

THE THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION
IN THE LIGHT OF NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING AND WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE WORKS OF
S O R E N K I E R K E G A A R D.

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TITLE:

The Theology of Christian Conversion in the light of New Testament teaching and with special reference to the works of Soren Kierkegaard.

OUTLINE OF STUDY:

Part One:

Examination of the teaching of the New Testament, with a commentary on the variety of descriptive emphasis found in the Apostolic statement of the significance of the Conversion experience.

Part Two:

Examination of the writings of Soren Kierkegaard: most especially those published between 1846 and 1855, and in particular, the Sickness unto Death, the Unscientific Postscript, Judge for Yourself, Training in Christianity, and the Journals. These since they belong to the most distinctively Christian period of his writings have the most to say concerning the way of Conversion.

Part Three:

i. Critique of the Kierkegaardian position with statement of the value of his contribution to the world of to-day.

ii. Statement of the fundamental principles of the Conversion experience, and a note on the relevance of the whole question to that of membership in the Christian Church.

CONCLUSION:

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"It is a sound and healthy instinct that has led many Christian circles to regard Conversion as the 'articulus aut stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae'." So writes Professor Underwood in his work 'Conversion, Christian and Non-Christian' (Page 45). With that judgment there are few who would disagree. The theology of the entire New Testament is 'Conversion Theology'. The record of the advance of the Christian Church is the record of how men have 'turned to God', and found in Him a new life. Paul, on the Damascus road, being claimed of God, his flaming career of persecution being brought to an end and a new life of sainthood being begun, far from being exceptional is rather a type of all who are found within the true fellowship of the Faith. The words of Augustine, describing his own experience of the love of God in Redemption, might have been the Apostle's own: "With Thy calling and shouting Thou didst break my deafness; with Thy flashing and shining Thou didst scatter my blindness. At the scent of Thee I drew in breath, and I pant for Thee. I have tasted and I hunger and thirst. Thou hast touched me and I am on fire for Thy peace." (Confessions X. 38). The men and women of the Early Church were obviously possessors of an experience that altered all their condition and estate. For them 'old things have passed away and all things have become new'. They stand forth as personalities redeemed out of a system of darkness, impotence and unadulterated evil into a sovereign and challenging life of triumph over Sin and to a service of God in Jesus Christ which

is true joy and peace. From whatsoever section of society, whether Jewish or pagan, they come, they one and all show the same outstanding quality of behaviour. They follow no longer their own passion or desire; they follow Jesus Christ their Saviour and their Lord. They are a Church of converted men and women. They speak as converts; they act as converts; they live as converts. Of the great mass of them we know nothing, yet - as Deissmann writes in his St. Paul (page 224 E.T.): "These unknown and forgotten inhabitants of the great cities of antiquity, some by their names recognisable as slaves, are striving upward from the dull vegetating mass, upward to the light, having become personalities, saints in Christ."

Conversion is the very touch-stone of the Church's life and witness, and its study must claim the attention of all who seek the furtherance of its borders in the world.

The term Conversion is commonly used to denote a decisive change or act of turning to God, as the primary manifestation of the spiritual life which has begun in the soul. The word however has a wider application in Holy Scripture. The strict etymology of Conversion and the cognate verb 'to convert', derived as they are from the Latin 'converto' to turn, undoubtedly indicate as the root meaning of Conversion that change of position or relationship which we understand to be effected by the process of turning. This is equally the case with regard to the Hebrew equivalents in the Old Testament, namely וָּשׁוּב and וָּשׁוּבָה (Isaiah XXX, 15 only) and the Greek

words of the Septuagint and the New Testament which we shall presently note. In Scripture, Conversion, in its moral and spiritual sense, is a turning of the will through its sub-;mission to Grace in a new direction, whereby a person breaks with the past, and that whether it has been the way of Sin or a false way of righteousness. Conversion is ever a turning in some way from Sin to Holiness, or from the love of self and the world to the love and service of God.

Coming directly to the New Testament, we find in one outstanding passage the word 'convert' represents the simple verb $\sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\epsilon\iota\upsilon$, 'to turn'; "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted - or turn - and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," (Matthew 18, v.3). In the rest, it represents the compound $\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\epsilon\iota\upsilon$, 'to turn to'. Thus Paul and Barnabas declared the Conversion ($\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\epsilon\iota\upsilon$) of the Gentiles - the only instance of the substantive (Acts 15, v.3). The verb, as is natural with verbs of motion, is used in more than one way. Sometimes it is directly transitive in its use whether in the active or in the passive: "Many of the children of Israel shall He convert to the Lord their God" (Luke 1, v.16). "To convert them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26, v.18): "If any of you do err from the Truth and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the errors of his ways shall save a soul from death" (James 5, v.20). Similarly in the passive: "Ye were as sheep

going astray but have now been converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls" (1.Peter 2, v.25). It is more usual however for the word to be used in the intransitive sense, by which the act of Conversion is regarded not immediately as the work of God's Grace, but as the voluntary act of the convert himself. Thus three times over the words of Isaiah, which St. John quotes in the passive form, are quoted by other writers intransitively: "Lest they should understand with their heart, and convert and I should Heal them" (Matthew 13, v.15). Other examples are our Lord's words to Peter: "And thou when thou hast converted, strengthen the brethren" (Luke 22, v.32): and St. Peter's to the Jews: "Repent therefore and convert, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3, v.19). Thus Conversion is sometimes spoken of as a gracious effect produced upon a man by some agency outside him, and sometimes as a movement of the man himself. Both accounts of the matter must be continually kept in mind. Man 'is converted' and 'he converts', as we see it most dramatically stated in the cry of Ephraim in the Prophet - ἐπιστρέψον με καὶ ἐπιστρέψω - 'Convert me and I shall convert, for Thou art the Lord my GOD' (Jeremiah 31, v.18 LXX version).

The word denotes a change of attitude or direction. Whereas the man before was facing one way, he now faces another way. In the simple uncompounded verb (ἐστρέφω) attention is drawn particularly to the movement of the change itself, rather than to the direction adopted by means of it. When our

Lord says to the Disciples, 'Except ye be converted (ἐὰν μὴ ἐστραφῆτε) ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven' (Matthew 18, v.3), He is condemning the attitude or direction which they had for the time assumed, not specifying that which He would have them substitute for it. He specifies the right attitude in the words which follow, "and become as little children". He tells these men who are wrangling for the highest position in the Kingdom of Heaven, that they are on the wrong road and that unless they cease to pursue it, there will be no question of a higher or lower in the Kingdom, but a certainty of exclusion altogether. Something must come and change the bent of their lives - that is the force of the passive - because at present it is wrong and fatal. Pride, ambition, envy, self-seeking, even under the most specious pretexts, can only be the ruin of the soul; and therefore the first thing is to be made to 'face about' and to turn in another direction.

In the compound verb, which is much more common, attention is called not only to the changed attitude but also to the new attitude to be embraced. Frequently, the object to which the convert turns is expressly named. "All the inhabitants of Lydda saw him and turned to - or converted - to the Lord" (Acts 9, v.35): "We preach you a Gospel that you convert from these vain things unto the Living God" (Acts 14, v.15): "Ye turned to - or converted - unto God from idols, to serve the Living and True God" (1 Thess.1, v.9). All these are cases

where a change is made from one religious system to another - from paganism or Judaism to Christianity; but the change is not spoken of in its external aspect but in its internal relation. Wherever the word is used it is felt that the experience of Conversion is a true reversion, a turning back to the proper attitude - the right attitude towards God in the first instance and therefore towards all other things. Conversion in whatever manner it takes place is the bringing of the soul home to a right relation with God. X.

In a most vital sense the word Conversion can be used to describe the general beginnings of the Christian life - the turning of the life in a new direction. But the word must of course be taken in the widest possible sense. It obviously does not mean a uniform experience through which all souls must pass in precisely the same way. The process is as varied as the souls that experience it. To some it may come as a sudden event, as it came to James Fraser, Parish Minister of Culross and prisoner of Jesus Christ in the Bass Rock and in Newgate - 'I was converted that Communion week in Edinburgh as with a clap'. But not all find it so. William Law in his book on Christian Regeneration says tellingly (page 95): "It may freely be granted that Conversion to God is often very sudden and instantaneous, unexpectedly arising from variety of occasions. Thus one by seeing only a withered tree, another by reading the lives of the antediluvian fathers, one by hearing

X. See further: Appendix to Part One.

of heaven, another of hell, one by reading of the love or wrath of God, another of the sufferings of Christ, may find himself, as it were, melted into penitence all of a sudden. It may be granted also that the greatest sinner may in a moment be converted unto God, and feel himself wounded in such a degree as perhaps those never were who have been turning to God all their lives. But then it is to be observed; That this suddenness of change or flash of conviction is by no means of the essence of true Conversion, and is no more to be demanded in ourselves or others than such a light from heaven as shone round St. Paul and cast him to the ground." There are many within the kingdom of Christ who could say with John Livingstone of the Kirk of Shotts: "I do not remember any particular time of Conversion, or that I was much cast down or lift up."

To some the spiritual life comes as an intellectual experience; it means the clearing up of the mind, the convinced acceptance of things previously disbelieved or doubted; others have proved it to be a great moral event, the cleansing of a life that had been wrong; still others have encountered it as an emotional change, contrition because of past years, heaviness of mind, or the coming of peace in the midst of trouble and unrest; the visitation of joy; the feeling that some vital issue has at last been settled. William Law, following the passage just quoted, adds the caution: "No one is to expect or require of another that he receive his Conversion or awakening

from the same cause or in the same manner as he has done; that is, that heaven or hell, or the justice or the love of God, or faith in Christ either as our Light or our Atonement, must needs be the first awakening of the soul, because it has been so with him." In this, as in all else, the works of the Lord are manifold.

None the less, it is clear that in every authentic Conversion certain fundamental things happen. Just as the form in which anyone manifests individuality or personal experience of any kind in no way affects or alters the basic realities of human nature, so the form in which Conversion may come does not alter the basic principles under which it first appears. It is our object to examine these principles anew in the light of the Word of God and to state in the simplest terms the Truth concerning them. One thing at this stage need only be said. In every case, the coming of the experience of Christian Conversion is felt to be the coming of a true Revelation from God: the light of God breaks upon what was formerly obscure and difficult upon eyes darkened by sin and alienation, and shines upon the road that leads to Life. In one of the outstanding descriptions which Paul has left us of his own conversion there is a suggestive phrase concerning the quality of life to which he has been brought. "God who said 'Let there be light' has shone within my heart." (2 Cor.4,v.6) In that hour something happened comparable to the great FIAT LUX of creation's dawn. The sublime and mighty word of the

story of the Creation was apparently in his mind as he wrote of this. The darkness of the chaos, and the face of the deep upon which the Spirit of God moved in power - that was all a mirror of his own dark and chaotic experience before Christ came. Then came the almighty word of Revelation and of Life; and the light of the Eternal Love shone within his heart and mind and he was claimed of God for ever. In A Man in Christ (page 82) J.S.Stewart writes of this experience of Paul's and his comment upon it in after time: "To me, says Paul in effect, it was like that - sheer miracle, a word proceeding out of the mouth of God, a creative act of omnipotence. To me, it was the birth of light and order and purpose and beauty, the ending of chaos and ancient night. And to me, as at that first creation, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. God who said 'Let there be light' has shone within my heart; he has scorched me with His splendour, and remade me with His strength; and I now walk in a marvellous light - the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." That is the most essential of all the great convictions of the soul that has been found of God, as it is too the most spontaneous. It is ever and always 'Light from above', and the grand consummation of all is crystalised in the words: 'Whereas I was blind, now I see'.

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PART ONE

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE:

THE ESSENTIALS.

(1) INTRODUCTORY:

"He to whom the word of God speaks," says Thomas a Kempis "is set at liberty from a multitude of opinions." That is the distinctive Christian affirmation concerning the Word of God, and our study of the doctrine of Christian Conversion must first address itself to an examination of the Scriptural teaching regarding this. Like Christian in Bunyan's immortal allegory, 'the best of books must be in our hands' if we would rightly see the true way of life. In one of his lesser known works, Christ a Complete Saviour, Bunyan gives point and added emphasis to this in his own remarkable way when he says:

"Wherefore, I say, be exhorted to the study of this part of Christ's work. Read and read again and do not despair of help to understand something of the will and mind of God therein, though you think they are fast locked from you. Pray and read and pray; for a little from God is better than a great deal from men. Also what is from men is uncertain and is often tumbled over and over by men; but what is from God is fixed as a nail in a sure place. There is nothing that so abides with us as what we receive from God." As in the beginning of the Creation of the world it was the mighty 'Verbum Dei - Fiat Lux', that brought forth the glory of the handiwork of God, so in

Conversion it is ever the Word of God that creates the new life in the heart of sinful man. It is to the Holy Scriptures then that are 'able to make wise unto Salvation' that we now turn, in the furtherance of our study of this great theme.

Obviously much at this point is taken for granted. The sovereignty of the Divine Love, the whole Biblical view of man's sinful estate, the Grace that brings men nigh to the throne and heart of God, the Mystery of the Word made flesh, the Redemptive Passion of the Saviour of the world, the power of the Spirit of Life by Whom alone the benefits of Heaven's love come to men - all this and much more is accepted as basic and foundational. Our study is of the Theology of Christian Conversion, and in our examination of the New Testament teaching on the subject, it is only natural to think of the whole of the New Testament doctrine as the background to the particular elements of it that are being brought into the foreground of emphasis. It is quite unnecessary within the scope of this paper to explore the whole field of Christian Theology; it must suffice to note that this one particular section of evangelical truth can in no way be isolated from the full-orbed Revelation of Holy Scripture. The broad outlines of the New Testament doctrines are accordingly assumed as being accepted and it is within their context that our further study is now made.

These broad outlines posit the reality of the Sovereign Love of God, a love without which there could be no hope for man. Were it not for the coming of the Son of God into

the arena of conflict on behalf of man and for man's salvation, then indeed man's plight would be mortal and his estate hopeless. But all this is most blessed reality: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." (John 3, v.16) Christ has lived and died and risen again, and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High. The invitation of the everlasting Mercy has been given; "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11, v.28) All now depends on man's response. Individual destiny is determined by the response to the Revelation thus given.

By what way then does man draw nigh to God? In what manner can he respond to the Revelation that comes to him with the authentic marks upon it of divine utterance? What are the conditions to be met, what are the imperatives to be obeyed? Are there many ways into the Kingdom, or do all the ways converge at one or several points which can without violating any canons of propriety be summarised and stated with clarity and simplicity? Through what wicket gate must man pass ere he find the Christ who alone can redeem and save? To discover the answer to these and other questions we come to the Scripture of Truth and seek therein the way of Life; and as we do we find that we need not be long in doubt as to the way appointed by God for the salvation of man, for all through the inspired page this is much to the fore. To this examination we now turn.

(2) REPENTANCE:

The earliest records we have of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus give this picture and statement of His message: "Now after that John was put in prison Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand, Repent ye and believe the Gospel." (Mark 1, v,14) Thus at the very commencement of His proclamation of the way of Life, this command to Repent was enunciated clearly and insistently. It was no new message. John the Baptist, who had just been imprisoned, had for many days been baptizing in the wilderness and preaching the 'baptism of repentance for the remission of sins'. And now, as Jesus begins to publish the good news of the Kingdom of God, this clarion call is raised again by Him and the message of the forerunner which had seemed to be stilled within the fastness of prison walls, is preached with yet greater earnestness and demonstration of power. So it was too when the disciples were sent forth by their Master to preach and to heal; the burden of their message was the same as His: "They went forth and preached that men should repent" (Mark Matthew 6, v,12). On the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured forth upon all flesh and the disciples who had failed their Lord but lately, were energised with a power that was given them from above so that they faced the multitude without fear and proclaimed the truth that had been revealed to them, the same message was given: "Repent and be baptised every one of you for the remission of

sins." (Acts 2, v.38). And again: "Repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3, v.19) Significantly enough, the last book of the Bible, the Revelation of St. John, has more to say of Repentance than any other of the books of the New Testament. It is clear that the call to Repent is ever in the forefront of the evangelical proclamation. If forgiveness is to be found - and without the forgiveness of sins there can be no way of Conversion - then Repentance must first be present. Repentance in the New Testament is always associated with Forgiveness and remission of Sins: "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to Repentance," (Mark 2, v.17) were the words with which Jesus emphasised the meaning of His ministry at the very beginning in Galilee; and at the last, when in company with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, having opened to them the Scriptures, He said: "Thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day; and that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in His name among the nations beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24, v.47)

What then is Repentance? In the New Testament three words are used to express this change of life.

(1) *μεταμένοι* from *μενομαι* : to care for; combined with *μετα*, to change one's care or love. This is used five times in the New Testament.

(2) *μετανοειν* : from *νοειν* to perceive, understand, consider; combined with *μετα*, to change one's mind or purpose.

This is the verb constantly used in the New Testament to designate the change.

(3) μετανοια : noun from the source as μετανοει ,
Repentance, change of mind or purpose.

It will be at once noted, then, that in the New Testament, Repentance is a spiritual condition in which thought (νοεῖν), emotion (παρορδαι) and purpose (signified by the preposition μετα involving the will to change) are all involved. In other words, it is an activity of the whole personality; as J.G. McKenzie says in his book Psychology and Evangelism (page 142): "Repentance is a spiritual condition in which thought, emotion and will are all involved. On the cognitive side there is the knowledge of what was done, of responsibility for what was done. It is the 'Mea Culpa'. Then there is the emotion of shame, humiliation and remorse arising out of the Mea Culpa against God. Finally, the conational turning from Sin, from Egocentricity to Object-centricity. All this is involved in Repentance. To acknowledge responsibility is not the same as Mea Culpa. To experience 'penitentia' without 'metanoia' is not Repentance. The whole spiritual attitude must be changed towards Sin and towards any particular sins prominent in consciousness. There can be no qualification of this Repentance." X.

X. See further Appendix to Part One.

Christian Repentance is thus a change of heart, mind and purpose regarding Sin. The Gospel that Jesus preached was a Gospel of the Kingdom of God, that is a Gospel of righteousness and truth, and in exhorting men to repent He was exhorting them to turn from the ways of unrighteousness and untruth - which are the ways of Sin - into the highways of the Kingdom of Heaven. As Dr. G. Alexander in Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels (Vol.II, page 498) writes: "Repentance is far more than a sense of regret and sorrow for the wrongdoings of the past. It is an agonizing desire, leading to an agonizing and persistent effort, to realise such a radical change in the mind as will secure and ensure against wrongdoing in the future. Born of a realisation of our natural sinward tendency and of our hopeless inability to correct and control it, it compels us to desire above all things that change of mind and moral condition which will not only lead us to choose Righteousness but also enable us triumphantly to realise Righteousness." Karl Barth in a very pregnant sentence in The Doctrine of the Word of God (page 445) writes: "μετανοια, to reverse one's thinking, to think afresh, to think through to God and His Kingdom really also means, particularly in the New Testament, to think upon the fact that we must die." True Repentance, that is, will be so absolute and entire that it will involve the turning away in completeness and utter abandon from the life of self and the way of Sin. As the Westminster Confession puts it: "By Repentance a sinner out of a sight and sense not only of

the danger but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavouring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandment." In line with this are the words of William James in Varieties of Religious Experience (127): "Repentance is to up and act for Righteousness and forget that you ever had relations with Sin."

That is the burden of the message of the Old Testament prophets as well as of the New Testament writers. That burden was never better put than it was by Isaiah (55, v.7) "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto Jahweh and He will have mercy upon him and unto our God for He will abundantly pardon." (Compare Ezekiel 14, v.6; 18, v.31; Malachi 3, v.7). In all such passages it is made clear that no Repentance is genuine unless it includes a firm resolution to abandon Sin, as well as sincere sorrow for it. "Many of the most beautiful passages in the Prophets" says Schultz in Old Testament Theology (Vol.II, page 97) "insist that deeds, not words, prove a conversion to be true." To repent is to turn from the ways of Sin, to the ways of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, and thus to repent is to experience the blessedness of the Forgiveness of sins. "Repent therefore" said Peter (Acts 3, v.19) "and be converted that your sins may be blotted out."

How then is the soul thus brought to the place of Repentance? St. Paul, in Romans 2, v.4, declares: "Knowest thou not that it is the goodness of God that leadeth thee to Repentance?" That is the ultimate answer. In a very real sense Repentance is a gift of God. In Acts II, v.18, we read: "When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God saying: Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted Repentance unto Life." The initiative is of Heaven. It is the reality of the Revelation given by God in Jesus Christ of His love and His will for the world that opens the door of possibility for the return of man to the kingdom of the Father, and to the fellowship of His Grace. By means of the Revelation which God gives of the beauty and blessedness of Righteousness, the true estate of the soul is seen and its ugliness and wretchedness recognised. By reason too of the Revelation which God gives of His boundless compassion and longsuffering as also of His desire to save - not willing that any should perish but that all should come to Repentance - the soul dares to hope that in the depths of that mercy, mercy can be found for its own deepest sin and shame. By reason also of the Grace of Christ who in the presence of human weakness and sin says: "Neither do I condemn thee," but rather "Go and sin no more"; for "Him hath God exalted as Prince and Saviour, to give Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins." (Acts 5, v.31). Herein is the Grace of God most tellingly revealed, that while the Revelation of the Love of the Father in Jesus Christ condemns

the sinner without one word being spoken, yet through the power of the Spirit of Christ, a hunger after such Righteousness and Love are born and the pathway of Conversion is entered upon eagerly and with joy.

