

valued so highly. France and England, he writes, in spite of their mutual hostility, have been led to co-operate in the same work. While the French Revolution sowed the seeds of French culture throughout Europe, England has carried European culture into Asia and has caused the works of Newton to be read in the language of Mahomet. The whole of the East is yielding to the ascendancy of Europe, and events have given England 15,000 leagues of common frontiers with China and Thibet. "Man in his ignorance often deceives himself as to ends and means, as to forces and resistance, as to instruments and obstacles. Sometimes he tries to cut down an oak with a pocket-knife and sometimes he throws a bomb to break a reed. But Providence never wavers and it is not in vain that it shakes the world. Everything proclaims that we are moving towards a great unity which, to use a religious expression, we must hail from afar. We have been grievously and justly broken, but if such eyes as mine are worthy to foresee the divine purpose, we have been broken only to be made one." *

* de Maistre, *Soirées de Saint Petersburg*, 2^{ème} Entretien, *ad fin.*

II. THE FORCES OF CHANGE

THE movement of change which has transformed civilisation so profoundly during the last hundred years has been accepted by the modern mind in a spirit of whole-hearted optimism that hoped all things and feared nothing. And, indeed, it seemed for a time as though this optimism was justified, and that there was no limit to the increase of material prosperity and to the advance of scientific knowledge and political freedom. There are, however, ominous signs in the world today that we have allowed the forces of change to get out of control and to become a positive danger to the life of our civilisation. Life necessarily implies change, but this does not mean that change always implies life. There is always a limit to the amount of change of which an organism is capable, and this is no less true of the social than of the physical organism. A species may adapt itself to a slight change in climate and may flourish the more for it, but if the change is very great a whole series of species may become extinct and new ones may take

their place. And, as a rule, the more specialised and elaborate is the type the more easily does it succumb to change, while the more plastic and adaptable forms of life survive. The lordly mammoth passed away with the ending of the glacial period, while humbler forms of life increased and multiplied.

In the same way human cultures or forms of social life develop and enrich themselves by cultural change, but if the change is too great or too sudden or the culture too stereotyped and fixed, change brings death instead of progress.

It is not a question of racial deterioration but one of social failure. The Red Indians were probably as fit and fine a type of man as has ever existed, but their culture could not compete with the more highly organised form of civilisation of the European colonists. And so they vanished with the buffalo and the open prairie before the plough and the rifle and the railway.

Are we Europeans to be the Red Indians of the next age? The question seems absurd, for does not all this modern movement of change belong to us and make for our power and wealth? "Is not this Babylon, the great, that I have built by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty?" It is true that

we are in no danger of being wiped out by some more civilised people, as were the Red Indians; but it is not only primitive peoples that are the victims of change. The most civilised people of antiquity, the Greeks, failed, not because their civilisation became unprogressive, but because it was too complex and refined. Their standards of life, their ideals of civic and individual liberty and enjoyment, were too high to stand the strain of political competition, and they went down before ruder and harder peoples like the Macedonians and the Romans, who asked less of life and got more.

And in our case there is a real danger that the forces of change may be too much for us, and that our civilisation may fail to adapt itself to the new conditions. The very fact that we were the leaders in the movement of progress has led to a haphazard and disorderly development, in which there was plenty of individual initiative but very little attempt at social direction. Every new discovery was exploited for all it was worth, but, as a rule, only for what it was worth in hard cash. And so we got the hideous and unhealthy factory towns of the industrial era, the wholesale destruction of natural resources and the defacement of the countryside. Modern man suddenly gained power and wealth such as his predecessor had hardly dreamed of, and, instead of using it

to create a Utopia, he built a slum and a factory and a cinema and a giant hotel.

The consequence of this state of things is that the machinery of modern civilisation has got out of control and threatens to destroy its makers. It is like Mrs. Shelley's story of the inventor who devoted his life to making an artificial man, and the result was a monster which pursued its creator with unrelenting hatred until it had killed him, because he had made it ugly, unhappy and without a soul. In the same way our mechanical civilisation is a danger to us because it lacks a soul. We created it to serve our immediate needs, above all the needs of wealth. We never intended to sacrifice to it our personal liberty or our tradition of culture or our spiritual ideals. But now it has grown so powerful that it threatens to absorb the whole of life and to make the individual man nothing but a cog in the economic machine.

There are two obvious ways of dealing with this problem, the way of the reactionary and that of the revolutionary. There are the teachers like Ruskin and William Morris and Tolstoi, who regard the whole process of material progress as a gigantic mistake and who urge us to save our souls by scrapping machinery and going back to a simple life on the land. But though such a solution might possibly be

applied, as Mr. Gandhi believes, to a society like that of India, which is largely mediæval in its traditions and standards of life, it is impossible to conceive of its being adopted by the peoples of Western Europe, who have grown up under the new conditions and who would be forced to return to the standards of life of an Oriental coolie, if they were deprived of the new machinery of economic and industrial life.

The other alternative seems at first sight more practicable, since it does not reject change, but accepts it whole-heartedly and without reserve. It maintains the need for a complete break with the past and the creation of a new social order entirely based on the mechanical organisation of life. Anything that stands in the way of this—religion, personal liberty, traditions of culture or moral standards—is to be ruthlessly thrown into the scrap-heap, and we are to make a fresh start without the inheritance of the past.

But in spite of the superficial plausibility of this solution, it is in reality even less possible than that of the reactionaries. For it is no more possible for society to escape from the inheritance of the past, than it is for the individual. A man can change his way of life and adapt himself to new circumstances, but he cannot become a new person ; and the same

is true of societies and civilisations. Nor is it possible to construct a purely material civilisation based only on economic factors, for every society is essentially a human order, and it must take account of the facts of human nature no less (but rather far more) than of the facts that are external to human life.

But, it may be objected, is not this revolutionary solution actually being put into practice today in Russia, and has it not succeeded in reconstructing society on a purely economic basis? Certainly the Communist *régime* has a great deal in common with the solution that I have just described. It has attempted to break with the past and to create a new mass civilisation based on the machine order, and it has ruthlessly destroyed all the individual liberties and the social and religious traditions that stand in the way of the fulfilment of its ideal. But for all that the Communist order is not a purely material one. It carried through the revolution in the name not of material efficiency, but of moral ideals—such as social justice and equality. It bases itself on a set of dogmas that are by no means purely economic, and it seeks to mould the economic order into conformity with these principles. In fact, as Mr. Bernard Shaw has recently insisted, the Communist attitude to life is religious rather

than economic, and it is in the spirit of religious fanatics not of business organisers that the Communists have broken with the past and instituted a new social order.

Thus the Russian experiment, far from abandoning society to the unrestricted forces of change, is really an attempt to restore order on the basis of a definite creed; a new Communist orthodoxy has taken the place of the old religious orthodoxy that was the foundation of Holy Russia. The old order had been undermined by the influence of Western culture and in the nineteenth century Russia was a strange blend of an imported foreign civilisation, which had no roots in the life of the people, with the old semi-oriental traditions of Byzantine-Slavonic culture. Today Russia is once more independent of the West, and looks on the unorthodoxy of capitalist Europe with the same aversion that the old Russia felt for its religious heterodoxy. Communism has restored the unity and self-sufficiency of Russian culture, though the cost has been a tremendous one.

But the situation in Western Europe is essentially different. Here there is no clash of cultures and no question of the introduction of a new civilisation from outside. Here the only civilisation is our own civilisation, and if it fails

we fail with it. But on the other hand we cannot rest on our achievements and allow our civilisation to drift. We also need to return to first principles and to recover unity of social purpose. But our task is constructive, not revolutionary. We cannot abandon either our spiritual traditions or our new system of material organisation. They are both of them essential elements of the Western tradition, and they must be reconciled and co-ordinated with one another if our civilisation is to survive.

Nevertheless there can be no question which of these two elements is the more important. The new material organisation of the world is a great achievement, but the civilisation that created it is greater still, and the creative power in that, as in every civilisation, is essentially a spiritual one. No doubt civilisation is in a sense dependent on the economic process, just as a man of genius depends on his dinner. But economic causes do not create civilisations, any more than good food makes great men. In both cases greatness is a spiritual quality, and has its source in the intelligence and the will of the individual and the society. A civilisation lives by its faith in its ideals no less than by its wealth and its material organisation. Its creative power is intimately related to the

strength of its spiritual tradition. When a society is united by its allegiance to common principles and its devotion to a common purpose, it is strong ; and when this spiritual unity disappears, the society is decadent.

At the present time Western civilisation has lost faith in itself and in its ideals, and that is the chief source of its weakness. In the last century the European believed that the cause of Western culture was the cause of progress and humanity, and this conviction of the absolute superiority of European civilisation was so strong that it gave him the power to impose his standards on the rest of the world. Today all this is changed. We no longer believe in ourselves, and consequently nobody else believes in us. The American despises Europe for its poverty and inefficiency, while the Oriental hates it for its wealth and power.