Such Repentance manifests itself in Confession of Sin before God. The Psalmist's words become the natural outflow of the heart: "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee and mine iniquity I have not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Psalm 32, v.5). It is the pathway ordained of Heaven's love wherein the repentant soul will gladly walk. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1, v.9). Such is the first of the essential conditions of Conversion - a true Repentance issuing in Confession of Sin. Since Sin is the barrier in the way of man on the road to God and life, there must be a fundamental change in man's outlook thereupon. The first command therefore is always the call to 'REPENT'.

(3) FAITH:

Faith is one of the fundamental words of the Christian Religion. The gift of God, the work of God and the calling of God are received and responded to in the apprehension of Faith. "We are saved by Grace through Faith." (Eph.2, v.8) When Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, His summons was not merely to Repentance but to Faith; "Repent ye and believe the Gospel" He said. "The Gospel" states St. Paul, "is the power of God unto Salvation to everyone that believeth." (Romans 1, v.16). The beloved Disciple gives the same message in I John 3, v.23, "This is His commandment that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." All through the pages of the New Testament, the word marks the very life beat of the Early Church. They were 'justified by Faith' and thus they had 'peace with God'. They 'fought the good fight of Faith and thus laid hold on Eternal Life'. 'Through Faith, they endured as seeing Him Who is invisible.' 'By Faith, things hoped for became reality to their hearts and the unseen world present and most precious to their spirits.' It is little wonder then, so marked is this emphasis in the new life which Christ brought to men, that St. Paul could speak of the New Covenant as 'the coming of Faith' (Gal. 3, v.23-25). "The life which I now live" says Paul "I live by the faith of the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal.2, v.20). And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews bluntly remarks (11, v.6) "Without Faith it is impossible to please

Him for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Faith is the veritable touchstone of the Christian Life.

The reason why Faith is emphasised, is that it is the only possible answer to the Divine Revelation. The whole of Scripture is emphatic on this. The word of the Lord came unto Abraham and he at once responded by absolute trust. (Genesis 15, vv.1-6). Between man and man the absence of Faith is a barrier to communion and it is just the same in things spiritual.

Faith in man answers to Grace in God. Faith is the correlative of promise. Trust answers to Truth; Faith renounces self and emphasises God's free gift. It is self-assertion with a view to self-surrender. As the Westminster Confession of Faith says: "By Faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God speaketh therein;

..... The principal acts of Saving Faith are accepting, receiving and resting upon Christ alone for Justification, Sanctification and Eternal Life, by virtue of the Covenant of Grace." Only by Faith can the heart of the believer intuit the Grace of God; and at the same time it is by Grace that he is enabled to intuit God's graciousness; in other words his Faith is the outcome of GRACE.

The way of Conversion, therefore, we see now to be the way of Repentance and Faith. The soul that comes to a consciousness of its own desperate need and also the willingness of God to help and succour, must turn in penitence from its sin

and its own life of self-love, and turn in Faith to the Word of God's Love, Jesus Christ, for forgiveness and deliverance. Neither of these, it must be noted, would be possible were it not for the Revelation which has come through Grace. The Righteousness of God thus revealed is the first grand act in the Salvation of the soul and upon that all else depends. This makes it accordingly clear that it is not possible to speak of the priority in time of either Repentance or Faith as against each other; they are mutually inseparable. If there can be no Repentance apart from the Revelation of the righteousness of God, and if this righteousness is revealed only to Faith as the New Testament most clearly insists, then these show themselves to be in a very practical way to be but twin aspects of the one great process of Conversion. If Faith is the condition of entrance into the experience of Salvation, the enjoyment of Eternal Life, Repentance is none the less the psychological and moral condition of Faith. As Eternal Life is unattainable without Faith, Faith is unattainable without Repentance.

It is surely significant in this connection that the whole experience of Conversion is covered in the Synoptics generally by the term Repentance, and in John exclusively by the term Faith. In the Synoptics and in the early chapters of the book of Acts the word Repentance is used in this broad comprehensive sense of turning from Sin unto God, and implicitly includes Faith which is a part of the process, the last step in it. (Cf. Luke 24, v.47). In the Fourth Gospel, on the other

hand, the reverse is the case. There Faith is the condition of salvation though Repentance is included in the idea of Faith, as e.g. in John 3, vv.15 & 36; and 5, v.44, where it is shown that a man cannot exercise Faith whose heart is not right, whose moral condition and attitude of will are opposed to the right. These two mighty activities of the soul, which are both also gifts of God through the activity of Grace, are complementary one to the other and they condition the measure in which each operates.

Our study of Christian Faith has thus brought us to see;

(I) That Faith is essential to the experience of Christian Conversion.

(II) That Faith is created by the Revelation of the Righteousness of God and is the only proper response to that Revelation.

(III) That Faith is both Passion and Action, a gift received through the power of God's word, yet a task fulfilled in Love and in Assurance of heart.

(IV) That Faith is conditioned by true Repentance, of which it is the inspiration and also the consummation.

But what is its essential nature? To answer this with the fulness and detail that are necessary for our study, it will be helpful to look at the various emphases that are made by the several writers of the New Testament regarding Faith.

(A) THE SYNOPTICS.

The word that is used in the New Testament for Faith is *πίστις*, a noun derived from the verb *πειθω* to persuade, convince. It has various shades of meaning attached to it, such as fidelity, goodfaith, sincerity, assent to the truth, but supremely it is used to signify trust in God, Faith in or directed towards God and His Revelation. It is significant that nowhere in the New Testament is this word used of man's faith in man; it is always Faith towards God that is signified. The Synoptics use the Word very largely in the sense of Faith in God as manifested in Christ with a view to physical help, what is known as 'Miracle Faith'. Our Lord was unable to do many mighty works of healing and of mercy in His own home town, because of the unbelief of those who dwelt there (Matthew 13, v.58). The blind men who came seeking for restoration of their sight were told that 'according to their Faith it would be done unto them' (Matthew 9, v.29). Full often words such as these fell from His gracious lips: 'Thy Faith hath saved thee', 'Thy Faith hath made thee whole, go in Peace.' Faith here is predominantly the means whereby the healing power of Christ's love becomes operative in individual lives; in other words, it is taken as being the principal agent in opening the way to the influence of Christ. It has not yet come to the point of soteriological significance, in the sense of 'Saving Faith'. Not that this is wholly excluded. There are instances where this word *πίστις* does seem to have this meaning: as for example

"Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh shall He find Faith on the earth?" (Luke 18, v.8). The allied verb *πιστεω* when used has also this association of meaning. The command of Christ at the outset of His ministry was: "Repent and believe". Luke has a most pregnant word in 8, v.12, where, speaking of the parable of the Sower, he writes; "Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the Devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." Here is 'Saving Faith', evidently in its most unique sense. Generally speaking, however, the term is to some extent undeveloped in meaning in the Synoptics. The vital contribution to its meaning that is given here appears to be two-fold.

(I) It is always Faith in God in Jesus Christ.

(II) It is the supreme agent in releasing the power of Christ to heal and save.

Any further extension of meaning must be regarded as only implicit within the meaning of the term.

(B) ACTS AND EPISTLES.

In the Acts and the Epistles *πιστις* acquires a new and much fuller significance, and comes to be almost a full technical term in the sense of 'Saving Faith'. As G.H.Box says in Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels (Vol.I, page 569): "In the Epistles it rapidly came to stand as a synonym for Christianity, marking out the new religion as essentially characterised by Faith or Belief in Jesus as Redeemer.

Believers became the designation of Christians; 'To Believe' came to mean to become a Christian."

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16, v.31) were the words of St. Paul to the Philippian jailor, and this great content of meaning is taken up and developed by him in all his writings to the churches of his day. Over against the Righteousness of the Law, he set the Righteousness of Faith, that which is born of Saving Faith in the Son of God, and he preached with all the passion of utter conviction that by the works of the Law none could be justified, that Justification was solely and supremely by Faith. "Being justified by Faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5, v.1). Faith is now upheld as the sovereign agent in the experience of Conversion and of salvation unto Life. Not only has the character of the word changed but the whole content of it has also been immeasurably extended and deepened. 'To believe' now is not merely to trust in the power of Jesus for healing and help, but it is filled with all the content of the Gospel of the Grace of God. In his letter to the church in Corinth, St. Paul elaborates his statement of the implications of the Gospel in the following words: (I Cor. 15, v.1): "Moreover brethren I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you

first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." 'To believe', it is evident from this, now involves knowledge and acceptance of these great facts. Special importance was attached by St. Paul to the third of these great statements, as is seen in other of his epistles to the churches of his day; note, for example, Romans 10, v.9: "For if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Saving Faith, in the eyes of St. Paul, is Faith in God as manifested in Jesus Christ and upon the whole of the work of Christ in life, death and resurrection. This, of course, demands belief in Him as the Son of God - the Resurrection is the final affirmation of God that this is so; "He was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of Holiness by the Resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1, v.4).

From this review of the position in the Acts and the Epistles the following points can be noted in summary:

(I) Faith is the sovereign agent in the experience of Conversion through Grace. "We are saved by Grace through Faith" (Eph.2, v.8).

(II) Faith in the fullest and truest and most Christian sense will be founded upon the facts of the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

(III) Faith involves acceptance of the claim of Jesus to be the Son of God.

(IV) Faith accomplishes a decision of the will by means of which the entire life is yielded to the power of Divine Grace, and the whole personality is founded upon God.

(C) JOHANNINE LITERATURE.

In the writings of John, Faith is ever used in the sense of Saving Faith. The word *πίστις* is never found, but its corresponding verb *πιστεύω* is here employed more often than by any other writer in the New Testament. Constantly the writer leads his hearers to consider the need for an absolute belief in Jesus Christ, as e.g. in John 14, v.1; "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." The whole object of the writing of the Gospel is stated to be the creation of Faith in Christ as the Son of God. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have Life through His name." (John 20, v.31). That, of course, is a heart-Faith, not merely a theological opinion about Jesus that He is the Son of God. It is such a conviction of heart as leads to trust in Him and to submission to the claims of His will.

There are points in the Fourth Gospel where the words Faith (*πίστις*) and Knowledge (*γινώσκω*) are practically interchangeable, and this is a significant fact in our study of this question. "We believe and are sure" says

peter to Jesus "that Thou art that Christ the Son of the Living God." (John 6, v.69). In the great high-priestly prayer, Jesus Himself says: "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and known surely that I came out from Thee and they have believed that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17, v.8). Such knowledge as is here referred to signifies a consciousness of eternal Truth, while Faith signifies its immediate apprehension and appropriation. This knowledge or assurance is the outcome of Faith which conditions its reception. Both Faith and knowledge are related in particular to Eternal Life, but Faith is the condition of entrance into that Life while knowledge is its character. (Cf. John 17, v.3; "This is Life Eternal that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent"; and John 6, v.40 "This is the will of Him that sent Me that everyone which seeth the Son and believeth on Him, may have Everlasting Life.") We have travelled a long way from the straightforward meaning of Faith in the Synoptics, where Faith in God was the condition of obtaining some miraculous benefit. Now, Faith is of the very essence of Salvation. Conversion to God is consummated by God in the gift of Eternal Life and that Life is entered into through Faith in the Son of God, a Life characterised by a knowledge of God surpassing all other things. Faith is the abandonment of Self, and the surrender of the life to Christ. In John 2, v.24, we read: "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them because He knew all men." This word 'Commit' is the

same ~~received~~ of so many other passages, and in John 1, v.12, and 3, v.16, the same significance persists: "To as many as received Him, to them gave He authority to become sons of God, even to them that believe on His name"; and "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting Life." To believe in Him is to commit oneself to Him, and such surrender and acceptance is to enter into Life.

We see therefore now in the writings of John the following outstanding points have emerged into clearer relief;

- (I) Faith is soteriological in significance.
- (II) Faith is ever centered on Jesus Christ the Son of God.
- (III) Faith is associated with knowledge of God.
- (IV) Faith is named as the essential key of Entrance to Eternal Life.
- (V) Faith is surrender to Christ and acceptance of His Spirit. X.

From all this we observe the following principles of the experience of Faith.

- (I) It is by the apprehension and the act of Faith that a sinner is delivered from bondage to Sin and is united to Christ.
- (II)/

X. See further Appendix to Part One.

(II) In this act of Faith the whole nature of man is engaged; affections, understanding, will. In what we call Saving Faith the soul reaches out towards God; our understanding approves, our affections desire our will accepts the Salvation of God. Dr. Emil Brunner writing of this in The Word and the World (page 72) says tersely: "Faith is neither a psychological function nor a combination of such functions: it is the life utterance of the total self in its unanalysable unity. Faith is the totality act of personality. I say on purpose THE totality act of personality: for Faith is the only such act. Outside of Faith the Ego is not capable of a totality act: it is divided."

(III) Faith directs itself to the word of God; not to the Scriptures as writings merely, but as the utterance of Divine Truth, the assurance of the Almighty. Faith thus terminates in God; and as God reveals Himself only in Christ, Saving Faith is Faith in the Saviour. It is not Faith in a proposition, a record or doctrine, a creed or scripture; it is Faith in Him Who is the Word of God, it is personal trust in a Redeemer.

(IV) Faith and Repentance are indissolubly linked together. Repentance is truly evangelical. It is bound up with a sense of the saving mercy of God in Christ. It is a turning from sin unto God. It thus conditions Faith while it itself is the veritable outflow of Faith.

(V) Faith is thus - as Karl Heim in Glaube und Denken (page 390) so well says - a 'Standing before God'. It is the

proper and only response to the Revelation which God has given in His Son Jesus Christ.

(VI) Faith in its birth act is single, naked and alone. But, like 'Hesperus that led the starry host' it calls out into experience and recognition the galaxy of the Christian virtues, for the sum of spiritual energy is implicit in it.

(VII) By Faith the soul is converted to God and regenerated, being blessed with the forgiveness of Sin. Faith is never the ground of such Forgiveness and Justification; it is only its means or channel. Faith is the acknowledgment of individual inability and the admission of the need of Another's ability.

(VIII) Faith issues in assurance and knowledge of the Truth. Calvin says in his Institutes (Book 3, ch.2, sect.7): "We shall have a complete definition of Faith if we say that it is a steady and certain knowledge of the Divine Benevolence towards us which, being founded on the Truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds and confirmed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit."

(IX) All this is the work of God through the Holy Spirit. To hear the word of God, to accept Divine Truth, to answer in Faith to the Revelation of God in Christ, is not man's act or man's possession. It is ever and always - 'Grace through Faith'. It is in the communion of the Holy Ghost that the soul dares to lift up its head.

(4) CONFESSION.

There is one other great aspect of the way of Conversion which must not be overlooked at this point of our study, as most certainly it was not overlooked by the Early Church and by those who then wrote of the Christian way: this is the need for Confession of Christ. Indeed it would almost appear - as we shall note shortly - that certain passages of the New Testament imply that Confession of Christ is a necessary condition of the reception of the Grace of Forgiveness and the benefits of the Work of Christ. That may not be altogether so, but it serves to emphasise the deep significance which the Church from the very earliest attached to the Confession of Christ. The great confessions of Faith by Psalmist, Priest and Prophet of the Old Testament are carried forward into the New Covenant and given new content in the confession of Christ. It is around the person of Jesus that the confession of the believer's Faith constantly gathers in the New Testament, and it will be readily recognised why this is so. If personal Faith in Jesus Christ constitutes the very essence of Christianity, as we have already noted, Confession is equally of its essence since Confession is the necessary utterance of Faith. "With the heart" writes St. Paul in Romans 10, v.10, "man believeth unto Righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto Salvation."

That our Lord Himself laid great stress on such confession of Faith is evident from His words in Matthew 10, v.32, occurring in His instruction to the Disciples before being

sent forth on their ministry of preaching and healing:

"Whosoever therefore will confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in Heaven." This same truth He taught with even greater emphasis from its negative standpoint: "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven." (Matthew 10, v.33). It is most noteworthy too that the impressive words of Matthew 16, v.18 should have been called forth by a confession of Faith such as had not been heard before. Through the Revelation of the Father, Peter has been led to declare Jesus to be the Son of God, and to that Jesus answers; "Blessed art thou Simon Bar Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven. And I say unto you, that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." It is clear from the context that this outstanding statement of Jesus was called forth by the reality and conviction of the saying of the Apostle Peter, and it is evident that in so far as Peter in person is named it is as a type of believing confession that the promise is given to him; and it is on the firm and rock-like foundation of such a confession as his, that Jesus says His Church will be built. In other words, no Confession, no Church.

It was natural therefore that the Early Church should put this in the forefront of its message and insist on a decisive and clear-cut confession of individual Faith before men. There had to be an absolute break with the old way of life and a

complete surrender to the claims of the new. Christian Baptism, which thenceforth took a central place in the Church's Faith, involved and evidenced such a confession of Christ before men. It was the witness of the soul to the power and grace of Christ and of the Soul's separation to His claim and commandment. St. Paul is most emphatic in his statement of the necessity of Confession for the enjoyment of the blessedness of God's Salvation: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved," (Romans 10, v.9), and again amongst his words of commendation of Timothy he lists the following: (1 Timothy 6, v.12): "Thou hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." The writer of Hebrews has a similar emphasis. Here Jesus is spoken of as "the Apostle and High Priest of our Confession," (3, v.1), and the readers of the letter are urged to hold such a confession fast, (4, v.14: 10, v.23). The same insistence is found in the writings of the Apostle John who is at one with the rest of the Sacred writers in his view of the spiritual necessity and value of Confession. "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." (I John 4, vv.2-3)

It cannot be doubted therefore with this volume of evidence before us that for the Early Church Confession was a

vital part of the experience of Conversion. Not only must man turn in Penitence from Sin and in Faith to Christ, the Revelation of God, but rightly and fully to enjoy the blessings of the Salvation thus apprehended Confession of his Faith must be made before men. Nor is it difficult to understand why this should be so. For Confession is at once the test and the evidence of Faith. In a very real sense, man is what he says he is. Out of the abundance - or the emptiness - of the heart, the mouth speaks. The reality of one's Faith is made manifest by the strength of the Confession made regarding it. It is impossible, indeed, to separate these two from one another, for, as J.C.Lambert in Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels (Vol.I, page 359) says: "They are really one and the same spiritual magnitude in its inward and outward aspects. The word of Faith, as St. Paul says, is at once in the mouth and in the heart, (Romans 10, v.8) and whatever value belongs to Faith as a vital and saving power, necessarily belongs to Confession also."

It is surely fitting at this point to call to remembrance the facts of the early ministry of Jesus in Galilee. The Gospel that He preached was the Gospel of the Kingdom and He summoned men to the new way of Life by the words: "Repent and believe the Gospel." But there was more than that. The word that is most frequently upon His lips, particularly when dealing with individuals, is 'Follow': 'Follow Me'. A careful study of the relevant passages leads one naturally to assume that the men thus addressed had already listened to His message, had been

convinced of the Truth of His claim, had in measure turned towards the way thus revealed, but the final and decisive step had not been taken. This could only be through complete identification with Him, in His life and custom, and so this challenging command is given them by Jesus: "Follow ME". They had to confess their Faith and had to "Follow Him". In this great act of Confession, they at once gave witness to their Faith in this Man who had called them to follow, to become His disciples, and they made thus all the more effective a band of disciples. Committed by the deed of their Confession, they could not go back from Him while the full significance of their initial step of surrender became more and more apparent the more they knew of their Lord.

With this stated, we find that the fundamentals have been noted which the New Testament states to be essential to man's Conversion. The response ordained of God to be given to His Love and Redemptive Work in Christ are the acts of Repentance, Faith and Confession. Where the soul, out of a due sense of its need and sin and an apprehension of the Grace of God in Christ, resolves to turn from the path of Sin and to embrace the benefits of the Love of Christ, staking all upon the reality of the Word of God as revealed in Christ, that soul is truly converted unto God; and the inevitable and spontaneous desire of the life thus changed, will be to be a witness to the Truth thus received. In this way, old things pass away and all things become new. The long entail of Sin is broken and a

new life begun through the power of the Living Christ. The whole personality, unified in the great apprehension of Faith as it could not otherwise have been, is fixed and grounded in God and finds abiding peace in the true home of the Soul.

CHAPTER II.

EVANGELICAL EXPERIENCE AND EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE.

(1) INTRODUCTORY:

The Bible is the greatest piece of biographical literature in the world. It is the record of experience - that is its appeal and warrant. It was first lived and then written. It was first an experience and afterwards a record. The great doctrines of the New Testament were not first developed as an aid to the promotion of a Christian experience; they were the inevitable outflow and extension of the experiences which believing men had passed through. Thus it came to pass that in the development of the various doctrines of Christianity, many and varied were the descriptions and records given of the reception of Divine Grace. The experience passed through coloured the whole outlook of the heart and mind as they came to give expression to the Truth of Salvation. This is not to suggest inconsistency in the record of Scripture, but only to emphasise its infinite variety and many-sidedness of approach to the realities of Divine Revelation and Grace, and of man's response to the Truth. Some of the Evangelical writers indeed seem to have been at a loss to describe adequately the measure of the Grace that had drawn nigh to them bringing Salvation. Like Luther at a later day who cried out under the same burden of striving for expression: "We are like young children learning

to speak, and can only use half words and quarter words", so did the writers of the New Testament feel that the resources of language could not express all that they wanted to say. It follows therefore that the study of the experience of Conversion in the New Testament as illustrated, described and defined therein, cannot be anything else but complex and extensive. The emphasis of the Synoptics is not the emphasis of the Johannine writings; St. Paul traverses country that the writers of Acts and Hebrews leave uncharted; and yet all are vital to a full comprehension of the will of God in man's Salvation. It will be necessary therefore to look in some detail and in order at the various New Testament groups of writings if we would have the full panorama before us of the scope of man's Conversion unto God. We turn accordingly to study the experience of Conversion as revealed in (I) The Synoptics; (II) St. Paul's Writings; (III) Hebrews; (IV) The Johannine Literature.

(2) THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS:

(a) The Kingdom of God: The concept of the Kingdom of God was of paramount importance in the teaching of Jesus. St. Matthew informs us that the message which Jesus proclaimed first of all throughout Galilee was: "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (3, v.2); and St. Mark (1, v.14) declares: "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God." Thus we have the very earliest writers recording this unique fact that the burden of the message of Jesus from the very beginning was that of the Kingdom of God. The purpose of His mission and ministry was to establish the Kingdom of God amongst men, and there is ample evidence to demonstrate that not only was Jesus in His own view the Founder of the Kingdom, but it is His kingdom as well as His Father's and He is Lord and King over it. (Cf. Matt. 13, v.41; 16, v.28; 20, v.21; 25, vv.34-40; etc.) Into the full meaning and significance of this, it is not necessary for this study to enter, save only to mark the nature of the Kingdom thus established. It was a spiritual kingdom: "My Kingdom is not of this world" said Jesus to Pilate "else would my disciples fight." (John 19, v.36). That is not to suggest that the Kingdom of God would not have an impact upon society surrounding it, but to emphasise that the whole weight of the teaching of Jesus is rested upon the inward disposition, on the new relation to God, on the new life of the Spirit, on the new hopes and privileges of the Sons of God. It was a new principle of Divine Rule in

the hearts of men, in virtue of which those who had been received into it were changed in disposition and became servants of Righteousness and of God. The conditions of entrance into this Kingdom were those we have already noted - Repentance and Faith; and it is within the sphere of the Kingdom that the Covenant blessings of God are bestowed upon men - the Forgiveness of Sins, the Satisfaction of Spiritual Need, the Gift of Righteousness and the Blessedness of Eternal Life (Cf. Matt. 5, vv.3-10; 6, v.14; 19, v.29; Luke 4, v.18). Writing of the teaching of Jesus regarding the Kingdom, A.M. Fairbairn in The Philosophy of the Christian Religion (page 389) has some words that cannot be bettered: "On the basis of love to God and man, He built up a Kingdom, out of which the wicked in his wickedness was excluded, but into which the most wicked could by Conversion enter and become the most holy. In this Kingdom all men were to be brothers and all sons of God; their worship of Him was to be a service of love expressed in obedience and realised within the community of the saints. Instead of outside rules, an internal law was to reign: men were to live in the spirit and speak in the Truth. It was a new idea of God, of man, of religion, each of these singly, all of them together, and all conceived as man's and not as limited to any elect race or conditioned by any sacred class."

In this we have one of the most outstanding of the emphases of the Synoptic Gospels. The concept is, of course, not lacking in the rest of the New Testament, but it is here

that it receives its most pointed and best illustrated form. In bringing His message to the people of His day, our Lord gathered up much of the golden prospect of Old Testament prophecy around Himself, and taught the reality of the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world, of its power over its citizens, of its character of Grace and of its ultimate sovereign triumph. The soul that has turned to God in Penitence and Faith is welcomed into the Kingdom of God; he becomes a citizen of another and a better country; he is a servant of the most high God and of Jesus Christ His Son, Who is the King of the Kingdom. Within the walls of the city of this Kingdom, his protection and his provision are sure; Faith is made perfect in Obedience, and Love is regnant in it all.

(b) The Forgiveness of Sin, Closely allied with the great concept of the Kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus is that of the Forgiveness of Sins. The most outstanding fact of all regarding the Kingdom, is that it is a Kingdom of souls forgiven, men and women who though sinful have received the Pardon of God. Dr. H.R.Mackintosh has some significant words to say regarding this in The Christian Experience of Forgiveness (page 2): "The Forgiveness of Sins has a fundamental significance in the teaching of Jesus Christ. History reveals no prophet or founder of religion who came forward, as He did, with the claim to have power under God to forgive Sin. His contemporaries obviously were aware that in adopting this attitude, His intention was not simply to proclaim the general truth or principle that

Forgiveness is a possible thing, but rather to offer Himself with pronounced emphasis as the guarantee of its reality. In His person the Kingdom of God is here. This He said as a Jew to Jewish hearers. But by all the higher minds of Jewish Religion, Forgiveness had invariably been regarded as foremost among the blessings which the advent of the Kingdom would secure."

In coming face to face with the fact of the forgiveness of Sins, we have met the most astounding thing announced by the Christian Gospel, the thing which makes the Gospel, the thing which is "wholly Other" than anything sinful man could have deserved or expected. Dr. J.S. Whale writes in his small book on Christian Doctrine (page 65): "The prophets witnessed to this incalculable factor in history, which they can only describe as 'the mighty acts of God'. They testify to a dimension of the other-worldly and the supernatural, impinging upon history, and transforming it into the sacred history of God's coming. Anything worthy to be called the Kingdom of God, must be more than the product of a natural evolution. It must be something about which you can only say: "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes." Here we find the most amazing fact in the world - "the redeeming Pardon of God."

The Synoptic Gospels have this outstanding fact in the forefront of their record. Time and time again, Jesus is represented in His divine ministry as conferring the gift of Forgiveness upon sinful people. By far the most common verb

used is ἀφίεω which occurs about forty times in the Synoptics and only seven times elsewhere in the New Testament; the corresponding noun ἀφίεω - forgiveness, also occurs more often in the Synoptics and Acts than elsewhere.^{X.} Later writers came to use the more theological concept of Justification but with very little difference in the content of meaning. The evidence, then, is clear. Our earliest records show us Jesus Christ as putting the necessity and the reality of Forgiveness in the very forefront of His message and allying this closely with the kindred truth of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of the Forgiven. The blessings of Conversion are at the one time welcome into the Kingdom of God and acceptance of the Grace of Forgiveness. The narrow wicket gates of Repentance and Faith open the way to the spacious lands of the Love of God and the still waters of the Peace of a great Forgiveness.

(3) SAINT PAUL:

When we pass beyond the words of Jesus we come to St. Paul, greatest of all the expositors of the Way of Salvation. His central theme was 'The Gospel' which was 'the power of God unto Salvation to everyone that believeth'; and of the richness of the Grace of God which brought this Gospel to men, Paul never tired to speak. It is to Paul that we owe some of the most striking descriptions of what man's Salvation essentially means, and we now turn to examine the outstanding emphases of his teaching on this great subject.

X. See Appendix to Part One.

(a) Reconciliation: St. Paul was the great preacher of Reconciliation. The term, indeed, owes its currency in the Church to him. It is he who describes what Conversion really means in the words: "We have received the Reconciliation". (Romans 5, v.11); it is he who says: "All things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 5, v.18). The ministry of Reconciliation was for him life's supreme ministry: the Apostolic Gospel was "The Gospel of the Reconciliation"; the great appeal to man was concentrated in the cry: "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5, v.20). For Paul, the experience of Conversion was the experience of Reconciliation.

This great Gospel of Reconciliation that Paul proclaimed so insistently is connected in the closest possible way by him with the statement of the necessity it has to meet. It is not possible here to make a detailed examination of all his teaching, but it must be stressed that for Paul the greatest of all realities concerning man in his relationship to God, was that of his 'Alienation', his 'Enmity', his 'Disobedience', all of them the manifestation and outcome of Sin. It is over against this situation that the doctrine of Reconciliation is proclaimed. The New Testament word for Reconciliation is $\kappa α τ α λ λ α γ η$ and with this are connected the verbs $\kappa α τ α λ λ α σ κ ω$ and $\acute{\alpha} π ο κ α τ α λ λ α σ κ ω$ ^{X.} In addition to these terms, however, there

X. See Appendix to Part One.

are in Paul certain words and phrases which express the same idea - for example, "made peace" (Col.1, v.20) "made nigh" (Eph.2, v.13), et.al.. No better passages can be cited for a crystallisation of Paul's thought than Romans 5, v.10; "If when we were enemies (~~ἐχθροὶ~~) we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son", and Colossians 1, v.21; "You being in times past alienated, and enemies in your mind by your evil works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." The word ~~καταλλάξῃ~~ must therefore be regarded as denoting a change from enmity to friendship. As Dr. Denney writes in The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation (page 142): "Paul connects in the closest possible way the announcement of his Gospel and the announcement of the necessity which it has to meet. 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel for in it the Righteousness of God is revealed for the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the Truth in unrighteousness'. The Revelation of God's Righteousness is necessitated by the Revelation of God's wrath. We require the Gospel because apart from it that is what awaits us." Man, says Paul, in sin is under the condemnation of Heaven and at enmity with God, and his supreme need is to be reconciled to the One from Whom he is alienated.

This reconciliation is accomplished and realised in Christ. Paul speaks of Christ as Him $\delta\iota\ \alpha\upsilon\ \nu\acute{o}\nu\ \tau\eta\check{\nu}$
 $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\gamma\check{\nu}\ \epsilon\lambda\lambda\acute{o}\nu\epsilon\upsilon$ (Romans 5, v.11). In 2 Corinthians 5,
 vv.14-20, Paul gives glowing expression to the greatness of the

Salvation wrought for man by God: "For the Love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold all things are become new. And all things are of God who hath reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of Reconciliation. To wit that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of Reconciliation." Reconciliation is born of God. Reconciliation is God coming to men in Grace. Reconciliation is God's Revelation to man in his need and weakness; and all this is summed up and offered in Christ. It is significant that immediately preceding the great words of Reconciliation in Colossians 1, vv.20-22, is the statement that it was God's good pleasure to suffer His *Υἱόν* to dwell in Christ, and it is from that great fact that there corresponds His will *ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀποκαταλλάξει ἡμᾶς πάντα εἰς ἑαυτόν*.

Furthermore, it is the Christ crucified through Whom this Reconciliation is consummated. Peace is made 'through the blood of His Cross'. We are 'made nigh by the blood of Christ'. To quote again, Colossians 1, v.21, we read: "You that sometime were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death."

Paul always speaks of Reconciliation as flowing directly from the Cross of Christ. It was on the Cross that the conditions were fulfilled that made Reconciliation possible. There, every element of the mighty reality of Sin, as that reality is determined in the Divine order, was met by Christ. There, Sin was exhausted in His experience on the Cross; the Cup was not merely tasted, it was drained. Of this there can be no question. Reconciliation is won for men by Christ Who has realised to the uttermost in His own Person all that Sin meant, Who has felt - in Dr. Denney's fine phrase - "all the waves break over Him in which God's reaction against Sin comes home to us sinners."

Just because of the completeness of the work accomplished by Christ, the Reconciliation which is wrought for man is absolute and final. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8, v.1). Neither Sin nor Death, neither the flesh nor the Law, can depress or discourage the man who believes absolutely in Christ. He is a new creation - he is reconciled unto God. The enmity is dissolved, the peace is made which makes life glorious. This is Conversion in its most exalted sense. Converted unto God, man is welcomed into the very heart of the love of the Father and in the Faith of the Son of God Who loved and gave Himself for men, the old order is overthrown and life is born which is life indeed.

(b) Justification: The great doctrine of Justification by Faith was another of the outstanding concepts of Paul; the doctrine that the sinful are received into sonship and peace with God, not because of any good works or holiness on their part - as though they could deserve so great a salvation - but only and altogether because of His infinite mercy, freely granted to all who in Repentance and Faith cast themselves on His forgiving love in Jesus Christ. The experience of Conversion was not only an experience of Reconciliation but of Justification before God. Reconciliation is the subjective experience by which the soul is brought into fellowship with God, while Justification is the new objective relationship which accompanies the change.

Dr. H.R. Mackintosh in The Christian Experience of Forgiveness (page 3) points out that there is practically no difference in meaning between Forgiveness and Justification, and cites Romans 4, vv.5-7, as an instance where Paul takes Justification and Forgiveness as equivalents. He states; "How these ideas, if rightly interpreted, really differ, is hard to see. It may no doubt be held that Forgiveness is only a negative thing, meaning no more than that past sin is blotted out, and the slate as it were wiped clean; whereas Justification, as having positive implications, lays down that God puts the sinful right with Himself, not merely obliterating Sin but receiving the penitent into Fellowship as righteous in His sight. In this point of view, it is easy to say that Justification is

more and better than mere Pardon In theory, the distinction may be possible; it has not the slenderest bearing on experience. What is certain is that the God and Father of Jesus Christ cannot be thought of as doing a purely negative thing, namely, cancel the sinner's guilt, except as in and by this act, He takes him to His heart as a repentant child."

The fact of Justification by Faith was, for Paul, a theme of abiding wonder. Born and reared as he was in the atmosphere of Pharisaism with the emphasis on the works of the Law, this miracle of Justification captivated him with all the greater power. The word itself is legalistic and judicial in tone. Long before Paul, it had been used in the sense of 'Declare righteous', and it is this sense and not that of 'making righteous' that Paul uses. Thus it was that Justification could only be of GOD, for only God could, in His knowledge of the human heart declare man righteous. Despite the fact that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, yet the glad tidings of the Gospel is that God offers to sinful men Justification, in pure Grace, provided that they have Faith. Though the weakness and sinfulness of man leave him without a single claim to mercy, yet God in love welcomes the unacceptable and declares them righteous through virtue of their Faith.

Two words are linked indissolubly in Paul's teaching on Justification, namely Grace and Faith, *Χαρις* and *πίστις*. We are 'Justified freely by His Grace through the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus' (Romans 3, v.24), and 'To him that

worketh not but believeth on him that Justifieth the ungodly, his Faith is counted for Righteousness' (Romans 4, v.5). Of this Dr. R.S.Franks in Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels writes (page 918): "As proceeding from the Divine Grace, Justification by Faith is totally opposed to Justification by works which depend on merit. (Romans 4, v.4). Instead of attaining a Righteousness by his own efforts, the believer submissively receives a Righteousness which is wholly of God and His gift, (Romans 5, v.17; 10, v.3). This casts light upon the Pauline conception of Faith. It is the method by which the Grace of God is subjectively appropriated. In so far as the believer, instead of acting on his own initiative, allows himself to be determined by God (Romans 10, v.3), Faith is a species of Obedience; thus St. Paul speaks of the 'Obedience of Faith' (Romans 1, v.5). But in so far as it is correlative to Grace, Faith is psychologically 'Trust', a believing 'on God'.

It need hardly be said that while Faith is the medium of Justification, it is not nor can it ever be the ground of Justification or acceptance before God. The sole ground of the sinner's Justification is Christ in His Person and Work, His blood and Righteousness. Faith is evoked by the sight of the Crucified and Faith in committing the soul to the keeping of the One thus revealed, creates the condition whereby God, for Christ's sake, declares the sinful righteous in His sight. Thus this word, legalistic in its form and association, becomes the great expositor of a religion of unreserved Grace. Grace is made to

triumph over Law in terms derived from the Law itself.

The experience of Conversion thus unfolds itself in ever greater terms of wonder. The soul that out of its Sin turns to God through Jesus Christ, is at once Reconciled and Justified through Forgiveness and acceptance before God.

(c) Union with Christ: Yet another great truth which was very real and vital to the heart and mind of St. Paul must be noted if our study is to be in any way adequate. The experience of Conversion in addition to being an experience of Reconciliation and Justification was one of being united to Christ. Professor H.A.A. Kennedy in The Theology of the Epistles (page 124) points out that for Paul, Faith means 'the trustful surrender of his whole being to Christ as crucified and risen, and the complete identification of himself with Christ's attitude to God and to Sin'. The longer one lives in company with Paul, the more does this become apparent. For him, no blessing of God was possible save only as it came through Christ, and the greatest of all miracles of Grace to him was the fact that through Faith the soul is linked with Christ and that the life thus begun is a life of constant, abiding fellowship with Him. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor.5, v.17): "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave himself for me": (Galatians 2, v.20).

The illustrations with which Paul emphasises this fundamental truth are most striking. There is the great passage in I Cor. 12, in which Paul likens the union of the believer to Christ to that of the organic unity of the head and the members of the body. "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whither we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." Or again, there is the place where Paul illustrates this truth by the moral oneness of husband and wife (Eph. 5, v. 25). "Husbands love your lives even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it: that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave His father and mother and shall be joined unto His wife and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and His Church." The influence of this permeates all Paul's writings. The gifts and Grace of God are revealed and appropriated 'in Christ': the life that he lived was only life indeed, as it was 'in Christ'. 'I, yet not I' was the key-note of his whole experience.

The experience of Conversion was thus an 'ingrafting into Christ', and the life of a converted man could be adequately described by the words: 'Life in Christ', or 'Life in the Spirit'.

It is in virtue of union with Christ that the sinner is forgiven - "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8, v.1). It is in the power of this union that the long entail of Sin is broken: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the Law but under Grace."

(Romans 6, v.14). It is in union with Christ that the believer is made to become a fellow-labourer with Him for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. In 2 Cor. 5, v.21 and 6, v.1, though the connection is somewhat obscure by the separation of the chapters, we read: "He hath made Him to be Sin for us who knew no Sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We then as workers together with Him, beseech you that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain." It is in virtue of being made 'Righteousness in Him' that Paul can speak of being a 'Worker together with him'. To this there was no limit in Paul's view. It was his passion that whether by life or by death, he should 'know Him and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto His death'.

Here then we touch the fountainhead of the new power by which the new life is to be maintained. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4, v.13) says Paul. Here is the new moral dynamic which nourishes virtue and saps the roots of vice. Here is the grand inspiration to high and holy living. In virtue of this union with Christ, it becomes possible for duty to be done, for Temptation to be

vanquished, for trials to be endured: "My Grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12, v.9). It must never, of course, be forgotten that all this is possible only through Faith. "The life which I now live I live in Faith in the Son of God." (Gal.2, v.20). Furthermore it is in this new life in Christ, that the Spirit of Jesus works in the heart all that is of Virtue and Praise. The springs of the whole being are cleansed, new motives take action, the understanding is enlightened, the will response naturally to the impulse of Righteousness, the Love of God is shed abroad in the heart and the Master's compassion for men becomes one's own. And all this because - as Paul in Faith could say - "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." (Galatians 2, v.20)

In A Man in Christ, (J.S.Stewart) writing of Paul's own spiritual experience, has some words that make fitting conclusion to this section of our study. (Page 147) "The heart of Paul's religion is union with Christ. This more than any other conception - more than Justification, more than Sanctification, more even than Reconciliation - is the key which unlocks the secret of his soul. Within the Holy of Holies which stood revealed when the veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom on the day of Damascus, Paul beheld Christ summoning him and welcoming him in infinite love into vital unity with Himself. If one seeks for the most characteristic sentences the Apostle ever wrote, they will be found not where he is refuting the Legalists or vindicating his apostleship or meditating upon

eschatological hopes or giving practical ethical guidance to the Church, but where his intense intimacy with Christ comes to expression. Everything that religion meant for Paul is focussed in such great words as these: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (Gal. 2, v.20; Romans 8, v.1; 1 Cor.6, v.17).

(d) Election: There is yet one further emphasis of Paul's which must be set beside those that have been already noted. It must be remembered that it was out of the deepest experience of his own life that Paul was speaking as he elaborated his mighty arguments concerning the doctrine of Truth. Reconciliation, Justification, Union with Christ - these all were elaborated and illustrated out of his own amazing experience of having been reconciled, of having been justified, of being 'in Christ'. So too was it with his great thought of Election: this was the outflow of his conviction and his own abiding experience of God. He knew that he had been set apart to this holy task by no other hands than the hands of Christ. In his own words, he was *συνδος, κλητος, ἀποστόλος, ἀφορισμένος* and in it all, the love of God was present giving to him the power to respond to the high calling of the Holy One. Of this Barth writes in his Commentary on the Romans (page 27) in words which he would still fully endorse: "The man who is now speaking is an emissary, bound to perform his duty, the minister of his

king, a servant not a master." Everywhere and all the time we behold him regarding himself as one actually predestined to his apostolic ministry by God. 'The God who hath set me apart from my very birth called me by His Grace: He revealed His Son in me that I might preach Him to the Gentiles.' (Gal. 1, v.15).

It is in this way that we come to the very keystone of Paul's doctrine of Election. "We shall never understand the doctrine" writes J.S.Stewart in A Man in Christ (page 143) "as it appears in the Epistles until we realise that it runs back to the personal experience of a man who by the fact of his conversion discovered himself to be elected of God, marked out by Divine decree for service and ambassadorship. He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1, v.4). Predestination, in this aspect, is just another name for Grace. It is safe to say that if Paul's interpreters had always kept this personal background adequately in view, many of the enormities of interpretation which have overshadowed the whole idea of Election, making it productive of misery and misgiving for thousands of pious souls, could never have been perpetrated. What Paul is really trying to do, is not to suggest misgivings but to remove them. He is bidding anxious souls reflect that their religion stands, in the last resort, not upon their choice of Christ, but upon Christ's choice of them. What a note of ringing confidence, he seems to say, that fact ought to impart to your personal religion.

Paul is thus in this great thought of Election re-asserting what we have noted so often already, namely, always the initiative is with God. The experience of Conversion is that of realising the truth of the Saviour's words quoted by John (15, v.16); "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." Man's Salvation, which God purposes should be absolute and eternal, is girded and encircled by the reality of Sovereign Grace, which is God coming and speaking the word of Life to sinful man. Reflecting, as he was ever doing, upon the ways of the Spirit of God, Paul could not but feel that all that he had and was, he owed to God. God had chosen him, he knew not why, but he was certain that it was not because of any merit in himself. Beyond that he could not go.