No doubt this change is due in part to a natural reaction from the rapid expansion of the last century and from the economic exploitation that it often produced. But this would have been far less severe if it had not been accompanied by a wave of spiritual discouragement in Europe itself and a positive disintegration of Western ideals. Since the war Europe has lost not only its military and economic supremacy, it has lost to an even

greater extent its old position of spiritual leadership. The war did indeed fail to destroy European civilisation, but it destroyed its internal cohesion. The fall of the great military monarchies did nothing to weaken nationalism. On the contrary, the new states have done their best to cut themselves off from their neighbours by tariffs, and armaments and nationalist propaganda, although their increase in number and their decrease in size make these attempts a greater danger to the peace and prosperity of Europe than ever before.

And in reaction the idealists have despaired of Europe and turned to cosmopolitanism for a solution. But cosmopolitanism affords no real basis for a constructive social ideal. It assumes the existence of a world civilisation, and as yet no such thing as a world civilisation exists. What we call world civilisation is in reality only the world influence of European civilisation. The opposition between nationalism and internationalism, cosmopolitanism and particularism, is a false dilemma. There exists a third alternative—the European ideal. What we need at the present day is not a nationalism that denies the spiritual community of the peoples of Europe, or a cosmopolitanism which disregards the existence of historical realities and cultural traditions, but a European

consciousness and a spirit of European patriotism.

No doubt some people will say that European civilisation is just as much an abstraction as world civilisation, and if we reject the one we must reject the other. Because Europe is not a state, they refuse to recognise that it is a true society. As Germany and Italy were nations before the German Empire or the Italian Kingdom existed, so Western Europe is a social organism, though it has no political organisation. In fact, Europe existed before the nations, and it is only in and through Europe that the nations have come into being. Europe is not a natural unity, like Australia; it is the result of a long process of historical evolution and social development. It is essentially a spiritual community, a community of peoples who share the same traditions, who have been formed by the same cultural influences and who have followed common ideals. All the Western nations have a common spiritual history which has its roots in Christianity and in the traditions of classical civilisation, and even the movements most closely associated with particular peoples—the Italian Renaissance, the German Reformation, the French Revolution and the English Industrial Movement—have not been limited to the nations that produced them, as would

have been the case if the nations were independent cultural unities, but have become international movements that affected the life of the whole European culture-complex.

Even the wars between European peoples are not a denial of European unity; they are either religious wars, like those of the Reformation and even those of the French Revolution, or else civil wars due to the attempt of some great power—the Spain of Philip II., the France of Louis XIV. and Napoleon, or the Germany of William II.—to attain supremacy in Europe.

And in the same way the present crisis through which we are passing is not a proof of the non-existence of European unity. It is rather a sign of the need for a new integration of European culture. It is possible that it may not involve the death or the disintegration of Europe, but may be a crisis of transition towards a higher form of unity. The passing of the cumbrous organisation of the old military empires involves the need for some closer and more co-operative system of international relations. The sense of this need is shown in the League of Nations, though the League of itself has no power to provide a solution. We do, at least, realise today that our social and economic problems can be solved only by common action; and that is something. But

we do not at present possess either the common faith or the spiritual leadership that are necessary to overcome national particularism and class selfishness. What we need is nothing less than a spiritual revival of European culture: without this its political and economic revival is almost impossible. It is no use indulging in speculations about the coming of such a revival. The future is in the hand of God and in the heart of man, and both are hidden. All that we can do is to try to understand what is the nature of the spiritual traditions that have made Europe what it is, what are the principles that have governed its past development, and what are the ideals that it must preserve if it is to be true to itself and to retain its spiritual vitality.

Now there are four main traditions that have gone to the making of European culture and that distinguish it from every other civilisation that the world has seen:

(i) In the first place there is the Christian tradition. Christianity has not only given Europe its religious beliefs and its spiritual ideals; it has actually been the spiritual force that created the unity of Western culture. Before the coming of Christianity there was no Europe. It was the Christian Church that fused the peoples of the barbaric West into the

social unity of Christendom. Europe began as Christendom and it remains Christendom still, though it is a Christendom divided, secularised and weakened by intellectual and moral disorder. But for all that Christianity remains the religion of the West, not only because it still retains the allegiance of a large number of religious people, but because it has entered so deeply into Western thought that it has in a great measure inspired the moral and social ideals of modern secular culture. A complete break with the Christian tradition would mean not only the loss of our specifically religious ideal, but a fundamental change in the whole spirit of Western culture.

(ii.) This is particularly evident in the case of the second distinctive element of European culture—the humanitarian tradition. This has tended during the last century and a half to replace religion as the dominant social and moral ideal of Western civilisation. It inspired the great movement of social reform in the last century which put an end to the slave trade and to so many other forms of social injustice, and it is mainly responsible for the element of moral idealism in the Socialist and Democratic movements and in the modern international movement. It is, however, intimately related to the Christian tradition, since it is based essentially

on the Christian idea of the spiritual value of the individual personality and on the Christian ideals of altruism and of devotion to the service of the poor and the oppressed.

(iii.) In the third place, there is the scientific tradition, which, during the last two or three centuries, has acquired a dominant position in European culture. It is the scientific tradition that has created the new industrial and technological order that seems destined to transform the world. In fact, science has had such a revolutionary effect on the modern world that we are apt to regard it as something alien from the rest of our culture—a transcendent power coming from outside to destroy all the traditional standards of culture and to make a new world. We must, however, remember that the scientific tradition is itself the product of Western culture. If the modern world is inconceivable without science, science is inconceivable without the European tradition. The creators of modern science—Galileo and Newton and Lavoisier and Faraday—were all of them typical representatives of Western culture, and their work is an integral part of the European movement of thought. We cannot even be sure that the world which science has made will be as favourable to the production of scientific genius as the world that made science. For

science, after all, is a spiritual activity, and it cannot be turned out of a machine.

(iv.) Finally, our civilisation has a distinctly political tradition. It has inherited from the Græco-Roman world the classical conceptions of law and citizenship and political freedom, and it has embodied these ideals in its culture and institutions to a greater extent than has any other civilisation. Today for the first time in the world's history we are witnessing the attempt to extend these ideals to the entire population, so that every man and every woman will possess the full rights of citizenship and take a more or less active part in political life. This new democratic ideal is making its influence felt in every part of the world, but it belongs above all to Europe and America, and it has its roots in the old European tradition of citizenship on the one hand, and, on the other, in the humanitarian ideal to which I have already referred.

These are, I believe, the most distinctive elements of the European tradition, and thus it seems that Europe stands above all for four ideals — the Christian ideal, the ideal of humanity, the scientific ideal, and the ideal of democracy.

The problem that we have got to consider is how far these ideals retain their vitality in the modern world and how far they are consistent

with one another and with modern conditions. Can modern civilisation remain faithful to these ideals and apply them anew to the needs of the present situation? Or must we abandon them in whole or in part, and look elsewhere for new ideals and new gods to take their place?

III. *DEMOCRACY*

OF all the elements of the European tradition democracy is the one that is most difficult to appreciate in an objective and impartial spirit. It has been surrounded by an atmosphere of loose thinking which has obscured its true nature and has degraded it until it has become an empty catchword that covers every kind of political sentimentality and falsehood.

And yet it stands, none the less, for an element in European life that is of permanent value and importance. It is the most characteristic expression of European political ideals, and if we attempt to separate it from its historical roots in European culture and to identify it with an abstract ideal that had its first conception in the mind of Rousseau, we shall inevitably misunderstand both democracy and Europe. There are two mistaken views of democracy, both of which have caused infinite misunderstandings in the past and which even today are not altogether extinct. One of these regards democracy as a crude destructive force that cares nothing for the finer values of civilised life, that is indif-

ferent to culture and scientific knowledge and seeks only to satisfy the vanity and greed of the masses. This is the fallacy of the reactionaries. And, on the other hand, there is the ideal of democracy that is founded on false belief in the perfectibility of human nature. It regards all the evils of society as due to the misdeeds of kings and governments and believes that if once the power is put into the hands of the common people everything will go well, every one will be happy, and the world will be transformed into a Utopia.

In reality, democracy is neither the enemy of culture, nor a cure for all its ills of humanity. It is simply the culmination of the old European tradition of social and political freedom that has always been one of the essential elements in Western culture.

The basis of democracy is the idea of public law and civic rights which Europe inherited from Greece and Rome, and which is almost absent in Oriental societies however advanced they may be in civilisation. Consequently the fundamental opposition is not that between democracy and aristocracy, but that between citizenship and despotism. In the East the individual is nothing and the state is everything. It is a divine power—the Shadow of God on Earth, as the Sultan of Turkey used to call him-

self—and any claim to independent rights against that power on the part of the individual is inconceivable.