And so it ever is. Never was there one that came to the Cross seeking Pardon and finding with it the Peace of God and all the riches of the Grace of Christ, but has felt, like Paul, that all was of God. Therein too there has been found comfort and strength. Dr. Dickie in the Organism of Christian Truth (page 199) writes: "It deserves to be noted carefully that in the original Reformed Theology the use made of the doctrine of Election was to fortify Christian Faith by the assurance that our Salvation cannot be lost, because it is not we who are the architects of it, but the All-powerful and Eternal God. The doctrine was thus a strength and a sustenance to life, whatever its speculative difficulties."

If we are to be true to the teaching of Scripture we must assert that Election of God is primarily unto Salvation. 'Whom He did fore-know' writes Paul in Romans 8, v.29, 'He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.' That is man's ultimate Salvation - Conformity in all things to Jesus Christ. But it is also evident that the emphasis of all Scripture is of Election unto Service. Paul was 'separated from his mother's womb' unto the apostleship and ministry of Reconciliation. Election is never merely individual but always for the service of God's Kingdom. Thus is man's Salvation revealed from glory to yet greater glory. The experience of Conversion is the blessed experience of being at peace with God, of being accepted before Him through Grace, of being joined to Christ by cords which cannot be broken; but it is more - it is the consciousness of the Eternal Providence of Love over-ruling all life in sovereign Grace and leading the soul on into the paths of Righteousness, into the highways of hazard and glorious endeavour for the sake of the name that is above every name.

(4) THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

It will be profitable to look at the aspects of the life of Faith which the Epistle to the Hebrews emphasises, for in some particulars they are not found to the same degree in the other books of the New Testament. There is a sense in which this Epistle is somewhat remote from St. Paul, giving prominence to certain things - Christ as the Pattern of Life, for instance - that are not stressed by him; but that does not alter the fact that in both Paul and Hebrews there is the same consciousness of the centrality of Christ and efficacy of His work in the Salvation of sinful men. Like Paul, the writer of Hebrews repeatedly asserts the centrality of the work of Christ upon the Cross, as for example in 2, v.7: "He is a faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make Reconciliation for the sins of the people." And again in 9, v.12: "By His own blood, He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us." There are ways, notwithstanding in which Hebrews stresses the meaning and the implications of Conversion - of coming to Christ as the writer would describe it - which are not found with an equal stress elsewhere, and it will be well to note one or two of them.

(a) Access or Nearness to God: It is to the Epistle to the Hebrews that we owe the great concept of the Priesthood of Christ. It is as Priest that Christ makes propitiation

(2, v.17), is able to sympathise (4, v.15), is able to save (7, v.25), makes present appearance in Heaven on behalf of His own (9, v.24), sits on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the Heavens (8, v.1). And it is because of His perpetual priesthood that sinful man is brought nigh to God. As A.B.Bruce in his book on Hebrews (page 171) writes: "The Epistle emphasises one truth above all others. Christianity is the religion of free access to God." Such exhortations as 'Draw nigh', 'Hold fast', 'Draw not back' are repeatedly found, as, for example, in 10, vv.19 and 29: "Having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say His flesh, and having an High priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of Faith having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." It is significant and characteristic of this emphasis of the whole Epistle that the word for 'Believers' is οἱ προσερχόμενοι, those who come right up to God, and its corresponding exhortation is προσερχώμεθα, let us come right up to God. The Christian Faith is the better hope by which we draw nigh to God (ἐλπίς τοῦ Θεοῦ) and Christ is spoken of as the Surety (ἐγγυος) of a better Covenant, that is, One Who ensures our permanent access to God. And it is stressed too that in proportion as believers realise this privilege of nearness and respond to those exhortations to 'Draw near' and 'Keep near',

they find that element of *παρρησία* which is one of the essential features of a strong Christian Life.

Closely allied with the thought of Access is that of Rest. "For we which have believed do enter into Rest"; "There remaineth therefore a Rest for the people of God. For he that is entered into his Rest hath ceased from his works as God did from His." (4, vv.3-7). It is in the nearness of the presence of God that Rest is found. In Christ the High-Priest Access is ministered to the believer; through Him we have fellowship with God; reposing on the finished work of Christ, the approval of the Father rests upon us and we rest in His Grace. Here all the jarring notes of life are blended into the psalm of Peace; here all the fitful fever of the unforgiven heart is removed, and God's Peace takes control and stands sentinel over the yielded life. In the intimacy of His presence, brought nigh by the Incarnation and Sacrifice of Christ (10, v.20) the Rest of Faith is discovered and the "God of Peace makes the children to be perfect in every good work to do His will, working in them that which is wellpleasing in His sight." (13, v.20).

(b) The City of God, "Faith" says the writer of Hebrews in 11, v.1, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is an *ἐπιβουλὴ ἐλπιζομένων*, an open confidence corresponding to the nature of the thing hoped for: an *ἔλεγχος ὁ βλεπομένων*, a proof of the invisible and unobtainable. The whole of this majestic Epistle

is a demonstration of this definition, most particularly in regard to the environment and character of the new life of which 'those who draw nigh to God' are made partakers. In order to appreciate this most clearly, the general theme of the book must be kept in mind. In 2, v.5, we are told that 'the world to come' is to be the writer's theme, but it must be borne in mind that this world to come already exists and has existed from the creation. But it is regarded as still to come because it has not been yet fully realised in Time. It is a heavenly, spiritual counterpart of this temporal, material world in which we live. The material world and the Jewish system of worship which belongs to this world are not in the strictest sense real. Christianity is the perfect religion, and is superior to Judaism because its origin, worship and priesthood belong to the heavenly world of which Judaism is only a shadow. The ministers of Judaism only 'served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things' as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the Tabernacle: "See that thou make it according to the Pattern showed to thee on the Mount." (8, v.5). Furthermore, it is only this heavenly and spiritual kingdom that will abide eternally. All else of material and visible essence will crumble into dust, but the Kingdom of the Lord will not fail; "Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the Earth and the Heavens are the works of Thine hands: they shall perish but Thou remainest." (1, v.10). It was towards this kingdom, or City of God as the writer speaks of it, that holy men of God in the past looked. "Abraham looked for a

city whose builder and maker is God," (11, v.10), and others of that chosen band confessed themselves as being "strangers and pilgrims upon Earth" and desirous of a "better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be their God, for He hath prepared for them a city." (11, v.14-16).

Over against all this, the unreality of things material with 'nought of Eternity in them' and this unfulfilled expectation of the Old Testament days, stands Christ the Mediator of the better Covenant, the Door to the better country. It is the basic teaching of the whole Epistle that in Him the believer is brought into the domain of things real and eternal, is enabled to break through the barriers of sense and circumstance to the true City of God. "We who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us have a strong consolation" says the writer in 6, v.19, and adds "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that within the veil." The crowning passage of all is that in 12, vv.22-24, where the writer describes explicitly and in detail what coming to Christ means. "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the City of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels: to the general assembly of the first-born which are written in Heaven, and to God, the Judge of all and to the spirits of just men made perfect: and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." "This" says J. Alexander Findlay in The Way the Truth and the Life (page 65)

"is the Kingdom that cannot be shaken when Earth's foundations melt away. When with reverence and awe we worship the Crucified, His blood is sprinkled upon our souls, and we become 'very members incorporate of the body of Christ which is the blessed company of all faithful people in the Earth and in Heaven'. When we pray and worship the Lord we are in Heaven and our spirits breathe the air of the better country."

Salvation, the 'great Salvation' of chapter 2, v.3, is therefore in a very real sense salvation from the present world order into the world of the Spiritual and Eternal. Here we see the full significance of the meaning of the words ὁ ἴσος τοῦ Θεοῦ and ἐκκλησία. Through Faith this unseen and better country becomes actualised and objective; the believer learns to distinguish what is of a day and what is eternal. Life is now Life in God Who changeth not and Whose years do not fail. Reality is found through the mediation of the Highpriest and in the Kingdom of the King Eternal. Spiritual things become the only true things and it is as citizens of this better country and heavenly City that life in the world is from day to day lived out. Conversion or Coming to God is the experience of glorious access to God, but it is at the same time, an experience of being welcomed into the citizenship of the City of God, into the Kingdom which shall not pass away.

(5) THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS.

Archbishop Temple in his Readings in St. John's Gospel (page 32) says: "The balance of evidence supports the view that the mind of Jesus Himself was what the fourth Gospel disclosed, but that the Disciples were at first unable to enter into this, partly because of its novelty and partly because of the association attaching to the terminology in which it was necessary that the Lord should express Himself. Let the Synoptists repeat for us as closely as they can the very words He spoke; but let St. John tune our ears to hear them." It is well for us to bear such considerations on our mind when we come to the Johannine writings. In thus coming, we are not being faced with a radically altered situation, but with the same situation, with its significance made more clear and its consummation more exactly defined. As regards too, the relationship of Johannine and Pauline thought, most students are agreed that the Pauline interpretation of Christianity underlies the Johannine one. It may, no doubt, be the case that the emphasis of John is more on the incarnation and the fact of Revelation, while Paul works mainly within the categories of Redemption and the significance of the Death of Christ. But that is most certainly a superficial judgment. Each has his own significant way of expressing the Truth, but both have the same consciousness of the need for a 'Whole Christ' - incarnate, sinless, Redeemer of the world. As Dr. Denney says in The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation

(page 176): "Even if we concede to the idea of Revelation the prominence in John which is sometimes claimed for it, we are compelled to say that what is revealed is the same for both Apostles, and that for both it is revealed in the same way."

With these considerations in mind, we can now turn to the study of the ways in which the Johannine works portray the experience of Conversion. It will not be forgotten that none of these ways are alien to the thought of the rest of the New Testament; that they are almost all found in part in the other books as are the dominant concepts of these other books present in John. What we now note is the outstanding emphases of these books, the particular forms in which Conversion is delineated and described, and with this we shall complete this New Testament section of our study.

(a) Eternal Life: It is especially in the writings of St. John that we find 'Eternal Life' presented as a heavenly boon which may become the actual possession of believers in the present life. God Himself is the Source of Life and 'As the Father hath Life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son to have Life also in Himself' (5, v.26). In the Word which was made flesh and dwelt among men, there was a visible manifestation of the Life Eternal: "In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men" (1, v.4); so that He Himself declares "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." (14, v.6). In 17 v.3, we learn the character of this Life: "This is Life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast

sent." Eternal Life - in so far as these words are regarded as a definition of its nature - consists in such a knowledge of God and of Christ as involves a personal experience of vital fellowship, in which the very Life of God flows into the heart of man. There is doubtless more implied than pure knowledge of God, but apart from that knowledge there could not be Life. It is further stressed that this knowledge is a present possession and that accordingly this Life Eternal is a present possession of the believing heart. Here there is not mere promise or prospect of some future condition or estate: "God gave unto us Eternal Life and this Life is in His Son. He that hath the Son, hath the Life and he that hath not the Son hath not the Life." (5, vv.11-13). It is a heavenly gift and an actual possession of the soul.

It has been made sufficiently clear from these quotations, which could be multiplied greatly, that Conversion in the Johannine view is the gaining of the great boon of Eternal Life; the Evangelist expressly states (20, v.31) that he has 'written these things that believing ye might have Life through His name'. Life is the boon which surpasses all else and which God in mercy and grace gives to those who 'accept Christ'. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." (3, v.36). "He that heareth My word is passed from death unto life." (5, v.24). From Death! Yes, for that is the condition in which the soul of man truly is apart from God. The state of Sin and privation of the presence of God is Death in its truest expression. The great need of man is to be 'raised from death'.

It is over against this horizon of the darkness of death in sin, that John proclaims the reality and power of the life God gives. "Whosoever believeth on Him, shall not perish but has everlasting life." (3, v.16). In 8, v.51, Jesus states that the man who is obedient to His commandment shall 'never taste of death'. As E.F. Scott says in the article on 'Death' in Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels: "Death as conceived by St. John is something wholly spiritual. The idea is enforced in its fullest sense that physical death is only a 'taking rest in sleep', and in no wise affects the real life. (11, vv.4; 11-14) Lazarus although he has lain four days in the tomb, has never truly died: for 'he that believeth in Me, when he is dead continues to live' (11, vv.25-26). The miracle by which he is 'awakened out of sleep', is more to show forth under the forms of sense, the inward and spiritual work of Jesus. He is 'the Resurrection and the Life'. He has come to raise man out of the state of death in which they find themselves, and to make them inheritors even now of the life of God."

The good news of the Gospel is thus for St. John the good news of Resurrection from spiritual death and the gift of a life eternal. McLeod Campbell in The Nature of the Atonement complains that "Ordinary religion is so much a struggle to secure an unknown future happiness instead of being the meditation on and the welcoming of the present gift of eternal life" (page 13). This was the glory and the joy of John - as it was of Paul and the Christian Church - Life with the stamp of Eternity upon it,

a present possession. (Cf. Romans 8, v.10; Colossians 3, v.4). This life, which was found in Christ, was appropriated in Faith. "He that believeth is passed from death unto life." Yet it is the gift of Christ's love: "I give unto my sheep Eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (10, v.28). Conversion is the experience of receiving this definite gift from the hands of Christ Himself, who is Himself 'The Life', a life everlasting and qualitatively different from any other form of life imaginable. To believe is to enter into life.

(b) Regeneration: The great Conversion as being in the first instance a new birth, a Regeneration, is common to all the New Testament, but it is in the Fourth Gospel and First John that the figure is most explicit. The actual word $\pi α λ ι ν γ ε ν ε σ κ ι α$ does not occur, it is true, in John's writings, being found only twice in the New Testament: (Matthew 19, v.28; Titus 3, v.5); but he uses the expression $γ ε ν ν η θ η ν α ι$ $α λ λ ο τ ω ρ$ (3, vv.3-7); he speaks nine times in the first Epistle of being born of God ($ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ$); and twice in the Gospel and four times in the Epistle of children of God. ($Τεκνὰ Θεοῦ$).

Obviously this great truth is linked directly with the one we have just been studying. It is in this experience of Regeneration, this creative act of God whereby the soul is transformed and a new creation fashioned, that the gift of Life Eternal is discovered. The fundamental point is that Regeneration while conveying the gift of Eternal Life,

implies a 'Wholly new' way of life.

The connection between Regeneration and Repentance must be noted at this point. We have already seen that the Synoptics' favourite word for describing the experience of a soul turning to God, of Conversion, is Repentance, while they never once use the word Regeneration of the individual. John, on the other hand, never uses the words *μεταβολή* or *στροφὴ* in the moral sense, preferring to speak from the Godward side of the experience, and to use such words as *γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν*. None-the-less, it is one and the same experience that is being described by these two terms. When that experience is regarded from the side of God, as something due to His Grace or Spirit, it is called Regeneration, a being born again, from above, of God. When it is regarded from the side of man, as an experience the responsibility of which rests with him, it is called Repentance. Notwithstanding, there is no meaning or substance to be put into either of these terms which does not equally belong to the other.

Regeneration is described fittingly as a 'New Birth'. According to the record of John, it is not merely a going back to the beginning, a return to the state of infancy, it is a being born again: it renounces the past and affirms a new parentage: it breaks off the entail of Sin. In it, there is involved a new relationship to God, a new impulse and energy in the nature, a new direction in the will. As a new relation to God it follows from an act of the Father, who is the fountain of Deity. As a new potency, it flows from a saving union with Christ. As a new

direction of life, it is the fruit of the indwelling and inworking of the Holy Spirit. In the renewal of the spirit of man, Father, Son, and Spirit co-operate. Out of this renewing act there comes the restoration of the divine image. A new life force is born which cuts freshly upon the tablets of the heart the sacred lettering of the name of God.

The fundamental passage in all John's doctrine of Regeneration is of course the third chapter in the Gospel describing the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus. There Jesus is recorded as saying to the Ruler of the Jews: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God"; and further on: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." Unless a man be born again, says Jesus, he cannot see the Kingdom. See - look upon - he cannot know what we are talking about. Something radical has to take place which will create conditions not naturally existent whereby spiritual concepts will be conceived and grasped in Faith. However gifted, moral, or refined he may be, the natural man is absolutely blind to spiritual truth and impotent to enter the Kingdom. Here the Synoptics and John meet. "What John has in mind" says A.C. Underwood in his book on Conversion (page 114) "is the radical change in moral values which Jesus insisted upon when He called men to Repent and become as little children." And Dr. Moffatt in the Theology of the

Gospels says (page 196): "John 3, v.3, is a theological interpretation from the side of God of the experience which the Synoptic Gospels present as a moral change on the part of man to God's call." That is very true though it is not the whole Truth. Certainly 'being born again' is the Godward view of the experience of Repentance, but it is the very act of God. Herein human responsibility and Divine Grace in action meet and man is reborn, so that old things pass away and all becomes new.

Certain further considerations present themselves -

(1) In 1 John 5, v.1, Faith is presented as a vital condition of the new birth. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." It is in the act of Saving Faith that the soul is united to Christ. E.F.Scott in The Fourth Gospel (page 282) goes so far as to say that "according to John, man by Baptism is born again, in the sense that he has been magically changed into a new creature and possesses affinity, lacking before, with the supersensible world." That is an extreme view and not one likely to be endorsed by many. In John 1, v.12, we read: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Here Faith again is mentioned as the vital condition of the new birth, and no mention is made of Baptism as a means whereby we become children of God. In any case, the only Baptism no doubt known to John was that of confessing, penitent believers, who had already been born again. They were not baptised in order to be regenerated: their regeneration was sealed and proclaimed in the waters of Baptism.

Faith in the Son of God was the condition and act which united them to Christ and joined them - in Lightfoot's phrase - (Colossians 2, v.19) - to the head of the body 'by junctures and ligaments'. The primary duty of the unregenerate is to believe on the name of the Son of God.

(2) The instrument in Regeneration is the Word of God, that is, The Truth. The Divine Revelation is the vehicle of the Spirit's energy. By the word the mind is informed, the affections aroused, the conscience enlightened, motives are supplied to the will, and a moral decision is rendered possible. The whole nature, being instructed by the Word of Truth, responds to the touch of the Divine Spirit. "Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free." And again: "The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." (5, v.24). To this give the other New Testament writers abundant witness. "Of His own will begat He us" writes James (1, v.18) "by the word of Truth."; and Peter adds: "We are born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1, vv.23-25). It is by the Word of Truth that Faith is born, and Faith which is an energy of the whole nature, responds to the Revelation thus given. Hereby the soul is reborn.

(3) It is out of the bosom of the Love of the Father that this power of renewal is born. "Behold what manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the Sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew

Him not. Beloved now are we the Sons of God." (1 John 3, v.1). In this act of Regeneration all the fullness of God has come out to man; this act is the imparting to man of God's own self.

"In this was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." (1 John 4, v.10). In the experience of Regeneration there is always the conviction present that the change is the work of God alone, and not the outcome of conscious effort, or of unconscious processes. The act of Regeneration is thus seen as that act of God the Father by which He communicates to the soul the power of the Risen Christ through the Grace of the Holy Ghost.

(4) This new birth restores us to the family of God, renewing in us the defaced likeness of the Father. The evil ground in the will is replaced by the 'new man' which has been formed in Righteousness after the image of Him Who created it. The Regenerated are the children of God. No greater concept is possible than this. Sinful man who has so completely failed his God, and broken the law of His comandments so absolutely, is through the Love of the Father made, in virtue of his Faith in Christ His child and is 'adopted' into the family of God. Here Paul and John are expressing the same great truth in practically similar ways: John in his emphasis on being made sons of God, Paul in his exultant and thankful words regarding 'Adoption': "Ye have received the spirit of adoption" cries Paul "whereby

ye cry 'Abba Father'," (Romans 8, v.15): "God sent forth His Son that we might receive the adoption of sons," (Gal.4, v.5).

McLeod Campbell in the Nature of the Atonement (page 147)

writing of this wondrous experience expresses the deep poignancy and vivid thankfulness of the New Testament in words that can scarcely be bettered: "Let us think of Christ as the Son who reveals the Father that we may know the Father's heart against which we have sinned, that we may see how Sin, in making us Godless, has made us orphans and understand that the Grace of God which is at once the remission of past Sin and the gift of Eternal Life restores to our orphaned spirits their Father and to the Father of spirits His lost children." Here is the glory of this new life begotten of God. By it we enter into the fellowship of the family of God. We look upwards and we know the Eternal God, as we could not otherwise have dreamed of knowing Him, as our Father. We are empowered to the fulfilment of our high responsibility as children of the Heavenly King, and we seek to lead others into the glory of the life that we have found. All this - and Heaven too - are the outflow of REGENERATION.

(c) Enlightenment: Yet another of the great figures in which John describes the experience of Conversion, is that of the coming of Light into the soul's native darkness and the consequent illumination of the mind and ultimately of the whole life which thereby takes place. "I am come a Light into the

world that whosoever believeth in Me, should not abide in darkness," (12, v.46); and these words are re-emphasised in the great saying recorded in 8, v.12 - "Then spake Jesus again unto them saying; I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the Light of Life."

'Darkness' is used to describe the state of spiritual ignorance and sin in which men are before the light of the Revelation of Jesus comes to them. It is also the description of that condition of incapacity of sight that results from long continuance in evil. "This is the condemnation that Light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be exposed," (3, v.19). In this estate of darkness the whole personality is involved. The mind is unilluminated by the truth, the conscience is unquickened by the Spirit, the heart is barren of the Divine Love, the will is impotent to make ultimate decision for God. It is over against this horizon of eclipse and midnight that the light, which is the true light, shines.

"God is light" says John in 1 John 1, v.5, "and in Him is no darkness at all." By that there is implied the truth that it is the very nature of God to communicate Himself, and the whole of the Fourth Gospel is the record of that self-communication of God in the LOGOS, who is the very principle of Life. "In Him was Life and the Life was the Light of men. And the Light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. That was the

true Light which lightens every man as it comes into the world." (1, vv.4,5 & 9). The LOGOS is spoken of here as being both Life and Light. "In Him was Life; this Life was Light." Here, as has been often pointed out, we have the key-note to the whole Gospel, in which Christ as the Light represents the essential Truth of God as revealed to human knowledge. In Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels (vol.2, 34) Dr. James Moffatt says: "This metaphor of light denotes much more than the self-revelation of God in the person of Jesus, (Weiss): it describes the transcendent life streaming out on men, the absolute nature of God as Truth, as the supreme Reality for man to believe in, and by his belief to share."

The coming therefore of Christ to the human heart is accompanied by a great experience of illumination and enlightenment. The whole domain of the personality is envisaged as participating in this gracious experience. The beginning of the Christian life is like the coming of the morn after the night. It is the awakening of the mind, the daybreak of the soul. "The people that sit in darkness have seen a great light." That, says John, is what really comes to pass when a soul comes to Christ. The glory of the Divine Revelation breaks upon the heart and mind and an assured knowledge is created which is distinct from any other kind of knowledge. It is at this point that we should note what has already been stressed under the heading of Faith: that in John *πίστις* and *γινώσκω*, are sometimes almost synonymous in meaning. 'To know' in the

Johannine language expresses the perception of Eternal Truth: 'To believe' its temporal discovery and appropriation. The former is the product of the latter. (Cf. 10, v.38: "Believe the works that ye may know.") The intellectual element is the fruit of the moral acts of Faith. Faith is ever primary. But the outstanding factor here stressed is that through Faith a knowledge is obtained of eternal truth and the light of the Revelation of God is shed abroad in the heart of the believer. This is not to suggest Divine Revelation is primarily and essentially a communication of knowledge. What is revealed of God is Himself as a Living Presence in the life of the believer. Man does not really know God until he knows Him in that way. As Dr. Dickie says in Organism of Christian Truth (page 31): "The revelations in Scripture and even the supreme Revelation in Jesus Christ are meaningless to us till God Himself lays hold of us and impresses Himself upon us, authenticating the historical revelation by a personal experience." That is the true order: Experience of God and then Doctrine of God. But we must not thereby minimise the importance of this second great reality. Through contact with Jesus Christ and by participation in His life, the mind is enlightened and the whole being illumined, so that the way of Truth is seen and embraced, and the statutes of the Lord become the delight and the song of the entire life. The promise of the Lord was nothing less than this: "Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free."

A P P E N D I X .

Additional notes on the usage and significance of the terms employed by the evangelical writers in reference to the Conversion experience .

CONVERTY CONVERSION.

ἐπιστρέφω to turn towards, to turn about, a positive expression corresponding to the negative ἀποστρέφω. Most commonly it is intransitive, to turn oneself around to to.

1. Literally; Matt. 12 v. 44. Acts 9 v. 40. Cf. LXX in 1 Kings 19 v. 6. ἐπιστρέψας ἐκοιμήθη = round again. So also Psalm 85 v. 6. ὅς ἐπιστρέψας ῥωσώσεται ἡμᾶς. In an absolute sense, to return, Luke 5 v. 55.; passive = to return again, as in Matt. 9 v. 22. Figuratively in Gal. 4 v. 9.

ἐπιστρέφετε πάλιν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀδελφὴ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα.

2. In an ethical sense, to change, to change oneself.

In Scripture it is generally used to denote the positive turning to God, which implies an ^{1st} allegation of one's former sinful conduct, or of a tendency to depart from God = to repent, to change for the better. Lxx = 21st, καὶ

and 21st : 1 Sam 7 v. 3. : 1 King 8³³. etc. In Isaiah 9¹² it is paralleled with ἐκζητεῖν τὸν κύριον. In the N.T. the active intransitive is found. Luke 1¹⁶. πολλοὺς ἐπιστρέφει

ἐπὶ κύριον τὸν θεὸν ὑμῶν : v. 17.

ἐπιστρέφει καρδίας πτωχῶν ἐπὶ τέκνα καὶ ἀπειθεῖς ἐν φρονήσει δικαίων : James 5¹⁹⁻²⁰.

ὁ ἐπιστρέψας ἁμαρτωλὸς ἐκ πλάνης ὁδοῦ δόξου. Elsewhere it is intransitive. Matt 13¹⁵.

have 4¹²: Luke 22³²: Acts 8¹⁹: 9³⁵: 11²¹: 14¹⁵
15¹⁴: 26¹⁸. 20. 2827: 2 Cor. 3¹⁶. The passive
= to be converted. John 12⁴⁰: 1 Pet. 2²⁵:

The negative and positive elements are
completely blended in Act. 14¹⁵:

ἐναντιοῦντο ὑμῖς ἀπὸ τούτων ματαίων
ἐπιστρέφον ἐπὶ θεόν ἡμεῖς: 1 Thes 1⁹:

Acts 26¹⁸. ἐπιστρέφει ἀπὸ σκοτεινῶν εἰς φῶς
καὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ βασιλῆος ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν.

Very exceptional is the use in Act. 15¹⁹—

ἀπὸ τῶν ἔθνων ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν. The

negative element implied in the word is

then left out, and only the positive

sense retained, e.g. in Luke 1¹⁶: Acts 9³⁵.

ἐπιστρέφον ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον: 1 Peter 2²⁵.

The negative element is rarely alone

referred to as in James 5¹⁹⁻²⁰. He more

frequently finds ἐπιστρέφον by itself used
as = to change or to convert oneself.

Luke 22³²: Matt. 13¹⁵: Luk. 4¹²: John 12⁴⁰:
Acts 3¹⁴: 28²⁷: It is joined with
μετανοεῖν in Acts 3¹⁹: 26²⁰: and includes
πιστεύειν in Acts 11²¹: (Cf. Acts 26¹⁸, Luke 22³²)
πῶς τὸ ἔργον πιστεύας ἐπέστρεψεν εἰς
τὸν Κύριον. In such passages as Acts 9³⁵
'ἐπέστρεψεν implies the more frequent
'ἐπίτρεψαν: "Καὶ ἔιδος αὐτοῦ πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες
Νύκταν καὶ τὸν Σαῦραν, οἵτινες ἐπέστρεψαν εἰς
τὸν Κύριον.

As it is a turning from a certain
state or conduct, so it signifies a
positive entrance upon a state of conduct.
Cf. 1 Pet. 2²: Acts 27¹⁸: 2 Cor. 3¹⁶: Acts 3¹⁹:
James 5²⁰. Thus it differs from μετανοεῖν
which includes only the behavior as the
turning of penitence. Conversion combines
both penitence and faith (cf. Acts 20²¹).

Repent, Repentance.

Μετανοέω the opposite of προσέν a word not often occurring in profane Greek, combines two meanings of the preposition, to think differently after. Its usual meaning is, to change one's mind or opinion. In the LXX it is the counterpart of $\Pi\eta\iota$, and together with μεταμελεῖν is synonymous with ἐπιστρέφω, cf. Jer. 18 v. 8. καὶ ἐπιστράφη τὸ ἔθνος ἐκεῖνο ἀπὸ πάντων κακῶν αὐτῶν καὶ μετανόησεν περὶ τῶν κακῶν ἃ ἐλογιάσθη τὸ πάθος. ~~ἄλλο~~, as used to denote moral change or conversion, is in the LXX rendered by ἐπιστρέφω and not by μετανόειν. In the Apocrypha, however, where the word also occurs but seldom, it is used to denote a moral change, Ecclus. 17 v. 24; and 48 v. 15, ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις οὐ μετανόησεν ὁ λαός, καὶ οὐκ ἀπέστησαν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. In the N.T., especially by St. Luke and in the Revelation, it denotes a change of moral thought and reflection, which is said to follow moral delinquency primarily, μετάνοια ἕκ τῶς, Rev. 2 v. 21, ἕκ τῆς πορνείας; Acts 8 v. 22 ἀπὸ τῆς κακίας = to repent of anything, not only to forsake it, but to change one's mind and apprehensions regarding it. Then without addition = to repent in a moral and religious sense, as e.g. in Matt. 3 v. 2 et. al. . The feeling of sorrow, pain mourning is thus included in the word, cf. Luke 17 vv. 3-4. εἰς ἐπίτακτις ἡμέρας ἁμαρτήσῃ εἰς οὗ καὶ ἐπιστρέψῃ λέγων 2 Cor. 12 v. 21 ^{Μετανόω.} ἢ... πένθῃσιν πολλοῖς τῶν ἢ μετανόησάντων ἐπὶ τῇ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ. Synonymous with ἐπιστρέφω in Acts 3 v. 19

μετανοήσατε καὶ ἐπιστρέψατε , and 86 v. 20 μετανοήσιν καὶ
ἐπιστρέψουσιν εἰς θεόν . Cf. Acts 20 v. 21 .

μετάνοια change of mind, repentance, is found very seldom
in the LXX and only occasionally in the Apocrypha . In the
N.T. and especially in Luke it has the full significance of
Repentance corresponding to μετανοῆν . Cf. 2 Tim 2²⁵.
ὁ ὡς αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς μετένοιον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν
τῆς ἀληθείας . Acts. 20²¹. ἡ εἰς τὸν θεόν
μετένοιον . Cf. 2 Cor. 7 v. 9. ἐλυπηθῆτε εἰς
μετένοιον with v. 10. ἐλυπηθῆτε καὶ
κατὰ θεόν : Acts 9 v. 18. εἰς ἰωάν : 2 Cor 7 v. 10
εἰς σωτηρίαν . Heb. 6 v. 1. ἀπο νεκρῶν ἔζησαν .
It is found combined with ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν .

FAITH.

πίστις found often with particularising additions
as e.g. Hebrews 6 v. 1. πίστις ἐπὶ θεόν ;
1 Thess 1 v. 8. ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν
Mark 11 v. 22 πίστις θεοῦ . Further πίστις
εἰς Χριστόν Acts 24 v. 24 . : πίστις ἡ εἰς
τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν . It is also found without
further qualification meaning, FAITH , which
regards the N.T. declaration of Grace with
decided acknowledgment and unwavering
trust and appropriation in its thing .

Here 1 c. 9., the expression in Acts 3 v. 16.
 ἡ πίστις ἣ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ:—the faith
 which is brought about by Jesus Christ.
 In Paul we find believers referred to
 as οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, and ἐκ πίστεως εἶναι—
 Gal. 3 vv. 7-9. Rom 4.¹⁰.

In the whole N.T. πίστις involves
 an element of acknowledgment which
 is distinct from εἰδέναι. Cf. 2 Cor 5.⁷.
 διὰ πίστεως γὰρ περιπατοῦμεν, οὐ διὰ ἔγνων.
 Heb. 11.²⁷ πίστει κατέλιπεν Ἀίγυπτον
 τὸν γὰρ ὁρατὸν ὡς ὁρῶν ἐκράτησεν: and
 11.¹ ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑποστάσις,
 πραγμάτων ἐλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων.
 Heb 20.²⁹ μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ
 πιστεύσαντες. But this cannot properly
 be held as the fundamental element
 of the word's significance. As also in the
 case of the cognate verb πιστεύω, the
 main element is threefold!

(1) a conviction which is not like

πίστις in proper Greek, merely an opinion
 held in good faith without reference
 to its proof: (cf. 1 Pet. 3¹⁵: εἴρηται δε
 αὐτῇ πρὸς ἀπολόγισιν πάντι τῷ ἀκούοντι
 ὅπως λόγος κατὰ τῆς ἐκ θεοῦ ἐλπίδος:
 121 ὥστε τὴν πίστιν ἔχει καὶ ἐλπίδα
 εἶναι εἰς θεόν.) but a free and
 convinced acknowledgment of God's
 saving revelation or truth.

(ii) a cleaving thus demanded of the
 person who acknowledges to the
 object acknowledged, therefore personal
 fellowship with the God and Lord of
 salvation and surrender to Him.

(iii) a behavior of unconditional and
 yet perfectly intelligent and assured
 confidence.

FORGIVE, FORGIVENESS.

ἀφίεναι To send away, to dismiss, set free. Synonymous with ἐλευθερῶν. Cf. Matt. 4 v. 11. and often. In general use, to leave anything, to let alone, as e.g. in Matt. 4 v. 20 τὰ δίκτυα 5 v. 24 ἄφες ἐκεῖ τὸ ἄρτος σου In the religious sense the expression does not occur in profane Greek, while it is used in Biblical Greek almost exclusively with this significance, answering to the meaning of ἁμαρτία and opposed to λογιζόμεναι; e.g. in 2 Cor. 5 v. 19 λογιζόμενος τὰ παραπτώματα, as also to κρατῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας in John 20 v. 23. It is almost synonymous with κἀλυπτεῖν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν in Rom 4.⁸ and λύειν τινὰ in Matt. 16.¹⁹ The expression denotes then, where it does not stand for social proceedings, the abrogation of the divine legal claims upon man, (Cf. ὑπόδικος, also Mark 11.²⁵ ἀφίετε ὃ ἔχετε κατὰ τινός; Luke 11.⁴ ἀφίετε παντὶ ὀφείλοντι), the remission of the amends due, or the punishment due for imperfect, sinful conduct: that is deliverance from suffering the divine judgment.

Q. Mark 2.7: τὸς δοῦναι ἀφ' ὧν ἀπαρτίζε-^{A/10}
ται πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ Θεός: the ἀφ' ὧν ἀπαρτίζε-
is the object of the N.T. revelation and
preaching.

The cognate noun ἀφ' ὧν - discharge,
setting free, as e.g. of a prisoner, is
found in the N.T. with words such
as περισπασμός and ἀπαρτίσις, meaning
the forgiveness of sin on the part
of God, - and with reference to the
future judgment. Cf. Matt. 16.28. Mark 1.4.
Luke 1.77: 3.3: 24.47: Acts 2.38: 5.31: 10.43: 13.38: 26.18.
Col. 1.14: Heb. 10.18: used absolutely, ἀφ' ὧν =
forgiveness of sins. Mark 3.29. οὗτος ὁ υἱὸς
βλασφημῶν αὐτὸν τὸν Πατέρα τὸν ἀληθινόν, οὗτος
ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ ἀφ' ὧν αὐτὸν δύνανται, ἀλλ'
ἐν ὧν οὐκ ἔστιν δύναμις κρίσεως.

It is probable that the year of Jubilee called
constantly ἑτος or ἑβδομήκοντα τῶν ἀφ' ὧν, or simply
ἀφ' ὧν (cf. Lev. 25.31.40: 27.24.) the year in which all
debts were forgiven, suggests the higher application
of the word.

RECONCILE, RECONCILIATION.

καταλλάσσω to exchange, to change, then like διαλλάσσω and συλλαλάσσω to reconcile. In Romans 5 v. 10 and 2 Cor. 5 vv. 18-20, where καταλλάσσειν is used of the divine work of redemption, the context must show whether God is to be regarded as the antagonist of man or man of God. Neither the word in and by itself, nor the grammatical connection can here decide. Nor does the designation of men as ἑχθροί Romans 5 v. 10 settle the question for that word may equally well be taken actively as in Romans 8 v. 7, or passively as in Romans 11 v. 28. But

Rom 5: "— οὐ μόνον δὲ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' οὗ νῦν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν — is decidedly opposed to the supposition that either a change of feeling on the part of man, brought about by the divine redemption, is offered to, or an alienation in his relation to God is to be accomplished by man himself.

P.B. also Rom. 11⁵. εἰ γὰρ ἡ ἀποβολὴ τῶν κατὰ καταλλαγὴν κόσμου, τίς ἢ πρόσληψις εἰ μὴ ἡμεῖς ἐν κατὰ.

It is God who forms the relation between
Himself and humanity anew: the part of
humanity is to accept this reinstatement.

Cf. 2 Cor 5²⁰: δοῦντα ἑαίς Χριστοῦ,
καταλλάγητε τῷ Θεῷ. In Paul, indeed,

καταλλάγντες appears completely parallel
to δικαιῶντες: Rom 5⁹⁻¹⁰. πολλοὶ οὖν
ἄλλων δικαιῶντες ἔν τῳ αἵματι
αὐτοῦ σωθήσονται δι' ἁγίου ἀπο τῆς ὀργῆς.

εἰ γὰρ ἔχθοι οὗτος καταλλάγμεν τῷ
Θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ,
πολλοὶ ἄλλων καταλλάγντες σωθήσονται
ἐν τῇ ἰωῇ αὐτοῦ. According to καταλλάγναι

may be used to explain δικαιῶντες σώζεσθαι

which it could not be if καταλλάγναι

were meant to express any change in

the feelings of man. It is a relation

which is changed which God changes.

in that He desists from His claims.

Cf. 2 Cor 5¹⁹⁻²¹

Mat 5²³⁻²⁴

Thus κατελλάσσειν denotes the divine and ^{A 13}
saving act of ἐλεοσέψωσις in so far as
God turns self, by His taking upon Himself
and providing an atonement, establishes that
relationship of peace with mankind which
the demands of His justice had hitherto
prevented. It is the very opposite of
the heathen ἰλιζόμεθαί in which the
deity is the object and man the subject.
In κατελλάσσειν, God is the subject,
man the object. While ἰλιζόμεθαί
aims at the averting of God's wrath,
κατελλάσσειν implies that God has laid
aside or withdrawn wrath.

κατελλάγη, the noun form of the word,
means primarily the exchange effected,
then the reconciliation: for this
διελλάγη and εὐελλάγη are also used.
In 2 Macc. 5.²⁰ it is employed in
opposition to ὀργή. The word denotes

The result of the divine act of salvation^{A 14},
namely, the new ordering of the
relation in which man stands in
relation to God, in so far as he
no longer remains an object of
ὀργή. Rom 5: "τὴν καταλλαγὴν λαβεῖν."

2 Cor. 5:18. τὰ δε πάντα ἐν τῷ Θεῷ
τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ δόντος ὑμῖν τὴν
διακόνειαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς, ὥς ὅτι
Θεὸς ἡμεῖς ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσει
ἑαυτῷ, μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ
παραπτώματα αὐτῶν καὶ θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν
τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς.

the same day, the same day, the same day

a part of the same day, the same day

while in my own house, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

PART TWO.

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

about the same time, the same day

CHAPTER III.

SOREN KIERKEGAARD: THE MAN AND HIS EXPERIENCE.

(1) The Background: "When I am dead" said Soren Kierkegaard once "write on my grave 'That Individual'." In no more terse fashion could he have summarised his most distinctive characteristic, as also his self-chosen mission to men; he would be truly an individual himself and he would endeavour to make the world of his day worthy of the crown-rights of individuality. From his childhood he regarded himself as "The exception", cut off from others, marked out by genius and 'the suffering which is its sign'. "The thought that in every generation there are two or three who are sacrificed for others, used in frightful suffering to discover what redounds to the benefit of others, goes very far back in my recollection; and in my melancholy I understood myself as marked out in this way." So he wrote in his 'Point of View for my work as an Author' in 1848, and the words give expression to the real significance of his outlook alike on himself and the world.

He was born at Copenhagen on the 5th May, 1813, the child of his father's old age. His father, Michael P. Kierkegaard, came from a peasant home in Western Jutland, and evidently while still young had been deeply influenced by a Pietistic movement in the district, the impress of which never left him. In his business life he prospered exceedingly, but paradoxically enough he interpreted this as an evidence of

Divine displeasure in the remembrance of a day when he had cursed God. His spiritual life was suffused with an intense melancholy and gloom, and these in turn descended partly by inheritance and partly by training upon his distinguished son. So Soren Kierkegaard writes in Point of View, "From a child I was in the grip of an immense melancholy, so profound that it could only be adequately gauged by the equally immense ability granted me of covering it under apparent gaiety and enjoyment of life. From the beginning, as far indeed as my memory reaches back, I found my sole pleasure in letting no one discover how unhappy I felt. As a child I was brought up strictly and seriously in Christianity; humanly speaking, senselessly brought up: In my earliest youth, I had already strained myself on impressions under which the melancholy old man who laid them on me had himself succumbed. A child that in senseless fashion was to be made to feel, think, and live like a melancholy old man! Frightful! What wonder, therefore, if Christianity seemed to me at times like the most inhuman cruelty. Yet I never lost reverence for it. I never broke with Christianity nor gave it up; it never entered my head to attack it - rather was I firmly resolved to offer my all for its defence or at any rate for the presentation of it in its true colours." (page 76).

(2) Youth, Development and Conversion: The

influence of his father never left him. Notwithstanding the fact that for so many years after going to University he lived in a fashion wholly displeasing to his father, so much so that a complete rupture took place, Kierkegaard could never forget him. During the years of aimless, frivolous and not infrequently riotous living, the memory of the father followed him and ultimately beyond doubt brought him back from the far country to God and a purposeful life. Regarding this return, the Journal entries July 7 to 18, 1838, are most illuminating, e.g. July 9: "How I thank Thee, Father in Heaven, that Thou hast preserved for me here on earth for a time like the present when I stand so greatly in need of it, an earthly father who, as I hope, shall by Thy help find more joy in being for the second time my father than he had the first time."

Ten years later in 1848, he wrote in the Journal (773) "I owe everything from the beginning to my father. When, melancholy as he was, he saw me melancholy, his prayer to me was; Be sure that you really love Jesus Christ." It is clear that it was his father who led him on the way to Christian faith, and his death on August 9, 1838, only served to deepen Kierkegaard's determination to serve Christ.