But in the West a man has his rights, even against the state. The whole history of Europe is the story of the vindication of these rights and the affirmation of human freedom, whether by classes or communities or individuals, from the English barons at Runnymede, the free cities of the Middle Ages, the Swiss peasants and the English House of Commons, down to the final affirmation of the Rights of Man by the fathers of the United States and the founders of the French Republic. It was inevitable that these rights should begin as the rights of a privileged class, and gradually be extended to the rest of the community. For unfortunately, they are not the natural birthright of the human race, as the early Liberals used to believe. They are the culmination of a long process of social development—the flower of an advanced civilisation. The free man who was the ideal of the eighteenth-century democrats was not a mere nobody; he was an ideal type—no less ideal than the mediæval knight or the Renaissance gentleman, and in the same line of descent. In fact, the ideal was first launched by aristocrats of the type of Alfieri and Mirabeau, and the English Whigs and the Virginian planters. The

famous lines of Burns: "The rank is but the guinea stamp, a man's a man for a' that," do not mean that *quality* doesn't matter; on the contrary, they mean that quality is so important that it far outweighs the conventional labels that society has substituted for it.

Thus, paradoxical as it may appear, the democratic ideal has its origin in the aristocratic principle. In fact, Western democracy is essentially *aristocracy for all*. It was just the same with the Greeks. Greek democracy was not a proletariat; it had its origin in the extension to the majority of the civic rights that had originally been the jealously guarded privilege of a small body of patricians. Athens, the greatest of Greek democracies, was in reality one of the most aristocratic communities that has ever existed.

And this ideal, whether ancient Greek or modern European, has nothing in common with the Oriental ideal of the absolute state. The free man has no place in the latter; it is the impersonal power of the community, whether embodied in an absolute monarch, or a priesthood or a democracy, that is all in all. Of course, this ideal is also capable of acquiring a popular form. The absolute state may represent the interests of the whole people rather than of a privileged class; it may even, as in

Communist Russia, become the instrument of a dictatorship of the proletariat. But this does not make it democratic in the Western sense. Bolshevism is a popular version of Tsarism, just as democracy is aristocracy for all. The essential note of democracy is the recognition of the dignity and the rights of the individual citizen. And thus it is very closely associated with the traditions of humanism and of humanitarianism, of which I have spoken above. In fact, apart from humanitarianism democracy becomes an empty and meaningless form. The political rights of democracy presuppose the moral rights of humanity, and if the humanitarian movement had not inspired Western society with an enthusiasm for social justice and for the cause of the weak and the oppressed, modern democracy would never have come into existence.

But in spite of the superiority of the democratic ideal—at least to the Western mind—we must admit that it is much harder to realise than the ideal of the absolute state. The despotic *régime* is the one that has succeeded, at least in the past. And even today, the vast and rapid advance of democracy should not blind us to the fact that the opposite ideal is still vigorous and that in some respects it is once more gaining ground at the expense of democracy.

The chief cause of this is not political but economic. As Mr. Leonard Woolf has pointed out, it is the problem of economic equality that is the real crux of democracy. You can give nominal political rights to every citizen without much difficulty, but when you attempt to put into practice the full programme of real democracy—that is to say, to give every citizen equal opportunities of happiness and an equal share in the good things of life—you are faced with a serious dilemma. Complete economic equality seems attainable only by state socialism, and any thorough-going system of socialism seems to involve, as in Russia, the omnipotence of the state and all the dangers of a return to despotism and the negation of individual rights which that implies. The democratic ideal in its economic aspect is neither that of pure individualism nor that of pure state socialism ; it is the ideal of a free co-operative economy in which every man has control over his own life and possesses an economic foundation for his social liberty. In other words, economic democracy means capitalism for all : it means an extension of the rights of property to every citizen rather than the abolition of private property in the interests of the state. It is inconsistent with the individualistic society in which a small number of very rich men control the lives of the great

masses of their fellow citizens ; but it is also inconsistent with the communist society in which the economic life of the individual is even more completely controlled by the machinery of an all-powerful state.

We must, in fact, recognise (and it is very seldom recognised) that the idea of equality is not necessarily or exclusively democratic. Pure democracy leads to equality, but so does pure despotism. And as a matter of fact, it is easier to attain the negative ideal of a dead level of equality in equal servitude than to achieve the positive ideal of equality in freedom and fulness of life.

But, as I have said, democracy is aristocracy for all ; it is levelling up, not levelling down. The true democrat does not wish to attain equality by lowering the cultural standard of society and by reducing everyone to a drab uniformity of existence. He desires the richest and fullest life that is possible. In the communist Utopia, there is no room for a Wordsworth or a Beethoven. The artist, no less than the engineer or the bureaucrat, is the servant of the economic machine, and his highest aim is to be a kind of publicity-agent for the communist state. But in the democratic Utopia, the state would be the servant and not the absolute master of the human personality,

and the development of individual genius would be encouraged as much as possible, for one Mozart adds more to the real wealth of society than a hundred millionaires or political organisers.

All that the democrat demands in the name of equality is that no man shall be debarred by economic or social privileges from developing his own genius or from enjoying the results of the genius of others.

Every society must have its *élite* ; the only question is what kind of an *élite* it desires to have. In a despotic society the *élite* are the picked servants of the state, like the Communist Party in Russia, the later Roman bureaucracy, or the priests and officials of the old Oriental despotism. We find the extreme development of this ideal in those Oriental states, like mediæval Egypt or Turkey under the Ottoman Sultans, in which the country was governed by picked slaves and members of the subject races who owed everything to the sovereign power and had no rights of their own. But in the civic type of society, whether it is a democracy or an aristocracy, the *élite* are not bound to the service of the state. They are free men with the right to live their own life and develop their own personalities under the most advantageous conditions.

The only difference between the aristocracy and the democracy is that in the one case the *élite* forms a hereditary class which tends to monopolise political power and social privilege, while in the other they are the leaders of their fellow citizens, who set the standard of culture for the rest of the community and use their opportunities for the enrichment of the common social life.

This was the secret of the achievements of Greek democracy. The *élite* at Athens had no monopoly of political power, but they possessed a cultural leadership. Their aristocrats, like Pericles, were great democratic leaders, and their rich men were expected to use their wealth to provide for the public amusements of the citizens. And thus the brilliant achievements of Greek art and literature were not the selfish monopoly of the few, but the common possession of the whole body of citizens; as we see, above all, in the case of the Greek drama, perhaps the greatest civic art that has ever existed.

It may be objected that this is not real democracy, and that the Athenians would have done better to abolish their *élite* and to use their wealth for the increase of the ordinary man's income. But though it is true that you cannot enjoy the higher goods of culture if you have not enough to eat, it is also true that you

cannot get twice as much culture by doubling the amount you eat. The truly rich society is not the one that goes on piling up economic wealth as an end in itself, but the one that uses its wealth as the foundation on which to build a rich and many-sided culture. From this point of view, a country like ancient Greece, in which hardly anybody could afford more than one good meal a day, was richer than the United States at the height of its prosperity.

The great fault of modern democracy—a fault that is common to the capitalist and the socialist—is that it accepts economic wealth as the end of society and the standard of personal happiness. We have made the increase of wealth the one criterion of social improvement, and consequently our aristocracy is an aristocracy of money-makers, and our democratic ideal is mainly an ideal of more money for everyone. But the standard of life is really not an economic but a vital thing; it is a question of how you live rather than how much you live on. Just as a man who buys one's house does not buy one's family and friends and interests—all the things that made up the life that was lived in that house—so two men may possess the same money income and yet have totally different standards of life.

Even if we could guarantee every unemployed person an income of £400 a year, we should not have solved the vital problem of unemployment, which is the problem of social maladjustment. St. Francis of Assisi possessed no income at all, and his material standard of life was below that of a modern tramp. But for all that he was infinitely better off than the modern unemployed, because he had achieved a complete measure of social adjustment. To take a less extreme instance; during the happiest and most productive part of his life, Wordsworth had, I believe, an income of about £70 a year, and he would have been no better off with a million, because he had found the way of life that suited him. If he had lived in a different kind of society, for instance in modern America, he would have needed twelve times that income and he would still have been cramped and unsatisfied.

The great curse of our modern society is not so much lack of money as the fact that the lack of money condemns a man to a squalid and incomplete existence. But even if he has money, and a great deal of it, he is still in danger of leading an incomplete and cramped life, because our whole social order is directed to economic instead of spiritual ends. The economic view of life regards money as

equivalent to satisfaction. Get money, and if you get enough of it you will get everything else that is worth having. The Christian view of life, on the other hand, puts economic things in the second place. First seek the Kingdom of God, and everything else will be added to you. And this is not so absurd as it sounds, for we have only to think for a moment to realise that the ills of modern society do not spring from poverty; in fact society today is probably richer in material wealth than any society that has ever existed. What we are suffering from is lack of social adjustment and the failure to subordinate material and economic goods to human and spiritual ones.