"So my father died at 2 o'clock in the night. I had so heartily wished that he might live a few years longer and I regard his death as the last sacrifice his love for me occasioned; for not only has he died from me, he has died for me, in

order that if possible something may be made of me still."
(Journal 215).

When exactly his conversion took place cannot be said with certainty, but on May 19th, 1838, the following is the entry in the Journal.

"May 19. Half-past ten in the morning. There is an indescribable joy which enkindles us as inexplicably as the Apostle's outburst comes gratuitously; 'Rejoice, I say unto you, and again I say rejoice', Not a joy over this or that but the soul's mighty song 'with tongue and mouth, from the bottom of the heart'. I rejoice through my joy, in, at, over, by and with my joy - a heavenly refrain, as it were suddenly breaks off our other song; a joy which cools and refreshes us like a breath of wind, a wave of air, from the trade wind which blows from the plains of Mamre to the everlasting habitations."

It is obvious that Kierkegaard from about this time was savingly converted to God and began to discover how he was to serve. From now on his whole outlook changed as witness.

Another entry, "July 9. I mean to labour to achieve a far more inward relation to Christianity; hitherto I have fought for its truth while standing outside it. In a purely outward sense have I till now carried Christ's Cross, like Simon of Cyrene."

In that labour we now know he was not to fail.

(3) Regine Olsen: Another strong influence upon his career and character was Regine Olsen to whom he became betrothed in September 1840. No sooner had he done so than he realised with horror that this could never be.

"I came to myself again. On the next day I saw that I had made a mistake. A penitent as I was, my *vita ante acta*, my melancholy, that was enough." (Danish Edition, X⁵ A.149). It is not possible here to analyse the factors which taken together made marriage impossible for him. Sufficient to say that he could not bring himself to burden Regine with the profound melancholy which rested upon him nor with the sins of his youth, and that holding it necessary that complete frankness should obtain in the relationship of marriage, he felt he must lay bare before her all the details of his own and his father's life, and this he shrank from doing. So the breach came. The influence of Regine Olsen on his life and works was very profound. Some of his writings indeed were obviously intended to be at least an apology for what had occurred and to explain his views of marriage as justifying his behaviour in relation to her. But it is doubtful if he was able to convince himself that he had done what was right concerning her. Certainly his love remained, true and constant, and to the end of his life he prayed for her daily. Of the event he wrote later:

"My sin is that I had not faith, faith that with God everything is possible. Had I had faith I should have remained with Regine thanks and praise be to God, I now see that." (Journal 444).

The whole affair forms one of the saddest acts in the drama of Kierkegaard's life, but its effects upon his subsequent career were truly incalculable. It would not be possible to approach to an understanding of the writings of the first great period without having Regine Olsen constantly in mind, so deeply had she influenced the writer. As Kierkegaard himself said, "I owe what is best in me to a young girl, learning it not exactly from her, but through her." (Journal 761).

(4) Environment:

(a) Religious: At the beginning of the 19th century Rationalism reigned supreme in Denmark. Dean N.C. Clausen at Vor Frue Kirk in Copenhagen was its most influential spokesman. For him true virtue, morality and human nobility were the objects of Christianity. For many of the Rationalist clergy the school was a more important institution than the church; education was the keystone of their system of uplift. Christianity was embraced only in the ideas of God, virtue and immortality. There was lacking the living power of the Spirit of Life and the churches were empty. Here and there across the country were small groups of men and women who preserved the light and kept it burning, groups founded mostly by the Moravian missionaries and exercising a markedly strong influence within a limited sphere, but they only served to show the greater weakness and futility of the wider national church. Change for the better in the national church came with the induction of J.P. Mynster. Influenced by the Romantic movement in Germany, he

assumed pastoral duties in South Zealand, and one year after ordination passed through a very deep spiritual experience. The influence of this never left him and on his elevation in 1811 to the Cathedral at Copenhagen his beneficent and uplifting ministry began far and wide to be felt. Then there was N.I.S. Grundtvig, a strong, passionate and able leader of a revivalistic band of believers, laying great stress on the Sacraments and the Apostles' Creed. Under such influences as these - the Moravians, Mynster and Grundtvig - the religious life of Denmark was being quietly transformed at the time when Kierkegaard began to be known and to exercise his power. The transformation, however, was not yet apparent in any large measure. For Kierkegaard, Christendom had accomplished one great fact - the destruction of true Christianity. All were Christians - Christians by birth, just as Jews are Jews by birth - but the lives of all were lived on the plane of sense and of customary morality. The Church had forgotten the New Testament standard and the necessity for personal choice. It preached "peace without the sword". It was in the light of this situation that Kierkegaard assumed for himself the high task of re-introducing Christianity into Christendom, and making clear the implications of Christian belief to those who professed it.

Cf. Journal 1037: "Here is a situation in Christendom. It is said of Bernard of Clairvaux that parents held back their children, women their husbands, - for fear that Bernard should persuade them to become Christians in such a way that they

really left all things. Such is always the case with the true Christian, he is like the true of antiquity, to such an extent does he call one away from the physical man's pleasures, life and gladness - and so we are all Christians in Christendom. Even now, when now when there is not one

living." Or again: Journal 864, "Nowadays in Christendom not a word is breathed about spiritual tribulation, because religion is not made a serious matter. People simply do not live religiously; and indirectly that can be proved by the disappearance of tribulation."

Elsewhere he had written - "The fundamental misfortune of Christianity is clearly Christendom." (Sickness unto Death: page 192).

(b) Intellectual: The intellectual atmosphere of his day was Hegelianism in philosophy and Romanticism in literature, and against the spirit of both Kierkegaard waged ceaseless war. Of the latter J.A.Bain writes in his book on Kierkegaard (page 41): "Kierkegaard had been brought up in the atmosphere of Romanticism and never quite threw off its influence. It is seen in the pseudonymous form in which he presented most of his thoughts in his works, embodying his conceptions of philosophy, religion and ethics, not in formal scientific treatises but in fictitious personalities. But against much of what Romanticism meant, its harking back to the legends and ideals of the Middle Ages, its exaggeration of emotionalism, its dreamy impracticableness, his

whole thinking was a constant protest. In contrast to its intangible idealism he was a fierce realist."

As he writes in his Journal (90): "I do not hear the trees in the woods relating to me old legends etc. - no, they whisper to me all the twaddle they have so long been witnesses of. I beg you in God's name to hew them down so as to free us from these prating nature worshippers. Would that all these praters' heads were set upon one neck: like Caligula, I should know what I had to do about it."

It was against the Hegelian philosophy, however, that he fought most keenly and exerted himself most strongly, for in Hegelianism he found that which was diametrically opposed to Christianity and ultimately destructive of it. For Hegel the relation of God to the world was a harmonious evolution which could be comprehended by human reason and stated in terms of a synthesis. In this system man assumes the role of spectator, able to view God in a detached and impartial way. For Kierkegaard on the other hand all this was falsehood and impiety. To him, the world, seen 'sub specie aeternitatis' was not an aesthetic harmony but a battleground for moral struggle. Man is not a spectator of the great drama of the Universe but an actor; his business in life is not to speculate but to decide. Instead of a synthetic BOTH-AND he is confronted with a tremendous EITHER-OR. It was not easy to throw down the gauntlet against the prevailing philosophy, for in Kierkegaard's day to accept Hegelianism was the necessary condition of being considered an

intellectual man. It even descended to the common people who had learned the jargon of that philosophy, so 'that when being shaved a man might have to submit to a discussion with his barber about thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis' (Bain, page 38). But convinced as he was that the most powerful enemy to be encountered on the way to "a more inward relation to Christianity" was the Hegelian system, he was fearless in his attack and resolute in pressing it home.

E.L.Allen in his book on Kierkegaard well says (page 63): "Kierkegaard's quarrel with Hegelianism lay not in any particular point but in its whole attitude to life and the content of Christianity. The great Christian affirmations appear in it, it is true, but in an emasculated form: a kingly religion, it has lost its authority and continues on its throne by grace of human reason. Instead of the bread of living concrete truth we are offered the stone of an abstract speculation, and saving events in time become then vague propositions located in a realm of shadows dignified with the name of eternity. It is that 'ballet of bloodless categories' of which Mr. F.H. Bradley refused to ask us to become spectators. In such a scheme "religion" and "faith" are the names given to a sort of general spiritual atmosphere, Christ is the "speculative unity of God and man", while God Himself disappears behind the many-hued splendours of the Absolute. We are "redeemed" when we grasp the truth that sin is but a necessary stage in the self-revelation of Absolute Spirit. In fact the esoteric knowledge which Hegel

communicates turns out to be that everything is really something else."

(5) His Personality: To this struggle with Hegelianism, Kierkegaard brought a nature uniquely endowed for conflict. It has been said of him that "In his settled melancholy he reminds us of Amiel, but he had not the gentleness of that sad Swiss. On the contrary, he had a good deal of the Berserker in him, so that when he entered the battle he smote his adversaries hip and thigh. If genius, as has been said, is a ship on fire at sea for the entertainment of the people on shore, Kierkegaard was truly such a ship, blazing fiercely and consuming by his own internal heat; but he was a battle-ship whose guns and magazines kept exploding with most devastating effect." (Expository Times, vol.47, page 196). Dr. A. Grieve in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics says, "His was a nature of unwonted intensity, with an inner life at white heat. His perfervid nature appears also in the iron resolution with which he wrought out his, as he thought, divinely appointed task; for he might claim as few others that in all his work he had striven but for one thing, and in prosecuting it he lost friends, means, health, was mocked at by the crowd and denounced by the religious, but held on, if not serene, yet undismayed to the end." And Dr. H.R. Mackintosh writes of him in "Types of Modern Theology": "His defiance of ecclesiastical convention stamps him as a man of lonely courage; nor could any man who did not possess singular moral insight and fierce vigour of phrase have come as

he did to be known as 'the accusing angel' of contemporary religion."

CHAPTER IV.

KIERKEGAARD'S VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

(1) Introductory: It will be the more easy to understand what Kierkegaard believed if we remember that his statement of his beliefs as well as their conception was continually anti-Hegelian. God, for instance, for Hegel was revealed in nature in some aspects of His character. Hegel laid great stress on the Divine revelation in history which, he held, unveiled the nature of God in the progress of law, culture, and art.

Arising from this was the special importance attached to the State by the Hegelian philosophy, for the State embodies and organises those elements of the divine revelation in history. The State embodies externally what the Christian experiences inwardly. If this is true, the Christian State realises the Kingdom of God and if God reveals Himself in this way in human history, it leads to the thought that humanity in its totality as developed in history is God. In a most real and intimate sense God and man are one.

To Kierkegaard nothing could be more completely and dangerously out of touch with reality than this view of God. Here for instance is an entry in his Journal (712): "The fundamental error of modern times (which runs into logic, metaphysics, dogmatics, and the whole of modern life) lies in the fact that the yawning abyss of quality in the difference between God and man has been removed." For Kierkegaard, the

fundamental presupposition of life was that; "God is God and man is man". There must be no confusion between the two. Man is not a part of God and God is not to be identified with any particular function of human nature. There is "an infinite qualitative distinction between God and man". God is holy and sublime. In Him there is the "fusion of the Absolute with perfect and awful holiness". God is accordingly the "Wholly Other". It is essential that there be no obliteration of the dividing line between the Creator and His creatures. There is absolute dualism between God and man. God must not be thought of as man in a superlative degree. He is The Holy and The Sublime, and when we gaze into our souls we know intuitively that there is naught of holiness or sublimity in us. For us ever to hope to understand Christianity or to share in the life that is offered us there, we must learn to keep our distance from the Most High. "Forget not" he says "that God is in Heaven and that man is on the earth." It was an inevitable outcome of this dualism that Kierkegaard in seeking for expression was forced to speak of God in such chilling phrases as "the absolutely Unknown"; "the mere Limit"; "the sheerly unqualified Being". This dualism is so complete that by no process of human reasoning or endeavour can it be lessened or resolved. The gulf fixed is absolute. It is from this background that all other facets of Kierkegaard's system of belief must be viewed. Sin, Salvation, Faith, the Christian Way, etc., are all alike attainable only as they progress from this sovereign reality.

The infinite qualitative distinction between God and man can be the only starting point for Christian thought.

(2) Sin: Hegel, in inevitable development of his initial presuppositions, had come to assert that there was no real or radical difference between good and evil. If God uses both in the advancement of the human race, and in the revelation of Himself in History, there cannot be an ultimate difference between them; they must be reconcilable in a higher unity. But where Hegel found himself led to deny the reality and significance of sin, Kierkegaard regarded it as the fundamental fact of man's moral and spiritual position. It is this very fact of sin that has made tragic in so absolute a sense the gulf between God and man, for by it a complete alienation has been established.

Of this position of Kierkegaard's, Dr. H.R. Mackintosh writes in "Types of Modern Theology", page 236: "Kierkegaard's view of sin is marked by the infinite gravity found in the Bible and the Reformers. Sin is the category that singles out the individual and puts him strictly by himself, unconfused with God, or with his fellows, or with the encompassing world. Between God and the sinful lies an infinite abyss: as he puts it; 'If the distance is infinite between God, Who is in Heaven, and thee, who art on Earth, infinitely greater is the difference between the Holy One and thee, the sinner'." For Kierkegaard, Sin was the rock on which all philosophical attempts to explain the universe were sure to be wrecked, because they could find no

place for it in their schemes. Of the destructive influence of Sin in the human heart, he wrote with passion and intensity. He held that the problem of sin must never be treated as an impersonal scientific one, but always as purely personal. For example, in the Christian Discourses (page 108), he writes: "Sin is man's destruction. Only the rust of Sin can consume the soul - or eternally destroy it. For here indeed is the remarkable thing from which already that simple wise man of olden time derived a proof of the immortality of the soul, that the sickness of the soul (sin) is not like bodily weakness which kills the body. Sin is not a passage way through which a man passes once, for from it one would then flee; Sin is not like suffering - THE INSTANT, but AN ETERNAL FALL FROM THE ETERNAL." And again: "In life there is only one danger which decisively brings with it destruction, that is Sin, for Sin is man's ruin." (Ibid. page 118).

In the two books Concept of Dread and Sickness unto Death, Kierkegaard addresses himself to the problem of the nature and source of sin. In the former, a psychological investigation of the fall, and so of Sin in general, Kierkegaard asserts that Sin is not to be explained scientifically; psychologically it is preceded by a vague apprehension of something that both attracts and repels, but this does not bring us to sin itself which, as an act of the human personality, comes by a 'Spring'. Sickness unto Death analyses Sin as a state of conscious or unconscious Despair, as the fatal disease which only

Christianity can cure. The matrix of Sin is Fear. Despair, taken by him as a virtual equivalent of Sin, is a universal condition. "Men fear or dread when they hear the challenge of Eternity, the call to be spiritual; they despair when they refuse to obey it."

One more emphasis must be noted in order to set Kierkegaard's view of Sin in clearest relief. This Fear or Dread which issues in refusal to obey and thereafter in Despair, the essence of Sin, manifests itself in Defiance. At the conclusion of this very section of Sickness unto Death, he says, (page 118): "To describe it figuratively, it is as if an author were to make a clerical blunder and this blunder were conscious of being such - though perhaps it was not really a blunder but was in a higher sense an essential constituent of the whole exposition, - it is then as if this clerical blunder were to revolt against the author, out of hate for him were to forbid him to correct it and were to say to him in mad defiance: No, I will not be erased, I will remain as a witness against thee that thou art a mediocre author." In these words Kierkegaard was certainly describing his own personal experience and his own defiance of God; it is out of the abundance of the heart that his mouth speaks and it is questionable if philosophical terminology could have described so vividly what it means for a man to defy his maker. His own exact definition of sin is: "Sin is this: Before God or with the conception of God to be in despair at not willing to be oneself or in despair at willing to be oneself." (Sickness unto Death), page 123).

(3) Revelation: We draw near to the very heart of Kierkegaard's doctrine of the Christian salvation when we ask the question: "By what means is this gulf so created to be bridged?" The whole library of Kierkegaard's works is devoted to the answer and here we can only sketch it in the barest outline. Kierkegaard fiercely maintains that so great is the cleavage between God and man, so tragically has it been made apparent by the fact of Sin, so helpless is man to bridge the gulf either by the exercise of his intellect or his will, that if there is to be hope at all God must act and declare Himself in time and reveal within the bounds of history His character and purpose to men. It is vanity to seek to apprehend God in any fashion; only the mercy of God drawing near to man in a personal way can enable the sinner to be united in faith to God his Saviour. Here for instance is an extract from a passage dealing with sin and the possibility of its forgiveness.

Journal, Danish Edition VIII A, 675: "Something about the forgiveness of Sin. Just as the first expression of a true and deep experience of human love is the feeling of one's own personal unworthiness, so the longing after the forgiveness of Sin is the evident sign that a man loves God. But no man by himself can hit upon the thought that God loves him. It must be proclaimed to man. This is the Gospel, Revelation."

In these terse words Kierkegaard expresses his position. Knowledge of God is impossible unless God consents and wills to reveal Himself; and likewise knowledge of sin and a man's own

desperate need must be matter for Revelation. As he continues in the above passage: "Just because no man of himself can hit upon the thought that God loves him, just for this reason can no man of himself conceive how great a sinner he is. The Augsburg Confession consistently teaches that it must be revealed to a man how great a sinner he is."

Only the Revelation of God before whom man lives and dies can evoke the really poignant sense of sin. Apart from Divine Revelation man is in ignorance alike of the Divine Character and his own true nature.

Of the way in which this fundamental necessity has been watered down in his own day, he writes in one of his small tracts, The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle: "What is it that erroneous exegesis and speculation have done to confound Christianity? Whereby have they confounded it? Briefly stated and with categorical precision it is thus: they have withdrawn the paradox-religious sphere into the aesthetical and thereby gained the advantage that every Christian term which in its own sphere is qualitatively categorical, can now in reduced circumstances do humble service as a 'Spirituelle' expression signifying pretty much anything. Now when the paradox sphere is done away with or expounded back into the aesthetical, an Apostle becomes nothing more than a genius - and then Goodnight Christianity! The Spiritual and the Spirituelle, Revelation and spontaneous originality, a call of God and human

talent, an Apostle and a genius - all of them come to pretty much the same thing in the end."

For Kierkegaard the Divine Revelation was the 'conditio sine qua non' of Christianity.

"Truth" he writes in his Journal (809), "from a Christian point of view does not reside in the Subject (as Socrates understood it), but in a Revelation which must be proclaimed."

These few brief selected quotations make clear the essence of Kierkegaard's position. Over against the Hegelian view of the ^{the} imminence of God in humanity, he elaborated and stated the uncompromising doctrine of Divine Transcendence; a transcendence so absolute as almost to forbid all contact with earth. It is the glory of Christianity that it is the channel of God's Revelation to men. God in Grace has come near to meet the sinner in a personal way and has made it possible for man to be united in living faith to God. God has come - that is the miracle of the Holy Evangel. As he cries dramatically in Training in Christianity (page 1):

"He, the only One who is able to help and to help with the one thing needful, to save from the sickness which in the truest sense is mortal, does not wait for people to come to Him, but He comes of His own accord, uncalled for - for He indeed it is that calls them - and offers help - and what help!"

(4) Jesus Christ: This self-revelation of God had to take an unique and exceptional form in view of the infinite qualitative distinction between God and man, and this took place in the Incarnation. For Kierkegaard it was the very essence of Christianity that Eternal Truth once came forth in history, a personal presence in the God-Man. Christ was not the effulgence of human nature but the breathing of Eternity into Time. The Incarnation was an incomparable event - 'The Moment' in a new sense, as the entry of Eternity into Time through Christ. Concerning this E.L.Allen (Kierkegaard, page 191) well says - "The pivot on which Kierkegaard's world turns is no longer the present instant of crisis and decision for the individual, but the hour in the past which marked the Advent of the God-Man."

It is here that we come face to face with some of the most baffling of Kierkegaard's views. Christ is the Revelation of Eternal God to man - that is true - but it is equally true that in His very person He bears the sign of Offence. It is true that Christ is the Saviour of men and the object of saving faith, but also true that He is a mortal affront to human reason. Christ's person mocks our intelligence by the fact that it is an earthly phenomenon with Eternal Godhead at its heart. The Incarnation was the actualisation of the impossible; the Absurd confronting us as a fact.

In the Philosophical Fragments, Kierkegaard discusses the general question; 'How can an Eternal Salvation be based upon an historical event?' As an experiment in thought, his pseudonym, Johannes Climacus, argues that an appearance of God in time-relations must be a 'paradox' for human reason. Thought must find such an appearance a stumbling block and may seek either to reject it or to explain it - both equally in vain. This is taken up and developed in the Unscientific Postscript where the starting point is the individual's passionate desire for his own salvation, and its problem is not, 'Is Christianity true?' but 'How can I become a Christian?'. The passionate desire rejects the proof from Biblical theology, from the existence of the Church, and from the philosophy which in identifying being and thought, distorts Christianity and subverts personality. The essential truth of Christianity, namely, that the Absolute has entered into time-relations, is a paradox for thought and can be appropriated only by an impassioned faith. This venture of faith is in God as revealed in Christ who, as a definite historical personality, is the same as God, the Eternal; and this absolute paradox is the specific object of Christian faith.

The following points fall to be noted in particular emphasis as we think of this:

(a) Christ for Kierkegaard is the One in Whom the Revelation of God is made to men. But who is Christ? Not merely the historical Jesus, nor yet the Christ of experience,

but the God-Man, the God Who by definition is the Wholly Other - yet become Man. In this he is the absolute Paradox. It must be noted here that the main emphasis in Kierkegaard's thought and teaching is on the Incarnation. The Cross and the Work of Christ thereon, would seem to be of less account for him than the fact of God-become-man. As Dr. H.R. Mackintosh says in Types of Modern Theology (page 244): "The other incredibilities of the Gospel, such as the dependance of Salvation on an historical event, or the Divine justification of the ungodly, were crowned and sealed for Kierkegaard by the supreme paradox that in Jesus the Eternal God enters Time."

(b) Christ is therefore an offence to men. It is a direct development from the foregoing position that Christ is presented as the possibility of the offence. He is an offence to the intellect. He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, a riddle to which our understanding need never hope to find an answer. Kierkegaard's elaboration of this was essentially deliberate, for he wanted ever to bring out the indubitable element of provocativeness in the Gospel. Any statement of the Christian Gospel which has been so watered down as to be inoffensive to those who hear it, is fatally untrue to type. Of this he writes in Training and Christianity (page 143): "So inseparable from faith is the possibility of offence that if the God-Man were not the possibility of offence He could not be the object of faith. So the possibility of offence is assumed

in faith, assimilated by faith; it is the negative work of the God-Man. For if the possibility were lacking, direct communication would be in place, and thus the God-Man would be an idol. Direct recognizableness is paganism."

This offence is multifarious. How, for example, can we tolerate His unlimited compassion? We are willing enough to pity our own neighbours but our pity must work within strict limits and must in no way endanger our superiority to the one we help. How hard too for us to accept His message that the misery we endure is our own sin! The crowning offence, however, was in His claim to be God; to our unaided intellect that is altogether unthinkable.

(c) Christ is the pattern for the life of the believer.

In Training and Christianity (page 232):

Kierkegaard writes, "Christ came to the world for the purpose of saving the world, and at the same time (as was implied in His first purpose) to be 'the Pattern', to leave behind Him footsteps for those who would attach themselves to Him, for those who might become His followers, for followers correspond to footsteps. Just for this reason He let Himself be born in lowly station, and thereafter lived in poverty, despised and humiliated. Why then was this, why this lowliness and humiliation? It was because He who in truth is to be the Pattern and is concerned only with followers, must in one sense be located 'behind' men, to drive them on, whereas in another

sense He stands before them, beckoning them on. This is the relationship of loftiness and lowliness in 'the Pattern'."

It was most particular^{ly} in regard to suffering that Kierkegaard thought of Christ as the Pattern. For him the disciples worth and love was proved in so far as he experienced like tribulation to that of his Master. The Cross was not borne by Christ that we might escape it but that we might bear it after Him. To this we shall return again.

(d) Christ is the soul's Redeemer as He is the Redeemer of the whole world.

The concept of Redemption was very near to the heart of Kierkegaard, though it is not in the forefront of his exposition of doctrine. We have just noted that the significance of the Incarnation is the most dominant consideration in the mind of Kierkegaard when facing the problem of man's salvation. None the less, particularly in his Christian Discourses, and most especially in his Discourses in Preparation for Holy Communion, the reality of his faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is most apparent. In no better way can this be illustrated than by quoting the words of the prayer with which he introduces the section 'Christ as the Pattern' in the major work Judge for yourselves, (page 161): "Oh Lord Jesus Christ, it was not to plague us men but to save us that Thou didst say, 'No man can serve two masters' - oh that we might be willing to accept it, by doing it, that is, by following Thee. Help us all and help everyone, Thou who art both willing and able to help, Thou who

art both the Pattern and the Redeemer, and again both the Redeemer and the Pattern, so that when the striver sinks under the Pattern, then the Redeemer raises him up again, but at the same instant Thou art the Pattern to keep him continually striving. Thou, our Redeemer, by Thy blessed suffering and death, hast made satisfaction for all and for everything; no eternal blessedness can be or shall be earned by desert - it has been deserved. Yet Thou didst leave behind Thee the trace of Thy footsteps, Thou the holy pattern of the human race and of each individual in it, so that, saved by Thy redemption, they might every instant have confidence and boldness to will to strive to follow Thee." That, as we shall again and again see, was the position which Kierkegaard all through his life strove to make clear, and any statement of his beliefs which in measure overlooks the comprehensiveness of his teaching in this respect is of necessity inadequate and unworthy.

(5) The Individual: In Hegel's philosophy little place was found for the individual personality; the individual was swamped in the totality of humanity, of which it is only a part and a partial expression. Not so with Kierkegaard. It was a part of his self-appointed task to assert, against the tyranny of the crowd, the rights of the individual. Only an individual as such could ever enter into fellowship with the Eternal. Dr. Lowrie in writing of Kierkegaard's view of the Church as being contrary to Richard Rothe's concept of the Church

as a society prior to and apart from individuals that compose it quotes the following saying from the Papers of Kierkegaard;
 "To relate oneself to God personally as an individual, quite literally as an individual is the formula for being a Christian."
 This passage continues thus: "Every time this occurs it is always an event of incomparably greater importance than a European war or a war which involves all the corners of the earth; it is a catastrophic event which moves the Universe to its deepest depths He whose life does not present relative catastrophies of this sort has never, not even in the remotest approximation, addressed himself as an individual to God." -
 (page 525).

Kierkegaard was wont to say that the decisive category for Christianity is 'the Individual'. Of this he never lost sight. The Church he saw could only become a mighty force for God in the world if the individuals within her fellowship were fully persuaded of and dedicated to the Truth as revealed in Jesus Christ. It was this high object that filled his mind and vision in endeavouring to make each man realise his own dignity and responsibility. He desired to reveal each human being to himself as a 'Citizen of Eternity', a 'personal self face-to-face with God'. The individual is only what he is - before God. As he says tersely in his Journal (313) - "The individual - that is where the battle must be fought." Yet again he writes in his Journal (632) - "The whole development of the world tends to the importance of the individual; that, and nothing else, is the

principle of Christianity Christianity is certainly accessible to all but, be it noted, only provided everyone becomes an individual, becomes 'the Individual'." He goes so far as to say emphatically (Journal 723) - "Now that the world has gone so far along the road of reflection, Christianity stands or falls with this category, the Individual. But for that category Pantheism would have triumphed I bind myself to make every man whom I can include in the category, 'the Individual', into a Christian, or rather since no man can do that for another, I vouch for his becoming so."

The greatness of this truth can scarcely be over-emphasised, and Kierkegaard did a great service for the Christian Church and for philosophical thought by his constant stressing of it. It is 'soul by soul and silently' that the bounds of the Kingdom are increased; God's word to man is ever 'Thou!'. It is in the solitude of a great alone-ness with the Eternal that God's Revelation is perceived and Christianity is seen to be the 'radical cure' that man's soul needs. Though it be true that God is so infinitely removed from man in being and in holiness, yet it is the marvel of God's mercy that He makes His Grace known to individual spirits, calling us forth by name, and makes us to know the glory of being 'an individual before God'.

(6) Faith: How is the individual thus delineated to appropriate the content of the Divine Revelation which God, in order to overcome the fatal bias of humanity and to save mankind from its mortal peril, has made in Christ? The answer is by Faith. The consciousness of man's sinfulness, the knowledge that before God we are always in the wrong, can never be removed by any general, humane or cultured experience of religion, but only by our entering the fateful region of Revelation - of Revelation on God's side and of Faith on ours.

In this again Kierkegaard's warfare was with the prevailing conceptions of his day and the battle was bitter and prolonged. Faith in his day was conceived of as 'immediacy', (unreflective spontaneity), and was therefore more or less a transient factor which should be superseded by philosophy. The philosopher must advance beyond faith. For Kierkegaard, however, faith was paramount and all-important. In Training in Christianity for instance, he writes, (page 140): "But modern philosophy as a whole has done everything to delude us into the notion that Faith has an immanent quality, that it is immanency; and this in turn is connected with the fact that they have done away with the possibility of offence, made Christianity a doctrine, done away with the God-Man and the situation of contemporaneousness. What the modern philosophy understands by faith is properly what is called an opinion, or what is loosely called in everyday speech, believing. Christianity is made into a doctrine; this doctrine is then preached to a person, and then

he believes that it is so, as this teacher says. The next stage then therefore is to comprehend this doctrine - and that is what philosophy does. On the whole, this is quite right, in case Christianity were a doctrine; but since it is not that, this is a crazy proceeding. Faith in a pregnant sense has to do with the God-Man. But the God-Man, the sign of contradiction, refuses to employ direct communication - and demands faith!"

That is a most important statement in regard to this view of Faith: Faith in a pregnant sense has to do with the God-Man! This means of necessity that there is no sense in which Faith can be considered a value-judgment, for the God-Man in His own person is an absolute affront to human reason. Since God is the Absolute Paradox, and Christ the Eternal become the Temporal, Faith in such a self-contradictory object is the denial of reason. Reason holds no part or place in Faith. In the acceptance of a first century Jewish peasant as God, Faith goes utterly counter to reason and mocks at all our canons of probability. Religious faith occupies a sphere of its own which is not continuous with rational belief nor to be reached by any approximations of proof or probability, but only by a leap. It is characterised, however, by a certitude such as rational proof or historical evidence cannot give, for this can never amount to more than approximation to certain knowledge. It is through faith that man is made whole again, for the opposite of vice is not virtue but faith. Because of its very nature, the act of faith is one that man always finds most difficult; so hard

indeed that he cannot will himself into it apart from Divine help. Writing of this, arguing that philosophy and Christianity can never be united, Kierkegaard says in his Journal (32):

"What brings it about that there are actually so many who, as they say, find in their consciousness Christian impulses, yet on the other hand neither are nor profess to be Christians? It is surely because Christianity is a radical cure which one shrinks from; and without having precisely the same formal conceptions which led many Christians in the earliest times to defer the decisive step until the last minute, it is surely for this reason such persons lack strength to take the desperate leap."

To the study of Kierkegaard's view of Christian Faith we shall return again; at this point the dominant note need only be sounded. The Divine Revelation is apprehended only within the Passion of Faith, for thus is the soul brought into encounter with Jesus Christ. It is by the leap of Faith in response to this self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the God-Man, that the soul is won to the side of God and is redeemed and delivered from its mortal peril.

CHAPTER V.

KIERKEGAARD'S VIEW OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION.

(1) Introductory: It is now possible, with this general statement of the Kierkegaardian position before us, as well as with some appreciation of his character and spiritual experience, to proceed to a detailed study and analysis of his view of Christian Conversion. Quite obviously it would not have been possible to have presented any adequate account of this without the foregoing: for clearly, the experience of such an intense and passionate spirit as Kierkegaard's was, must have played an immeasurable part in forming his convictions regarding the way of 'becoming a Christian'; and equally clearly, it is only within the larger framework of his general view of the Christian Religion, that any one aspect of it in particular could be satisfactorily delineated. It is certainly true to say that any statement of his view of Christian Conversion will be at once a mirror of his own exceptional and somewhat tragic experience, and a development of his whole outlook on and grasp of the Christian Faith.

(a) The Constant Aim. Over and over again Kierkegaard was wont to assert that he had but one aim. This is most particularly stressed in the little book in which he left on record largely for the sake of posterity his outlook upon his life's work and the dominant considerations that

governed him in adopting the methods he had embraced as his own. This book he called 'The Point of View for my work as an Author'- one of the most remarkable productions of any writer of any age. In endeavouring to assess the importance that Kierkegaard placed on the whole subject of Conversion this work is indispensable, for it is here that he stresses most particularly his conviction that all his output as an author had been directed towards leading the world of his day into a more realistic appreciation of the fundamental truths of Christianity and into a more existential approach to the questions of Faith and Life. Here for instance in the Introduction he says (page 5): "The contents of this little book affirm then what I truly am as an author, that I am and was a religious author, that the whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem of 'becoming a Christian', with a direct or indirect polemic against the monstrous illusion we call Christendom, or against the illusion that in such a land as ours all are Christians of a sort." Again he returns to this in the emphasis of a footnote to page 22: "Once and for all I must earnestly beg the kind reader always to bear 'in mente' that the thought behind the whole work is: what it means to become a Christian."

It is most important to keep this fact before us for often it may well seem that the paths along which Kierkegaard would lead us are far from directing our steps to this goal. So too must his contemporaries have wondered, as he himself realised, witness for example the following passage:

(Ibid. page 96) "He who was regarded with astonishment as about the shrewdest fellow (and this was attained with Either/Or), he to whom the place of 'interesting man' was willingly conceded (and this was attained with Either/Or) - precisely he, as it turned out, was engaged in the service of Christianity, he personally and as an author was striving to bring out this simple thing about 'becoming a Christian'." To this he adds a footnote with further bearing on this; "The consecration in so far as it dated from an earlier time, consisted in the resolution before God that even if I were never to attain the goal of becoming a Christian, I would employ all my time and diligence to getting it made clear at least what Christianity is and where the confusions in Christendom lie - a labour for which I had prepared myself substantially from my earliest youth."

Over against the deadness of religion and the miasma of speculation, Kierkegaard set before him this great task of shewing men what it really means to be a Christian. As we continue our study of this aspect of his work, it may come to seem as though the ideal he portrayed were too high and too extreme for it ever to be attained on earth; but that does not alter the fact that he devoted himself with utter abandon to the presentation of it and himself though 'faint oft and falling' sought to live up to the standard he set. For Kierkegaard the pathway of conversion was no flower-strewn road; it was the most difficult way that man could ever be called to walk upon; but the difficulties must not deter, they should rather invigorate and

inspire the soul to 'adventure forth with God'. The actual word 'Conversion' was not very frequently used by him; he preferred to speak about 'becoming a Christian'. It was thus that he persisted in speaking of himself to the end of his life, ever regarding himself as in the process of 'becoming'. To the high calling of leading others in that way his whole amazing output as an author was directed and dedicated.

All this might well be rounded off by quoting from the Supplement to 'On my Work as an Author' where writing under the heading 'My Position' he says (page 159): "I have never fought in such a way as to say: I am the true Christian, others are not Christians. No, my contention has been this: I know what Christianity is, my imperfection as a Christian I fully recognise - but still I know what Christianity is. And to get this properly realised must be, I should think to every man's interest whether he be a Christian or not, whether his intention is to accept Christianity or to reject it." Further, speaking of 'My Tactics': "On the other hand my tactics were these, by God's aid to employ every means to make it clear what the requirement of Christianity truly is - even though not a single person should be induced to enter into it, and though I myself might have to give up being a Christian (in which case I should have felt obliged to make open admission of the fact)."

Sufficient has been said to emphasise how central was this aim in all Kierkegaard's life and work. It is our task now to examine the content of meaning in the phrase 'becoming a

Christian'; or, in other words, to examine the content of Kierkegaard's Doctrine of Christian Conversion.

(b) Conversion - a slow process: "Conversion is a slow process." So Kierkegaard noted in 1836 in his Diary (61), and to that same dictum he would have readily subscribed many years afterward. Indeed, twelve years were to pass before he felt himself sufficiently possessed by the realities of his beliefs as to warrant him making a 'direct approach' as contrasted with the 'indirect' of the bygone years. Here are his words: (Journal 747) "N.B.: N.B. Wednesday, April 19th (Wednesday in Holy Week, 1848). My whole nature is changed. My closeness and reservedness are broken - I must speak. Great God, grant me grace now by God's help I shall become myself. I believe now that Christ will help me to triumph over my melancholy and then I shall become a priest."

This experience brought to him two great gifts - one of them, of which he speaks in the above passage - the power to speak; - the other, not mentioned therein but soon after in the next entry in the Journal, the assurance of Forgiveness. Prior to this date, this was one blessing which Kierkegaard could not, or would not, receive from God. That God could forgive and forget his sin, was a miracle of grace too great for him to comprehend. Now this became a blessed reality to him. In July 1848 he wrote: "Essentially this is the everlastingly comforting thing about the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins: 'Thou shalt

believe it'. For when the anxious conscience begins to employ itself with heavy thoughts and it seems to one as if in all Eternity it would be impossible to forget - then, the word is: 'Thou shalt forget; Thou shalt stop thinking about thy sin, thou hast not only a right to stop, it is not merely that thou mayest make bold to pray to God for permission to dare to forget it, no, thou shalt forget, for thou shalt believe that thy sin is forgiven'."

It is from this period that all his most distinctively Christian writings date, as for example, 'Sickness unto Death', 'Training in Christianity', and 'For Self-Examination'. It was a long road that he had had to travel before reaching this desired haven of 'Directness'; as he himself so early as 1836 had said (Journal 61): "Conversion is a slow process. As Franz Baeder truthfully says, 'One has to go back along the same road where one previously went forward'. One easily grows impatient; if it cannot happen immediately one might just as well give up, or begin to-morrow and enjoy to-day; that is temptation"

It is out of this experience of his own that he counsels those who would own allegiance to Christ not to fear the difficulty and toilsomeness of the way. Urging this he writes in Training in Christianity (page 19): "Oh turn about, turn about, come hither! Shrink not at the difficulty of the journey back, however hard it be; fear not the toilsome path of Conversion, however laboriously it leads to Salvation; whereas

Sin with winged speed, with ever increasing velocity, leads onward or downward, so easily, with such indescribable ease, as easily indeed as when a horse relieved entirely of the strain of pulling, cannot with all his might bring the waggon to a halt which thrusts him over the cliff into the abyss. Be not in despair at every relapse, which the God of patience possesses patience to forgive and which a sinner might well have patience enough to be humbled under. Nay, fear nothing, and despair not. He who says, 'Come hither', is with you on your way; from Him come help and forgiveness in the path of Conversion which leads to Him; and with Him there is rest."

It is to the abiding credit of Kierkegaard that he in no way tried to obscure the hard realities of the Christian Way. He saw that for the Saviour of the world the path of obedience was a path of humiliation and of trial, and it was of the very substance of his faith that the servant of Christ should be His follower in the fullest sense of the term. The road that leads upward to the Hills of God is steep and oftentimes precipitous; no good purpose could possibly be served by presenting it in any other light. So it was that he set himself to make this clear to the world of his day; he was convinced that to depict the stern realities of the situation was at once the highest wisdom and the surest way of winning true converts to the Kingdom.

(2) The Conditions:

(a) The Divine Initiative and Grace: For Kierkegaard, the hope of salvation for man could only be discovered in the good intent of God. For him the very heart of the Christian Gospel lay in the fact that the 'initiative is always with God'. Were it not for God's quest for man, man himself could never find God. Very beautifully Kierkegaard expresses this great truth in the introductory words to 'Come Hither' (Training Christianity, page 10), "Oh wonderful, wonderful! That the One who has help to give, is the One who says, Come Hither; what Love is this! There is love in the act of a man who is able to help and does help him who begs for help. But for one to offer help, and to offer it all! Yes, and precisely to all such as can do nothing to help in return! To offer it - no, to shout it out, as if the Helper were the one who needed help, as if in fact He who is able and willing to help all was Himself in a sense a needy one, in that He feels an urge and consequently need to help, need of the sufferer in order to help him."

It is thus that Man's deliverance is made possible; it is because it is 'God Himself that seeks them that stand in need of help'. The Divine Grace is revealed most startlingly to a sinful world in the manifestation of a questing God.

"He the only One who is able to help and to help with the one thing needful, to save from the sickness which in the truest sense is mortal, does not wait for people to come to Him, but He comes of His own accord, uncalled for - for He indeed it is that

calls them, that offers help - and what help!" (Training in Christianity, page 11).

Further on in the development of this great theme he writes again (page 20); "He does not stand and wait, He goes forth to seek as the shepherd sought the lost sheep, as the woman sought the lost coin. He goes - yet, no, He has gone, but infinitely further than any shepherd or any woman; He went, in sooth, the infinitely long way from being God to becoming man, and that way He went in search of sinners." To this thought Kierkegaard over and over again returns. So far removed was the Eternal God from man, the Creator from the creature, the Infinite from the finite, the Holy from the sinful, that the necessity for the Divine intervention was paramount and transparently essential. There is no 'hope in man', as man suffers from a 'malady that is most truly mortal'. God must come and - herein is the glory of the Evangel - God has come. "All His willingness to help would perhaps be no help at all if He did not utter this word and TAKE THE FIRST STEP." (Training in Christianity, page 21).

This is the crowning miracle of Divine Grace - God takes the first step - and from the wonder of that truth Kierkegaard never wandered. Here he is writing in his Journal in 1848 soon after the deep and abiding experience of Holy Week of that year, (752): "I understand more and more that Christianity is too holy for us men. Only think what it means to dare to believe that God came into the world, and for my sake too. It almost sounds as though it were the most blasphemous

presumption that a man should presume to believe such a thing. If it were not God Himself who had said it - if a man had hit upon that idea in order to shew how important man is to God; yes, of all blasphemies it would be the most terrible. It is therefore not invented to shew how important man is to God - but in order to shew how infinite is the Love of God. For it is certainly infinite that He should care for a sparrow, but for the sake of a sinner (and a sinner is even less than a sparrow) to let Himself be born and die - oh infinite Love."

That which is true of God's approach to the whole world is true likewise of God's approach to the individual soul; it is a work of grace seeking the highest good of man. "For the Christian HE OPENS HIMSELF", he writes in the Discourse, 'The Anxiety of Presumption', "and His Grace encompasses the Christian on every side blessedly and closely." Therein Kierkegaard expresses most forcibly this truth. God's 'first step' is a fundamental necessity for man as well as a sovereign act of grace; and this act of grace is one of unique Revelation - 'He opens Himself to man'.