To take a concrete example. The difficulties of our present situation are largely due to the fact that England sacrificed her agriculture and her agricultural population in the last century in order to become the workshop of the world. The preservation of our agrarian foundation was perfectly possible, but it would have involved a loss of immediate profit, a simpler standard of life, and a lower national money income, and consequently it was sacrificed to our industrial supremacy. We got the money, but we have paid the price in the loss of national stability and of a balanced social economy. But the most serious loss is not the loss of

economic self-sufficiency ; it is the loss of the rural class which has destroyed the old foundation of our national life and dried up the stream of British colonial expansion at its source.

And even more serious are the spiritual consequences of economic materialism.

Europe gained the leadership in world culture, not by its material wealth, but by its pre-eminence in the things of the mind—in science and literature and ideas. It created the ideals which the rest of the world followed. If modern democracy were to involve giving up this mission and abandoning spiritual leadership for material satisfaction, then it would justly mean the decline of Western culture. But as we have seen, democracy is by no means essentially materialistic ; the democratic movement was founded on idealism, and if it is losing its ideals that is not the fault of the people as a whole. One of the most acute critics of modern tendencies, M. Lucien Romier, has written as follows :

“ The modern masses are not closed to ideas, but they want them and understand them only within the limits of their own experience and their own most constant and vital preoccupations. The problem is not to level all thought down to mass tendencies,

but to answer the questions put by the masses. If the pure scientist or the philosopher who is capable of originality and leadership refuses to answer—then some slave of the crowd, some low journalist or venal politician, anxious for popularity and profit, will answer instead.” *

This is the vital problem of democracy, the problem of spiritual leadership. We need men who are something more than cunning manipulators of the political and economic machine, men who stand not for success or material efficiency, but for the old Christian ideals of faith, hope and charity.

And it is not only religious people who feel this. Even a thorough sceptic and modernist like Bertrand Russell is just as convinced as we are that if modern society goes on putting power and economic efficiency above spiritual values, it will end in disaster. This is what he says :

“ Our world has a heritage of culture and beauty, but unfortunately we have been handing on this heritage only to the less active and important members of each generation. The government of the world (by which I do not mean its ministerial posts,

* *Who will be Master, Europe or America ?*

but its key positions of power) has been allowed to fall into the hands of men ignorant of the past, without tenderness to what is traditional, without understanding of what they are destroying."

And consequently the new society that is arising, based on pure economic and scientific technology, is a society that is

"incompatible with the pursuit of truth, with love, with art, with spontaneous delight with every ideal that men have cherished with the sole exception of ascetic renunciation." *

It is impossible to state the issue more clearly. The society that exists for wealth and power alone may attain a kind of greatness, but it is the greatness of a despotism, not that of a democracy.

Democracy in the last resort rests on a spiritual community. It arose in the West because European society was based on a religious foundation. Even before the common man acquired political rights, he possessed a real kind of spiritual citizenship as a member of the universal Christian society. This was the fundamental citizenship in comparison with

* *The Scientific Outlook*, by Bertrand Russell, pp. 276, 274.

which a man's membership of the state was a secondary and relative matter. And consequently, the state was not the absolute master of the destinies of the individual. It could not treat him merely as an instrument for the attainment of its ends. For every man, even the poorest and the weakest, only belonged in part to the state. His personality was free and possessed an absolute spiritual value which was incomparably higher than anything in the economic or the political order. The state existed for man and not man for the state.

This is the principle which humanitarianism owed to the Christian tradition and which it handed on to modern democracy. As soon as this principle is abandoned, the moral foundations of democracy are destroyed and we are faced with the alternative of a return to some new form of state absolutism or mass dictatorship.

And thus we come back to the fundamental issue of the modern dilemma, an issue that may be expressed as the choice between religious and secular ideals or between the spiritual and the materialistic view of life. The new forces of science and material organisation have endowed modern man and the modern state with powers and resources

that far exceed anything mankind has hitherto known. But these forces can be used alike for destruction and for creation, for life and death, to the glory of God or in the service of Satan. The nineteenth century did not face the issue. It allowed the new forces to be exploited in a haphazard way for selfish and material and temporary ends, without any constructive plan or any vision of life as a whole. It kept religion for Sundays and it left culture to the upper classes. But we have come to see that this individualistic and sectional solution is no solution at all. Either religion and spiritual culture must inspire the whole of life, or they will be thrown out of social life altogether. Either we must accept the materialistic view of life, which substitutes the worship of the machine and the absolutism of mass civilisation for the ideals of the Christian and the humanitarian traditions, or else we must return to the spiritual foundations on which European civilisation has been built and attempt to make the new material forces the instruments of a spiritual purpose. There is no real reason for believing that the ideals of European science and democracy and of the humanitarian tradition have been destroyed by the forces of change. But if they are to be preserved, we need something more than a vague idealism

based on our personal desires. We must recognise the existence of an objective spiritual order that transcends the sphere of politics and economics ; that is to say, we must return to a religious view of life.

IV. SCIENCE

WESTERN science and Western civilisation are, as we have seen, very closely linked. The new scientific order is of purely European origin. It is perhaps the most original and the most characteristic creation of the Western genius. And yet at the same time modern science has undoubtedly acted in many ways as a powerful solvent on European culture. There are even scientists who regard it not as the servant but as the enemy of the spiritual forces on which our civilisation has been founded. They believe that the new scientific knowledge is destined to oust both the Christian religion and the old literary and humanist culture from their traditional supremacy, and to become the foundation of a new world order that has nothing in common either materially or spiritually with anything that we have known hitherto. If indeed we have to choose between science without religion and religion without science — between the mechanised inferno of Mr. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and the barbaric vitality of D. H.

SCIENCE

Lawrence's Red Indians, that would be a dilemma in the literal sense of the word, a choice of evils. The apparent conflict between religion and science is no longer an academic question that can be left to the professional controversialists. It is becoming recognised on both sides as a vital issue on which the whole future of our civilisation depends. For the effects of an elimination of religion from modern culture are not confined to the theological sphere; they pervade the whole of life and involve a moral and social revolution that would transform the very basis of European civilisation.

There are of course those who maintain that there is no room for either conflict or contact between science and religion. Science deals with the material world and gives us the power to control the external forces of nature, while religion is concerned with spiritual things and teaches man to know God and his own soul. One belongs to the public world of facts, the other to the private world of opinions and sentiments. But the matter is not quite so simple as this. Man is one, and his body and mind are so united that everything which he does or thinks has both a material and a spiritual aspect. Science is always pressing forward through biology, physiology, and

psychology into the domain of human thought and conduct, while religion claims to rule the whole man and to direct his action as well as his thought. We may say that science is by its very nature restricted to those aspects of reality that are capable of exact observation and measurement; but what, then, is the attitude of the scientist to the other aspects of reality that cannot be weighed or measured or experimented on? This is the vital question. Does the scientist say that this uncharted land that science has not surveyed is only a sort of fairyland, a world of make-believe, which does not belong to the real world at all? Or does he admit that the spiritual world is no less real than the world of physical science, but that it lies outside his province and must be left to the poet, the philosopher, and the theologian, who have the same rights in their sphere as he has in his?

The answer that the scientist gives to this question depends of course very largely on non-scientific factors. For the scientist is also a private individual who shares the beliefs and prejudices of his neighbours, and his view of questions of this kind is often determined by these non-scientific beliefs rather than on scientific grounds. But apart from this, his answer must also depend on his view of the

nature and function of science, and that is a problem which is as old as science itself and is still far from being settled. The Greeks discussed it more than two thousand years ago, and it has been debated off and on ever since. But never has the discussion been more active or the differences of opinion on the subject wider than they are at the present day.

This is by no means an easy subject to discuss in a few pages. But it is impossible to put it on one side, for it has a very important bearing on the problem of the relation between science and religion, and indeed on the whole question of the place of science in modern civilisation. Roughly speaking there are three conflicting views of the nature of science and three corresponding ideals of scientific knowledge.

(i) In the first place there are the materialists, who believe that matter is the only reality and that physical science is the only real knowledge. This point of view was characteristic of the science of the later nineteenth century, and today it is still dominant in Russia, though for political rather than scientific reasons. In Western Europe, however, scientific materialism is no longer in the ascendant. It is still strong, curiously enough, in the sciences that deal with life and mind, among the biologists and the psychologists; but it has lost ground in physics,

that is to say in the science that deals with the nature of matter and that has produced the greatest triumphs of strict scientific method. The fact is, it is difficult to be a materialist unless you can believe in matter; and the tendency of modern physics has been to destroy the old simple idea of matter as a substance and to substitute an unknown quantity or a group of events that can only be described in abstract mathematical terms.

(ii) Consequently it is the physicists, such as Eddington, Whitehead, and Jeans who are the chief representatives of the anti-materialistic view of science. They no longer believe that matter is the only reality or that physical science is the only true knowledge. The scientific method is a particular approach to reality which explains the material structure of the universe by means of mathematics and exact measurements. But there are other pathways to reality besides science and other aspects of reality besides material things, which are, according to Bertrand Russell's definition, simply "those series of aspects which obey the laws of physics." * From this point of view the spiritual world, the world of moral values and religious truth, lies outside the range of science, but it may be none the less real for that. And

* *Our Knowledge of the External Universe*, p. 115.

consequently there is no necessity for a conflict between science and religion.

(iii) But in addition to these two views there is still a third conception of science which is widely held at the present day. There is the "instrumentalist" theory of the scientific thinkers like Bertrand Russell who reject the old scientific materialism without accepting the new idealistic view. Science, they maintain, can tell us nothing about the nature of reality. It is a way of doing things rather than a way of knowledge. It has nothing to do with truth, but, on the other hand, it has a great deal to do with human life.

This is certainly the aspect of science that strikes the ordinary man. He sees science not as abstract mathematical theory, but as the power that has changed his daily life—the power that creates wireless and aeroplanes and motor-cars and even cinemas. Science, in fact, seems like some beneficent genie out of the *Arabian Nights* that has suddenly put himself at man's service and given him almost unlimited power over nature. Now, from this point of view, the whole end and object of science is to attain practical results, and consequently the great ideal that it has to offer to the modern world is the ideal of efficiency. As a writer of this school has recently said, the idea of efficiency takes the place in the

scientific world-view that was occupied by the idea of God in the world-view of religion.

But efficiency is, after all, only a means to an end, and it cannot itself serve as a final end for human life. If science is only an instrument, man is free to use it for any end he pleases, and he can use it for ill as well as for good. The same knowledge which gives us powers of healing and life also gives us powers of destruction and death ; it offers us machine-guns and high explosives and poison-gas as well as the miracles of modern surgery. Consequently a militarist society will use science as an instrument of power and a commercial society will use it for the increase of wealth ; it will be the servant of whatever power happens to be in control.

If this is so, the place of science in the new world-order will be very different from anything that the leaders of the old rationalist movement believed. It will have dethroned religion only to become itself the slave of power. The scientific idealist who wishes to use his knowledge for the benefit of humanity, will have to meet the claims not of authority and tradition, but of material interests and the power of mass selfishness. And when it comes to a trial of strength, the gangster and the political boss will probably get the better of the thinker, for they have on their side the dead weight of

selfishness and animality, which is part of the inheritance of humanity.

This is a depressing prospect, but so far as I can see the instrumentalist view of science offers no remedy for it. Even a partisan of the theory like Bertrand Russell admits the danger and prophesies that the realisation of the possibilities of science in the service of power will mark a new era in the history of human tyranny.

"Science," he says, "has more and more substituted power-knowledge for love-knowledge, and as this substitution becomes completed, science tends more and more to become sadistic. . . . The power conferred by science as a technique is only obtainable by something analogous to the worship of Satan, that is to say, by the renunciation of love." *

If science is merely a way of getting things done, as the instrumentalist theory holds, it can have little bearing on our spiritual problems. It is nothing but a new kind of magic.

But is this really a satisfactory view of the nature of science ? It is, I believe, the dominant view in America, as materialism is the dominant view in Russia ; and it is easy to see that it is in harmony with the practical spirit of American

* *The Scientific Outlook*, p. 273.

society. But certainly it is not typical of the great European scientists. As Henri Poincaré used to say, the great discoveries which have made practical men rich would never have seen the light if these practical men had been the only ones to exist. The authors of these discoveries were not practical men, but "disinterested madmen, who died poor, who never thought of what was useful, but who were nevertheless guided by something more than their own caprice." This disinterested love of knowledge is not, as Bertrand Russell maintains, a sign of the mediæval mentality of European science; it is its greatest glory and the source of all its achievements. Aristotle was not speaking for the Greeks alone but for all of us when he said that man has a natural desire for knowledge and that science and philosophy have their origin in the feeling of wonder that naturally arises in man in the presence of nature. Thus the child who is always troubling its elders with questions, "Why is the grass green?" "Why do the wheels go round?" is a rudimentary scientist. I know that many learned men declare that science never asks *why*; and that science does not look for causes, but only ascertains laws and sequences. But that is not really the case. As Emile Meyerson has shown, the natural tendency of

the scientist is always to ask why, and to investigate causes. He is not satisfied with description; he seeks explanation.

If the modern scientist is shy of talking about causes or of claiming to explain the nature of things, it is not so much because he has changed his ideals as because he does not wish to become mixed up in the wrangling of philosophers on such abstruse matters as the nature of knowledge and what we mean by a cause. He rightly feels that this is not his business; his business is to deal with the facts of nature. Nevertheless this does not mean that the scientific ideal is a purely practical one. Science is in search of truth no less than philosophy. In fact, science is itself a kind of philosophy—natural philosophy, to use the old term. Both of them aim at a rational explanation of reality; the only difference is that philosophy inquires into the nature of reality as a whole, while science investigates the nature of particular classes of things. Science, then, differs from philosophy, because it is more specialised, more exact and more modest. But it has the same final end—to understand reality. Moreover, both of them make use of the same method—the method of rational deduction—although science rigidly confines its deduction to a basis of observed facts. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as science, but only

sciences—such as physics, chemistry, biology and the rest. A universal science is nothing else but a philosophy. The moment that the scientist leaves his laboratory and attempts to construct a universal theory of reality, he ceases to be a scientist and becomes a philosopher.

This is obvious enough when a writer like Sir James Jeans gives his views on the ultimate nature of the universe, but it is equally true of many who profess to abstain from philosophy altogether. The scientist is within his province when he distinguishes between what is scientific and what is non-scientific. But if he asserts that scientific truth is the only truth and that the objects of science are more real than the objects of philosophy or religion, he is speaking not as a scientist but as a philosopher. We may agree with him or we may disagree; but in either case we must recognise that he has gone beyond the limits of physical science into the region of metaphysics or philosophy.

The great example of this is scientific materialism—the theory that reduces everything to matter and energy, and explains every kind of reality by the mechanical action of physical laws. This theory had an extraordinary success during the nineteenth century, especially in Germany and France, and for a time it seemed likely to become the working

faith of modern civilisation. It is easy enough to understand the attraction that it has not only for the scientist but also for the ordinary man, for it appeals to that metaphysical instinct that lies deep down in all of us. It offered men certainty, the final truth about man and the universe, the end of doubt and mystery. If we could accept this view, science would undoubtedly take the place of religion as the ultimate revelation and the final law of life. And this is why, as Bertrand Russell has pointed out,* materialism makes a special appeal to all those who have been accustomed to an authoritative religion and who have lost their faith in it: the Russians, for example, who have grown up in a mediæval atmosphere of religious orthodoxy.†

But though materialism is capable of arousing a kind of religious enthusiasm, it has the corresponding defects. It is apt to be a narrow, one-sided and puritanical creed, as we see in Russia today. The specialism and the concentration on one limited aspect of reality, which are the strength of the sciences in their own field, become a weakness when science is transformed into a philosophy. You may find a key to unlock your cupboard, and it may be a very

* *Whither Mankind* (ed. C. A. Beard), p. 66.

† We might add the Jews, who more than any other people have based their lives on their faith in an eternal and objective law.

good key, but you cannot expect it to unlock every door in the world. In the same way, physical science supplies the key to some aspects of reality, but not to all of them or to the whole of them. Its triumphs are due to its limitations—that is to say, to its rigid exclusion of all the elements in reality that are not amenable to exact treatment. Even in the physical world it leaves out all the sensible qualities that are to the ordinary man the very essence of things. It transforms the many-coloured, many-voiced reality into a cold abstract system of mathematical relations. It seems as though it explained nature only by destroying everything that makes nature real to us.

And if this is the case to some degree in the physical world, it is a thousand times more so in the world of mind. In this region the methods of physical science become more powerless the higher we go. We cannot apply mathematical formulæ to the poetry of Shakespeare, but that does not mean that it is any less real than the facts that are dealt with in physics or chemistry. Scientific materialism can explain the physical world, though it is only a partial explanation, but in the spiritual world all it can do is to explain things away.

The philosophers, on their side, started with the reality of the world of the mind and made

it the centre of their theory of reality. But when they come to the world of matter, they also started to explain things away. The dominant school of nineteenth-century philosophy, the German idealists, followed a parallel line of development to the scientific materialists. Hegel attempted to replace the science of the scientists with a philosophy of nature which was just as one-sided as the opposite attempt of the materialists. And in the same way Croce denies all genuine value to the physical sciences and regards them as little more than a sham substitute for the real knowledge that we get from art, philosophy and history.

In this way the European mind was torn in two between two mutually exclusive systems, and it was reduced to that state of dualism and spiritual conflict that was characteristic of the nineteenth century. It is like the old story of the fight between the whale and the elephant. The philosopher could not convince the scientist, nor the scientist the philosopher. They fought on different grounds, and all they could do was to reduce one another to a state of puzzled exasperation.

This hopeless state of affairs has ended, in so far as it has been ended, by each party's beginning to put its own house in order. The philosophers themselves began to criticise the

exaggerations of nineteenth-century idealism. And in the same way the men who criticised materialism most effectively were not the philosophers, but the scientists themselves—men like Cournot, Henri Poincaré, and the rest, who were guided by no ulterior motive save the desire to define the true nature and function of science in a scientific manner.

The result of this reaction was to produce a certain disillusionment. Just when science was beginning to acquire an enormous prestige with the man in the street, the scientists themselves began to lose confidence in science. In the past the scientist had an absolute faith in the universal reign of law, or, as Claude Bernard expressed it, in the absolute determinism of nature. Today he has begun to question this order and to feel that his old ideal of understanding the world is unrealisable. He may even go so far as to say, like Bertrand Russell, that "the external world may be nothing but an illusion, and that if it exists it consists of events short, small and haphazard," a universe that is all "spots and jumps, without unity, continuity, coherence or orderliness." And consequently he takes refuge in the purely practical ideal of science as man's way of getting what he wants.

But this is not the only attitude. In fact, I do

not think it is representative of modern science. There are others whom the failure of materialism has led not to despair in the possibility of knowledge but to a wider conception of reality. They have accepted the fact that the world of physics is not the only reality, and they have once more found a place for spiritual values in their theory of the universe. These are the writers of whom I spoke at the beginning of this chapter—Professor Whitehead, Professor Eddington and Professor J. H. Haldane, General Smuts, and Sir James Jeans. Of course, their views have aroused a great deal of criticism both from the philosophers and from the scientists. Many people talk as though they were trying to revive exploded superstitions; they regard the movement as a retrograde one—an attempt to go back on the achievements of the last age.

But it is absurd to maintain that the materialists have had a monopoly of intelligence. After all, Haeckel was not a greater thinker than Hegel, nor was W. K. Clifford any more intelligent than Professor Bradley. Nor were the nineteenth century scientists themselves necessarily hostile to religion. Many of them, such as Faraday and Dalton, Pasteur and Wallace, were profoundly religious men. But their science and their religion were, in a sense, disconnected owing to their lack of a philo-

sophy. And they had no philosophy because the philosophers were either idealists who had no use for science or materialists who had no use for religion.

It is one of the most hopeful signs of the present day that the old division between science and philosophy is coming to an end ; that the scientists should once more admit the need for philosophy and that the philosophers should recognise the rights of science. For it is, after all, a monstrous state of things that a man's conception of reality should depend on his profession, and that there should be no common world of thought for men who share a common social life.

What the new scientific thinkers are trying to do is to restore the connection between these two domains of reality, which have been separated by an artificial wall of false science and false philosophy. It is not a question of the scientists' creating a new religion for themselves ; it is simply a question of re-establishing contact between science and the spiritual and religious values that have always been there and that have formed the soul of our civilisation. And whatever we may think of their success, I believe they are on the right track, and that it is the way our civilisation must follow if it is to recover its spiritual unity. We do not realise

how serious this loss of unity is. It is the cause of the chief weakness of modern civilisation ; it deprived our spiritual world of reality and our material world of spiritual value. We were left with ideals that did not work and facts that had no moral significance.

The recovery of spiritual unity by the reconciliation of the scientific and philosophical points of view would not only put an end to this state of things ; it would change the whole outlook of our civilisation. Science would no longer be the slave of whatever power was strong enough to dominate society ; it would become the instrument of a moral purpose : the means by which the physical world is brought into relation with spiritual values. And at the same time it would recover its own dignity and its old ideals. As I have said, the leaders of the European scientific tradition were inspired by something higher than the idea of utility. They sought knowledge for its own sake because knowledge is good. They regarded nature not as a slave to be mastered, but as a mistress to be served in a spirit of almost religious reverence.

If the sceptics are right, of course this attitude is no longer possible. You cannot know what is unintelligible or reverence what is not there. As Bertrand Russell says, " we do not contem-

plate a flea ; we catch it. And the modern point of view will lead the scientist to regard the non-human world with as little reverence as we feel towards the poor flea." But if this is so, it is a bad lookout for science. The higher minds will turn away to art or to some other pursuit that has an ideal value, and leave science to the technicians and industrial experts. If you take this view of science, it is obvious that it offers no substitute for religion. On the contrary, it stands in need of some religious or moral power outside itself to give it direction ; otherwise it is bound to become the servant of power or selfish interests. The man who did more than anyone else to establish the practical and instrumental view of science saw this clearly enough ; I mean Auguste Comte, the founder of positivism. He realised that if the ideal of science was not pure knowledge but the service of mankind, it required social guidance ; and this social guidance implied a spiritual power that was inspired by religious ideals. But he believed that these ideals were to be found not in Christianity nor in any existing religious faith, but in a new religion of humanity—a religion without theological dogmas and even without God. His own attempt to found such a religion was a complete failure, but there are still many people who believe the real solution

of the problem is to be found along these lines—that is the view, for instance, of Professor Julian Huxley, and it is a point of view that we must discuss at greater length in the next chapter. If, however, the other view is accepted, the traditional ideal of science will recover its validity. Science can once more be regarded as a pathway to reality and a service of truth. It will go from strength to strength and continue to explore the inexhaustible riches of the ocean of existence that surrounds us. It is true that there can be no finality in this task, but that is no evil for the true scientist. He is contented with the disinterested service of truth, the spirit which is so well expressed in those lines which one of the greatest of modern mathematicians, Sir William Hamilton, addressed to the discoverer of Neptune :

"If some new truth, O friend, thy toil discover
If thine eyes first by some fair form be blest,
Love it for what it is, and as a lover
Gaze, or with joy receive thy honoured guest :
The new-found Thought, set free, a while may hover
Gratefully near thee, but it cannot rest."

The ideal of science is that of a changing world of knowledge in which truth never ceases to grow and to remain true to itself. And thus scientific truth cannot be hostile to spiritual

truth. Both of them are elements of one reality ; indeed, science is nothing else but the spiritual power of intelligence illuminating and ordering the multiplicity and confusion of the world of sense.

V. RELIGION

In the previous chapters I have tried to show that the modern dilemma is essentially a spiritual one, and that every one of its main aspects, moral, political and scientific, brings us back to the need of a religious solution. The one remaining problem that we have got to consider is where that religious solution is to be found. Must we look for some new religion to meet the new circumstances of the changing world, or does the Christian faith still supply the answer that we need ?

In the first place, it is obvious that it is no light matter to throw over the Christian tradition. It means a good deal more to us than we are apt to realise.

As I have pointed out, it is the Christian tradition that is the most fundamental element in Western culture. It lies at the base not only of Western religion, but also of Western morals and Western social idealism. To a far greater extent than science or philosophy, it has determined our attitude to life and the final aims of our civilisation. Yet on the other hand

we cannot fail to recognise that it is just this religious element in Western culture that is most challenged at the present day. The majority of men, whatever their political beliefs may be, are prepared to accept science and democracy and humanitarianism as essential elements in modern civilisation, but they are far less disposed to admit the importance of religion in general and of Christianity in particular. They regard Christianity as out of touch with modern life and inconsistent with modern knowledge. Modern life, they say, deals with facts, while Christianity deals with unproved and incomprehensible dogmas. A man can indulge in religious beliefs, so long as he treats them as a private luxury ; but they have no bearing on social life, and society can get on very well without them.

Moreover, behind this vague tendency to treat religion as a side issue in modern life, there exists a strong body of opinion that is actively hostile to Christianity and that regards the destruction of positive religion as absolutely necessary to the advance of modern culture. This attitude is most in evidence in Soviet Russia, where, for the first time in the history of the world, we see a great state, or rather a world empire, that officially rejects any species of religion and has adopted a social and

educational policy inspired by militant atheism. But this tendency is not confined to Russia or to the followers of communism. Both in Europe and America there is a strong anti-religious movement that includes many of our ablest modern writers and a few men of science. It seeks not only to destroy religion, but also to revolutionise morals and to discredit the ethical ideals which have hitherto inspired Western society.

This, I think, is one of the most significant features of the present situation. Critics of religion in the past have, as a rule, been anxious to dissociate the religious from the moral issue. They were often strict moralists, like the late John Morley, who managed to clothe atheism in the frock coat and top hat of Victorian respectability. But today the solidarity of religion and morals is admitted on both sides. If Europe abandons Christianity, it must also abandon its moral code. And conversely the modern tendency to break away from traditional morality strengthens the intellectual revolt against religious belief.

At first sight it seems as though the forces of change in the modern world were definitely hostile to religion, and that we are rapidly approaching a purely secular state of civilisation. But it is not so easy to get rid of religion as we

might imagine. It is easy enough for the individual to adopt a negative attitude of critical scepticism. But if society as a whole abandons all positive beliefs, it is powerless to resist the disintegrating effects of selfishness and private interest. Every society rests in the last resort on the recognition of common principles and common ideals, and if it makes no moral or spiritual appeal to the loyalty of its members, it must inevitably fall to pieces.

In the past, society found this unifying principle in its religious beliefs ; in fact religion was the vital centre of the whole social organism. And if a state did not already possess a common religious basis, it attempted to create one artificially, like the official Cæsar-worship that became the state religion of the Roman Empire. And so, today, if the state can no longer appeal to the old moral principles that belong to the Christian tradition, it will be forced to create a new official faith and new moral principles which will be binding on its citizens.

Here again Russia supplies the obvious illustration. The Communist rejection of religion and Christian morality has not led to the abandonment of social control and the unrestricted freedom of opinion in matters of belief. On the contrary, it has involved an intensification of social control over the beliefs

and the spiritual life of the individual citizen. In fact, what the Communists have done is not to get rid of religion, but merely to substitute a new and stricter Communist religion for the old official orthodoxy. The Communist Party is a religious sect which exists to spread the true faith. It has its Inquisition for the detection and punishment of heresy. It employs the weapon of excommunication against disloyal or unorthodox members. It possesses in the writings of Marx its infallible scriptures, and it reveres in Lenin, if not a God, at least a saviour and a prophet.

It may be said that this is an abnormal development due to the excesses of the Russian temperament. But it is abnormal only in its exaggerations. The moment that a society claims the complete allegiance of its members, it assumes a quasi-religious authority. For since man is essentially spiritual, any power that claims to control the whole man is forced to transcend relative and particular aims and to enter the sphere of absolute values, which is the realm of religion. On the other hand, if the state consents to the limitation of its aims to the political sphere, it has to admit that its ideal is only a relative one and that it must accept the ultimate supremacy of spiritual ideals which lie outside its province.

This is the solution that Western society has hitherto chosen, but it implies the existence of an independent spiritual power, whether it be a religious faith or a common moral ideal. If these are absent, the state is forced to claim an absolute and almost religious authority, though not necessarily in the same way that the Communist state has done. We can easily conceive a different type of secularism that conforms to the needs of capitalist society : indeed, we are witnessing the emergence of something of the kind in the United States, though it is still somewhat coloured by survivals from the older Protestant tradition.

And so too in Western Europe the tendency seems all towards the development of a purely secular type of culture which subordinates the whole of life to practical and economic ends and leaves no room for any independent spiritual activity. Nevertheless a civilisation that fails to satisfy the needs of man's spiritual nature cannot be permanently successful. It produces a state of spiritual conflict and moral mal-adjustment which weakens the vitality of the whole social organism. This is why our modern machine-made civilisation, in spite of the material benefits that it has conferred, is marked by a feeling of moral unrest and social discontent which was absent from the old

religious cultures, although the lot of the ordinary man in them was infinitely harder from the material point of view.

You can give men food and leisure and amusements and good conditions of work, and still they will remain unsatisfied. You can deny them all these things, and they will not complain so long as they feel that they have something to die for.

Even if we regard man as an animal, we must admit that he is a peculiar sort of animal that will sacrifice his interests to his ideals—an animal that is capable of martyrdom. The statesman sees this when he appeals to the ordinary man to leave his home and his family and to go and die painfully in a ditch for the sake of his country ; and the ordinary man does not refuse to go. The Communist recognises this, when he calls on the proletarian to work harder and to eat less for the sake of the Five-Year Plan and the cause of world revolution. But when the soldier comes back from the war, and the Communist has realised his Utopia, they are apt to feel a certain disproportion between their sacrifices and the fruits of their achievements.

Now it is the fundamental contradiction of materialism that it exalts the results of human achievement and at the same time denies the

reality of the spiritual forces that have made this achievement possible. All the highest achievements of the human spirit, whether in the order of thought or action or moral being, rest on a spiritual absolute and become impossible in a world of purely economic or even purely human values. It is only in the light of religious experience and of absolute spiritual principles that human nature can recognise its own greatness and realise its higher potentialities.

There is a world of eternal spiritual realities in which and for which the world of man exists. That is the primary intuition that lies at the root of all religion, even of the most primitive kind. The other day I came upon a very good illustration of this, rather unexpectedly, in a passage in one of Edgar Wallace's novels in which he is describing a religious discussion between a white officer and a West African medicine-man. The former says "Where in the world are these gods of whom you are always talking?" and the savage answers, "O man, know that the Gods are not in the world; it is the world that is in the Gods."

In our modern civilised world this truth is no longer obvious; it has become dim and obscured. Nevertheless it cannot be disregarded with impunity. The civilisation that denies

God denies its own foundation. For the glory of man is a dim reflection of the glory of God, and when the latter is denied the former fades.

Consequently the loss of the religious sense which is shown by the indifference or the hostility of the modern world to Christianity is one of the most serious weaknesses of our civilisation and involves a real danger to its spiritual vitality and its social stability. Man's spiritual needs are none the less strong for being unrecognised, and if they are denied their satisfaction through religion, they will find their compensation elsewhere, often in destructive and anti-social activities. The man who is a spiritual misfit becomes morally alienated from society, and whether that alienation takes the form of active hostility, as in the anarchist or the criminal, or merely of passive non-co-operation, as in the selfish individualist, it is bound to be a source of danger. The civilisation that finds no place for religion is a maimed culture that has lost its spiritual roots and is condemned to sterility and decadence. There can, I think, be little doubt that the present phase of intense secularisation is a temporary one, and that it will be followed by a far-reaching reaction. I would even go so far as to suggest that the return to religion promises to be one of the

dominant characteristics of the coming age. We all know how history follows a course of alternate action and reaction, and how each century and each generation tends to contradict its predecessor. The Victorians reacted against the Georgians, and we in turn have reacted against the Victorians. We reject their standards and their beliefs, just as they rejected the standards and beliefs of their predecessors.

But behind these lesser waves of change there is a deeper movement that marks the succession of the ages. There are times when the whole spirit of civilisation becomes transformed and the stream of history seems to change its course and flow in a new direction. One such movement occurred sixteen hundred years ago, when the ancient world became Christian. Another occurred in the sixteenth century with the coming of the Renaissance and the Reformation, which brought the mediæval world to an end and inaugurated a new age. And the forces of transformation that are at work in the world today seem to betoken the coming of another such change in the character of civilisation, which is perhaps even more fundamental than that of the sixteenth century.

All the characteristic movements that marked the culture of the last four centuries are passing away and giving place to new tendencies.

We see this not only in politics and the material organisation of life, but also in art and literature and science ; for example, in the tendency of modern art to abandon the naturalistic principles that governed its development from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century in favour of new canons of style that have more in common with the art of Byzantium and of the ancient East.

We are not, indeed, going back to the Middle Ages, but we are going forward to a new age which is no less different from the last age than that was from the mediæval period.

But if this is so, may it not be that religion is one of the outworn modes of thought that are being abandoned and that the new age will be an age of rationalism and secularism and materialism ? This is, as we have seen, the current belief, but then the current beliefs are always out of date. It is difficult to realise how much of current thinking belongs to the past, because it is natural for men's minds to be soaked in the mental atmosphere of the last generation, and it needs a considerable effort to see things as they are and not as other people have seen them. The artist and the philosopher and the scientist, each in his own way, sees life direct, but the majority of men see it at second-hand through the accepted

ideas of their society and culture. And consequently, the tendencies that we regard as characteristic of the age are often those that are characteristic of the age that is just passing away rather than of that which is beginning.

Thus in fact the tendencies that are hostile to religion and make for secularism and materialism are not new tendencies. They have been at work in Europe for centuries. The whole modern period from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century was a long process of revolt in which the traditional order of life and its religious foundations were being undermined by criticism and doubt. It was an age of spiritual disintegration in which Christendom was divided into a mass of warring sects, and the Churches that resisted this tendency did so only by a rigid discipline which led to religious persecution and the denial of individual freedom. And this again brought religion into conflict with the spirit of the age ; for it was an age of individualism, dominated by the Renaissance ideal of liberty of thought, the Reformation ideal of liberty of conscience, the individualist ideal of economic liberty and the romantic ideal of liberty of feeling and conduct. It was an age of secularism in which the state substituted itself for the Church as the ultimate authority in men's lives and the supreme end

of social activity. And finally it was an age which witnessed the triumphant development of scientific materialism, based on a mechanistic theory of the world that seemed to leave no room for human freedom or spiritual reality.

Today this process of revolution has worked itself out, so that there is hardly anything left to revolt against. After destroying the old order, we are beginning to turn round and look for some firm foundation on which we can build anew. Already in social life we are witnessing the passing of individualism and the recovery of a sense of community. In economics for example, the nineteenth-century ideal of unrestricted freedom and individual initiative has given place to an intense demand for social organisation and social control.

Looked at from this point of view, socialism and communism are not purely revolutionary and negative movements. They mark the turn of the tide. Karl Marx was among the first to feel the insufficiency of the liberal revolutionary tradition and the need for a new effort of social construction. And so he built on what seemed to his age to be an ultimate foundation—the bed-rock of scientific materialism. But today we realise that the materialistic theory of the nineteenth century was no more final than the scientific theories that it super-

seded. Science, which has explained so much, has ended by explaining away matter itself, and has left us with a skeleton universe of mathematical formulæ. Consequently the naive materialism that regarded Matter with a capital M as the one reality is no longer acceptable, for we have come to see that the fundamental thing in the world is not Matter but Form. The universe is not just a mass of solid particles of matter governed by blind determinism and chance. It possesses an organic structure, and the further we penetrate into the nature of reality the more important does this principle of *form* become.

And so we can no longer dismiss mind and spiritual reality as unreal or less real than the material world, for it is just in mind and in the spiritual world that the element of form is most supreme. It is the mind that is the key of the universe, not matter. In the Beginning was the Word, and it is the creative and informing power of the Word that is the foundation of reality.

And if this is true of the world of nature, it is still more true of the world of society and culture. We must abandon the vain attempt to disregard spiritual unity and to look for a basis of social construction in material and external things. The acceptance of spiritual reality

must be the basic element in the culture of the future, for it is spirit that is the principle of unity and matter that is the principle of division.

And as soon as this truth is admitted, religion will no longer appear as an unessential and extraneous element in culture, but as its most vital element. For religion is the bond that unites man to spiritual reality, and it is only in religion that society can find the principle of spiritual union of which it stands in need. No secular ideal of social progress or economic efficiency can take the place of this. It is only the ideal of a spiritual order which transcends the relative value of the economic and political world that is capable of overcoming the forces of disintegration and destruction that exist in modern civilisation. The faith of the future cannot be economic or scientific or even moral ; it must be religious.

This is just where the new artificial man-made religions, like Positivism, fail. They lack the one thing that is necessary, namely, religious faith. It is a complete mistake to think that we can bring religion up-to-date by making it conform to our wishes and to the dominant prejudices of the moment. If we feel that modern society is out of touch with science, we do not call on the scientists to change their views and

to give us something more popular. We realise that we have got to give more thought and more work to science. In the same way the great cause of the decline of religion is that we have lost touch with it, either by abandoning religion altogether, or by contenting ourselves with a nominal outward profession that does not affect our daily life and our real interests. And the only way to bring religion into touch with the modern world is to give it the first place in our own thought and in our own lives. If we wish to be scientific, we must submit to the authority of science and sacrifice our easy acceptance of things as they seem to the severe discipline of scientific method. And in the same way, if we wish to be religious we must submit to religious authority and accept the principles of the spiritual order. In the material world, man must conform himself to realities, otherwise he will perish. And the same is true in the spiritual world. God comes first, not man. He is more real than the whole external universe. Man passes away, empires and civilisations rise and fall, the stars grow old ; God remains.

This is the fundamental truth which runs through the whole of the Bible. There is, of course, a great deal more than this in Christianity. In fact, it is a truth that Christianity shares with practically all the religions of the

world. Nevertheless it is just this truth that the modern world, like the ancient world before it, finds most difficult to accept. You even find people who reject it and still wish to call themselves Christians. They water down religion to a series of moral platitudes and then dignify this mixture of vague religiosity and well-meaning moral optimism with the respectable name of Christianity.

In reality Christianity is not merely a moral ideal or set of ideas. It is a concrete reality. It is the spiritual order incarnated in a historical person and in a historical society. The spiritual order is just as real as the material order. The reason we do not see it is because we do not look at it. Our interests and our thoughts are elsewhere. A few exceptional men, mystics or philosophers, may find it possible to live habitually on a spiritual plane, but for the ordinary man it is a difficult atmosphere to breathe in. But it is the function of Christianity to bring the spiritual order into contact and relation with the world of man. It is, as it were, a bridge between the two worlds ; it brings religion down into human life and it opens the door of the spiritual world to man. Its ideal is not a static and unchanging order like that of the other world religions. It is a spiritual society or organism that has incorporated itself with

humanity and that takes into itself as it proceeds all that is vital and permanent in human life and civilisation. It aims at nothing less than the spiritual integration of humanity, its deliverance from the tyranny of material force and the dominion of selfish aims, and its reconstitution in spiritual unity.

And thus there are two principles in Christianity which though they sometimes appear contradictory are equally essential as the two poles of the spiritual order. There is the principle of transcendence, represented by the apocalyptic, ascetic, world-denying element in religion, and there is the principle of catholicity, which finds expression in the historic, social, world-embracing activity of the Church. A one-sided emphasis on the former of these leads to sectarianism, as we see in the history of the early Christian sects that refused all compromise with secular civilisation and stood aside in an attitude of negative and sterile isolation. But the Catholic Church rejected this solution as a betrayal of its universal mission. It converted the ancient world; it became the Church of the Empire; and it took up into itself the traditional heritage of culture that the puritanism of the sectaries despised. In this way the Church overcame the conflict between religion and secular culture that had weakened the forces

of Roman society, and laid the foundations of a new civilisation. For more than a thousand years society found its centre of unity and its principle of order in Christianity. But the mediæval synthesis, both in its Byzantine and mediæval form, while it gave a more complete expression to the social function of Christianity than any other age has done, ran the risk of compromising the other Christian principle of transcendence by the immersion of the spiritual in the temporal order—the identification of the Church and the World. The history of mediæval Christendom shows a continuous series of efforts on the part of orthodox reformers and Catharist and “spiritual” heretics against the secularisation and worldliness of the Church. And, as the wealth and intellectual culture of Western Europe increased, the tension grew more acute. It was the coming of the Renaissance and the whole-hearted acceptance by the Papacy of the new humanist culture that stretched the mediæval synthesis to breaking-point and produced a new outburst of reforming sectarianism. It is true that Catholicism met the challenge of the Reformation by its own movement of spiritual reform. But it failed to recover the lost unity of Christendom and was forced to lose touch with the dominant movements in secular culture. Thus Christianity

withdrew more and more into the sphere of the individual religious life and the world went its own way. European civilisation was rationalised and secularised until it ceased even nominally to be Christian. Nevertheless it continued to subsist unconsciously on the accumulated capital of its Christian past, from which it drew the moral and social idealism that inspired the humanitarian and liberal and democratic movements of the last two centuries. Today this spiritual capital is exhausted, and civilisation is faced with the choice between a return to the spiritual traditions of Christianity or the renunciation of them in favour of complete social materialism.

But if Christianity is to regain its influence, it must recover its unity and its social activity. The religious individualism of the last age, with its self-centred absorption in the question of personal salvation and private religious emotion, will not help us. The Christianity of the future must be a social Christianity that is embodied in a real society, not an imaginary or invisible one. And this society must not be merely a part of the existing social and political order, like the established churches of the past; it must be an independent and universal society, not a national or local one. The only society that fulfils these conditions is the Catholic

Church, the most ancient yet, at the same time, the most adaptable of all existing institutions. It is true that Catholicism has suffered grievously from the sectarian division and strife of the last four hundred years, but it has succeeded in surmounting the long drawn-out crisis that followed the dissolution of the mediæval synthesis, and it stands out today as the one remaining centre of unity and spiritual order in Europe. If Christianity is necessary to Europe, the Catholic Church is no less necessary to Christianity, for without it the latter would become no more than a mass of divergent opinions dissolving under the pressure of rationalist criticism and secularist culture. It was by virtue of the Catholic ideal of spiritual unity that the social unity of European culture emerged from the welter of barbarism, and the modern world stands no less in need of such an ideal if it is to realise in the future the wider unity of a world civilisation.

But though Christianity is necessary to civilisation, we must not forget the profound difference that there is between them. It is the great paradox of Christianity, as Newman so often insisted, that though Christianity is a principle of life to civilisation even in secular matters, it is continually at issue with the world and always seems on the verge of being destroyed

by it. Thus the Church is necessary to Europe, and yet any acceptance of the Church *because* it is necessary to society is destructive of its real essence. Nothing could be more fatal to the spirit of Christianity than a return to Christianity for political reasons.

But, on the other hand, any attempt to create a purely political or social religion is equally destined to fail. Nothing is more remarkable than the collapse of all the efforts to create an artificial religion to meet "the needs of the age." Deism, Saint-Simonianism, Positivism and the rest have all ended in failure. It is only a religion that transcends political and economic categories and is indifferent to material results that has the power of satisfying the need of the world. As Newman wrote eighty years ago :

"the Catholic Church has accompanied human society through one revolution of its great year ; and it is now beginning a second. She has passed through the full cycle of changes in order to show that she is independent of them all. She has had trial of East and West, of monarchy and democracy, of peace and war, of times of darkness and times of philosophy, of old countries and young."

And today she still stands as she did under the Roman Empire, as the representative in a changing world of an unchanging spiritual order. That is why I believe the Church that made Europe may yet save Europe, and that, in the great words of the Easter liturgy,

"the whole world may experience and see what was fallen raised up, what had grown old made new, and all things returning to unity through Him from whom they took their beginning."

THE END