(b) Man's Estate - Sin: (1) The Fact: Over against the Holy and Infinite God, stands man - helpless and hopeless because of Sin. In the light of Revelation given from above, Sin is shown up in its true colours and man's actual condition made clear. For Kierkegaard, it was the highest peak of Divine Grace that it should seek man in his Sin. As has just been quoted - "But for the sake of a sinner to let Himself be born

and die, oh Infinite Love!" This eternal contrast was ever in Kierkegaard's thought - God's infinite Mercy set over against man's infinite need; and he held it as axiomatic that there could be no real progress made towards entering into the Kingdom of Heaven without the birth in the heart of man of the consciousness of Sin and what it really means. Here again we are face to face with the mirror of Kierkegaard's own experience. His sins were truly 'ever before him', and it was out of the bitter struggle and agonising conflict with evil that he emerged into the sunlight of the knowledge of God's Sovereign Love in the Forgiveness of man's Sin. The pathway of Conversion on the human side begins with the dawning consciousness of the exceeding sinfulness of Sin. It is obvious therefore that a careful and full examination of his views on Sin is necessary if we would adequately explore his doctrine of Conversion.

The following points emerge most clearly as we study the wealth of writing that Kierkegaard has left upon this important question.

(2) The Consciousness of Sin: "The consciousness of Sin is the 'conditio sine qua non' of Christianity." So Kierkegaard wrote in his Journal in 1844 (479), the same year as he published his volume 'The Concept of Dread', his first major attempt at an examination of the problem of human Sin. It is the consciousness of Sin that binds a man to Christianity. Times almost without number his Journal reveals how deeply this had been founded in his own experience. Cf. 820: "If I were

not a penitent in my own eyes, I should at times have been scandalised at Christianity, but I dare not breathe a word, and so, looking back, I am reconciled to that which otherwise would have scandalised me. That is how I understand the words of St. Peter: 'To whom else shall we go?'. As they are normally declaimed by parsons they are merely sentimental. I understand them to mean that the consciousness of Sin binds a man to Christianity. It is perhaps a peculiar explanation to say that I am so conscious of being a sinner that I dare not do anything else The real proportions are there: if I were not conscious of being a sinner, I should be scandalised at Christianity. The consciousness of Sin silences me so that in spite of the possibility of scandal, I choose Faith."

It was thus axiomatic for Kierkegaard that the consciousness of Sin alone led to a true knowledge of God and of His Salvation. Speaking of the ways in which God seeks man in Training in Christianity (page 155) he writes: "He employs the most various things as the way and means of drawing unto Himself - but this we cannot dwell upon here. But though the means He employs are many, all ways come together at one point - the Consciousness of Sin - through that passes 'The Way' by which He draws a man, the repentant sinner unto Himself."

One more quotation must suffice. In Training in Christianity (page 72), he writes as follows: "Only the Consciousness of Sin is the expression of absolute respect, and just for this reason, that is because Christianity requires

absolute respect, it must and will display itself as madness or horror, in order that the qualitative infinite emphasis may fall upon the fact that only consciousness of Sin is the way of entrance, is the vision which, by being absolute respect, can see the gentleness, loving-kindness and compassion of Christianity."

Whence comes this consciousness: Once again Kierkegaard is forced back to the reality of the active Revelation of God. Here, for example, is an entry in his Journal, (478): "What the contemplation of nature is for the first (human) consciousness of God, the contemplation of Revelation is for the second immediate consciousness of God (consciousness of Sin). That is where the battle must be fought and not father the probability of Revelation on people, but silence them and include their consciousness of God under the consciousness of Sin." Sin is thus matter of Revelation and not a mere item of knowledge. It is impossible for one to attain to a consciousness of Sin 'per se': one would much more readily stand by the Socratic account of it as ignorance. It must come to him with all the authority of Revelation and with the summons to believe.

(3) The Nature: What then is Sin? To this question Kierkegaard devoted himself with all the intensity of his per-fervid nature. In two books - Philosophical Fragments and The Concept of Dread, published almost simultaneously in 1843 - he deals with it in detail and six years later he published his

great work 'The Sickness unto Death' - one of the most outstanding writings upon the subject of Sin. In this book - the greatest in his own opinion of all his writings - he gives at great length his teaching upon the problem and cure of Sin. Sickness unto Death is an elaboration in depth as well as in breadth of the Concept of Dread of four years before. For Kierkegaard as we have already seen Sin was the fundamental fact of man's spiritual and moral position. It was the rock on which all philosophical attempts to explain the universe were wrecked, because they could find no place for it in their schemes. For Kierkegaard, as E.L.Allen writes concerning him: 'to be a man is to be a sinner; not a citizen of Eternity but a lifelong exile from it.' (Kierkegaard: page).

We have already noted above some of the aspects of Kierkegaard's views of Sin - as for example the equation of Sin with Despair issuing in Defiance. Of the universality of this condition he wrote with passion and deep conviction. Here, for instance, are a few lines from Sickness unto Death (page 32): "As doctors could tell us that there is perhaps no man living who is completely sound, so a real knowledge of men would compel us to say that there is no living soul who is not in some degree a victim of despair; no man in whose inner life there does not dwell an unrest, a dispeace, a disharmony, the dread of something unknown, of something on which we dare not look, a dread of the possibilities of his own being, a dread of himself."

Alongside this, the following Journal entry might well be set (402): "The nature of original Sin has often been examined, and yet the principal category has been missing - it is dread, that is what really determines it; for dread is a desire for what one fears, a sympathetic antipathy; dread is an alien power which takes hold of the individual and yet one cannot extricate oneself from it, does not wish to because one is afraid, but what one fears attracts one. Dread renders the individual powerless and the first sin always happens in a moment of weakness; it therefore lacks any apparent accountableness, but that want is the real snare."

Dr. Lowrie points out in this connection (page 128) that the titles of the chapters of Concept of Dread cannot seem strange to one acquainted with the foregoing statement - as they must to those who approach that book without any knowledge of Kierkegaard's experience: Dread as the presupposition of original Sin; Dread as the consequence of original Sin; Dread as the consequence of that Sin which consists in the lack of the consciousness of Sin; Sin's dreadful anguish or the consequence of Sin in the individual; Dread as a means of salvation in conjunction with Faith. Of this Dread, Kierkegaard wrote with astonishing descriptive power: as, for example, in the Concept of Dread (Danish Edition, page 377): "One can compare Dread with dizziness. One whose eye chanced to behold the yawning depths becomes dizzy. But his eye is as much the cause of this as the abyss is, for he might not have gazed down. So is Dread

the dizziness of freedom, which occurs when the spirit is about to compose the synthesis, and freedom then gazes down into its own possibility and grasps at finite things to hold itself by. In this state of dizziness freedom sinks. Psychology can go no further than this. In that very same moment all is changed, and freedom when again it upraises itself perceives that it is guilty. Between these two moments lies 'the Leap', which no science has explained or can explain."

(4) Original Sin: In the earlier days of his literary activity, Kierkegaard was unwilling to commit himself to any thoroughgoing doctrine of original Sin. For instance in the Concept of Dread he seems to be still shy of any view which would make Sin original in human nature and so imperil freedom; his thesis there is that what we derive from Adam is not yet either Guilt or Determination to Sin for only the free act of the individual can bring him to that. Sin, in other words, is entirely an act of the will and one which could be avoided. But this was a position which Kierkegaard did not endeavour to defend for any length of time, and by the time Sickness unto Death was written he had come to observe another aspect of the question and to be prepared to state it. In that book the interest in human freedom yields to that in the universality and totality of Sin. The corruption of the will, which constitutes Sin, is now affirmed to be supra individual, cleaving to one as a member of a fallen race, and the possibility that it should begin afresh with each individual and each man be 'the Adam of his own

soul' is definitely repudiated. Original Sin is a fact - a fact perhaps from which we might desire to flee but inescapable for all that. In the Philosophical Fragments, this dogma of Sin is inherent in human nature, is given its fullest statement where it is employed in contrast to the Platonic theory of Recollection. In this view, the learner was actually never dispossessed of the truth: it was latent within him and only the service of the midwife was necessary to bring it forth to the light. But Revelation points the very opposite way. According to it, man is not 'in the Truth', but in 'untruth', and does not even possess the ability to apprehend it when presented to him. With this position, the Unscientific Postscript is in entire agreement. We come to a sinful environment and bring every new sin to birth, for there is in Sin an inscrutable combination of conscious volition and inability to act otherwise.

(5) Guilt: While it is true that Kierkegaard drew a sharp distinction between a sense of Sin and a sense of Guilt, it is also true that these two are for him as inseparable as night and day. Original Sin is in fact Guilt. Though born into a sinful context and with a fatal bias toward evil, man is none-the-less accountable and guilty 'before God'. Here are his words from his Journal (1061): "Original Sin is guilt. That is the real paradox. How paradoxical may best be seen thus. It is formed by compounding qualitatively different categories. To inherit is a natural category: guilt is an ethical and spiritual category. Now who would ever think, says Reason, of

putting them together, of saying that something is inherited which by definition cannot be inherited.

It must be believed. The paradox in Christian Truth is invariably due to the fact that it is Truth as it exists for God. The standard of measure and the end is superhuman, and there is only one relationship possible - Faith."

That is the real paradox, and only when man has grasped the fact of his 'guilt before God', will there be any possibility of his being led to Repentance. Kierkegaard constantly returned to this theme and wrote upon it with remarkable insight and wealth of detail; compare, for example, part of the following entry in his Journal (606): "The forgiveness of Sin must not be a scheme whereby a man who has tried his hand at many things ends by wishing to be a new man, and hopes to stumble through with the help of the forgiveness of Sin. No, only the man who has understood that guilt is something absolutely different and far more terrible than the consequences of Sin (looked upon as misfortune, suffering, etc.) he alone repents."

In the Unscientific Postscript, Kierkegaard devotes much space to the study of the meaning and place in Christian experience of Guilt. There he develops the position that 'the decisive expression for existential pathos is Guilt' and that 'the eternal recollection of Guilt is the highest expression for the relation between the consciousness of Guilt and an eternal happiness'. Of the reality of guilt in the consciousness he writes with passion and power in this great work, Cf. page 470:

"To him who is essentially innocent it can never occur to cast guilt away from him, for the innocent man has nothing to do with the determinant we call Guilt. Therefore, when in a particular case a person casts from him the blame and thinks that he is without guilt, at that very instant he makes the concession that on the whole he is one who is essentially guilty, only possibly in this particular he is not guilty. But here indeed we are not dealing with a particular case in which a man casts guilt from him and precisely by this denounces himself as essentially guilty, but it is a question of one's essential relation to existence. But to will essentially to throw off guilt from oneself, i.e. Guilt as the total determinant in order thereby to become innocent, is a contradiction, since this procedure is entirely self-denunciation. It is true of Guilt if it is of any other determinant, that there is a catch to it; its dialect is so crafty that he who justifies himself totally, denounces himself and he who justifies himself partially denounces himself totally." Further on he states (page 473): "The essential consciousness of guilt is the first deep plunge into existence." And also this, (page 480): "Every conception of guilt is lower which does not by an eternal recollection put guilt together with the relation to the eternal happiness." In other words, it is only over against the dimensions of the Eternal, the Infinite, and the Absolutely Holy, that guilt can be properly and adequately conceived. For any lower conception of guilt there corresponds a satisfaction for guilt - punishment, nemesis,

penance - which is lower than 'that eternal recollection which accepts no satisfaction'. It is when set in the light of the Revelation of Divine Love that man's guilt is revealed in all its nakedness and heinousness; it is then that every mouth is stopped and all the world becomes guilty before God.

From this position of alienation and guilt there is no exception - Kierkegaard was emphatic upon that, as witness Journal 494: "It is very curious that the purer a girl is the more certain she is to acknowledge her sinfulness. I am very glad of that because that was really the point which gave me the most difficulty in understanding Sin and in including everything under Sin. With us others it is easy enough."

(c) Summary: The position we have now reached in our study of Kierkegaard's teaching is that man, by nature and by will a sinner, and thus alienated from and guilty before God, can find no way of improving himself or his condition. Between him and God there is no point of contact or communion; there is the infinitely qualitative gulf betwixt God and man and no mortal power is able to bridge the gap. Hope is only possible if God should act in Grace - and He has done so. In Jesus Christ, the God-Man, God has come down into the midst of men; the Eternal has entered into Time relations, and has revealed Himself and His purpose of love and salvation. It is in this Revelation of Eternal Light and Love that man comes to know his own true nature and estate. The Revelation of God in Christ

alone has power to cut the Gordian knot of Sin. But how is that power brought to bear on life in such a way as to defeat the fatal bias and end the thralldom of Sin? The answer of Kierkegaard is that this comes through the gifts and activities of Repentance and Faith, and the next stage in our study must accordingly be to examine his position regarding these things.

(3) The Crisis:

(a) Repentance: In Purify your Hearts (page 32), Kierkegaard said: "It is beyond possibility of doubt that guilt must stand out vividly before a man if he is to repent sincerely." Unless man can be convinced of the reality of Sin and its guilt, there will be no constraining motive leading to an abiding repentance. This latter emphasis - an abiding repentance - was something that Kierkegaard held to be of the very essence of valid Christian experience. As he says in the same work (page 27): "There is then something which is to be done always, something which is not as if it were of time and had its season there is to be Repentance and Contrition." These are the two guides who are gifted to man by a watchful Providence, "one calling onward, the other calling back, one calling onward towards the Good, the other calling back from the Evil." By its very nature there can be nothing momentary about it; if it is true repentance it will be an abiding repentance. Further on still in this same little book, (page 31), he says: "In terms of Eternity, one must repent at once, yea there is

no time even to say it. But man lives actually in temporal conditions, a life extended in time. So, the eternal and temporal seek a mutual understanding, in which the temporal does not crave postponement in order to draw back, but knowing its own frailty asks for a place to prepare, and the eternal grants the plea not giving up its claim, but in a helpful fellowship granting to frailty brief respite."

What then in Kierkegaard's view are the marks and distinctive qualities of this true repentance towards God? It is possible here to mention only some of the main emphases which he was wont to make when writing of this and in doing so the following points emerge:

(a) Repentance is the fruit of a deep consciousness of guilt. For Kierkegaard it was unthinkable that anyone would ever come to the place of true repentance unless he first had come to see under the impact of Divine Revelation that as a sinner he was a sinner in the sight of God and guilty before Him. This could never have come to pass had it not been in the very beginning that God had made His purpose and character known to man; in the strictest sense of the term, Kierkegaard held that it was only the goodness of God which could lead a man to repentance, but the realisation of such goodness was the direct product of the self-revelation of Heaven.

(b) The outstanding characteristic of repentance is an absolute sorrow for Sin. In Training in Christianity (page 262) speaking of the woman described so graphically in Luke XXXVII, ?

verse 37, sq., he writes: "First we must learn to become like her indifferent to everything else, in absolute sorrow for our sins, yet in such a way that one thing is important to us and absolutely important - to find forgiveness." The emphatic word in this is of course the word "absolute". Kierkegaard hotly maintained that for true repentance to be experienced there could not possibly be any question of a divided self. All the powers of a man's personality - emotion, thought, will, etc. - must play their full part for the full and true manifestation of penitence before God. Not only so, but the turning from sin that repentance involves must be utter and complete and for all time. If sin is ever to be abandoned and its power destroyed within the human heart, then man must in one sovereign act of decision, an act the ramifications of which will cover the whole ordered system of life, ally himself with God, and adopt towards evil the attitude which a Holy God adopts. This sorrow for sin by which repentance is characterised, is far more than mere sorrow for the harmful effects and consequences of particular sinning; it is the absolute renunciation of everything alien to the mind and will of God. Nothing less than that, Kierkegaard held, could ever bring man to the place of Divine blessing and Grace.

(c) Such repentance will manifest itself in confession of sin and in prayer for mercy. It is ever in the eyes of God that repentance must be regarded - not on any human level; there must be paramount the upward look, the penitent's steps

must ever tend towards the Throne of Grace. Just because of this, preparation of heart is vital towards true repentance. As he says again in Purify your Hearts, (page 34): "And so repentance must not only have its time but also its preparation time. Even if it is to be a daily dumb anxiety, yet it must be able to collect itself as well and be well-prepared for the solemn occasion. This occasion is Confession for which preparation should be made beforehand. Just as a man changes his clothes for festivity, so one is inwardly changed who prepares for the holy act of Confession."

(d) Repentance has its consummation in a new love for God and the ways of God. In a striking entry in the Journals (365) Kierkegaard refers to this in the climax to which the experience of repentance brings a man: "..... and you who feel yourself so far from your God, what else does it mean when your repentance goes in search of God, but to love God?" It is there that this so necessary experience finds its goal and its reward; the soul having turned from its old way finds itself anchored in the will of the love of God in which will is peace.

(e) An important question is the relationship of repentance to faith in the view of Kierkegaard. Of this much could be written but only the main essentials of his position need be noted here. In the truest sense he regarded them as clearly inseparable in their very nature. He held that it is the function of Divine Revelation to bring a man to the place of absolute despair and that the road along which man is led to

that place is the road of penitence and contrition. This will appear most clearly in our next section when we are studying his view on the place of death and of life; but here it is sufficient to note the fact. Certainly there are passages in his works where it might appear as though he were capable of regarding Repentance and Faith as separable; but they are only liable to such an interpretation when divorced from the full context of his teaching. The very fact that he so constantly urged the truth that it is only the goodness of God that can lead a man to Repentance, added to his insistence that such goodness can only be made known to Faith, is surely all that is necessary to demonstrate his position in this respect. His own constant affirmation also that the record of a true Christian experience will of necessity be one of abiding penitence is another witness to his position in this matter. For Kierkegaard, everything depended on Faith; the very gift of Repentance was bound up with that - indeed for him Faith was true Repentance. Until man receives the assurance of the forgiving love of God, it is not possible for man to repent in truth. Like Calvin, he spoke of the 'Moment' of the unitary act of the glad submission to the loving-kindness of God - an act in which both Repentance and Faith have their own essential parts to play in indissoluble unity. "It ought not to be doubted" says Calvin, "that Repentance not only immediately follows Faith but is produced by it Those who imagine that Repentance rather precedes Faith than is produced by it, as fruit by a tree, have never been acquainted

with its power Yet when we speak of Faith as the origin of Repentance, we dream not of any space of time which it employs in producing it; but we intend to signify that a man cannot devote himself to Repentance unless he knows himself to be of God, except as he has previously received his Grace."

(Institutes, III, 3,1,2.) In no better way could the essentials of the Kierkegaardian position be stated, and with this now before us we can proceed to the next stage in the way of Conversion as he saw it - what he called in his outspoken way, the place of Death and of Life.

(b) The Place of Death and of Life: The crucial point in our examination of Kierkegaard's doctrine of Christian Conversion has now been reached. We have noted how the Divine Grace reaches down to men, God bridging the gulf that otherwise was unbridgable; how the Revelation thus given not only makes God manifest but man manifest to himself as truly and tragically in Sin; how, being thus convicted of the guilt of Sin, man is led to the very borderland of despair and hopelessness. Whence may hope and life be found? For Kierkegaard there was only one answer to that question. Only when man, in desire for a better way and a higher life, comes to the point of knowing that in himself there is no power of help or uplift, can anything be done by God. It is when man dies to himself - to his selfishness which is the world - and to all suggestion of merit or self-righteousness, that God can operate in power through the Spirit of Life. There is no more striking portion of

Kierkegaard's writings than the section in which he elaborates this particular aspect of the beginning of the Christian Life as he saw it. In 'For Self Examination' in the chapter entitled The Spirit giveth Life, he develops his theme at some length and as it has a most direct bearing upon our study at this point, we must note in detail the essential elements of his thesis regarding it.

Speaking directly of the way in which the Holy Spirit alone can bring life to the human heart, he writes as follows, (page 96): "The Spirit giveth life This bestowing of life in the Spirit is not a DIRECT increment of the natural life of man, immediately continuous with this - oh blasphemy, oh horror, thus to take Christianity in vain! - it is a new life; a new life, yes, and this is no mere phrase as when the word is used for this or that, whenever something new begins to stir within us: no, a new life, literally a new life, when death comes in between, this thing of being dead; and a life on the other side of death, yes, that is a new life." First Death! What does he mean? He continues: "Therefore, first death, first thou must die to every merely human hope, to every merely human confidence, thou must die to thy selfishness or to the world; for it is only through thy selfishness that the world has power over thee; if thou hast died to thy selfishness then thou hast died to the world to be obliged to deprive oneself of the object of desire of which one is in possession, that is to wound selfishness at the root - as in the case of Abraham, when

God required that Abraham himself, that he himself, with his own hand - oh, horror of madness, - must sacrifice Isaac, Isaac the gift so long and so lovingly expected, and the gift of God, for which Abraham himself conceived that he must give thanks his whole life long, and would never be able to give thanks enough - Isaac his only son, the son of his old age, and the son of promise. Dost thou believe that death can smart so painfully? I do not.

But that is what it means to die! Before the Spirit can come which giveth life thou must first die.

.....

My hearer, then cometh the life-giving Spirit. When? Why, when this has occurred, when you have 'died from'. For as it is said, 'if we are dead with Christ we shall also live with Him', so also can be said, 'Would we live with him, then we must die with him'. First death, then life. But when? Why, when the first has occurred Assuredly it comes and brings the gifts of the Spirit, Life and Spirit."

That is a quotation of outstanding importance for our understanding of Kierkegaard's position. Before the new life of the Spirit can be begotten in man, there must be an act of such extreme self-renunciation that only the word Death can fully describe. There must be renunciation of every merely human hope, of every merely human confidence, of every expression of self-love as of the very roots of the Self-life. It is to this pass

that the Divine Revelation leads man - to death; to the knowledge that in himself there is naught of merit nor of hope. Then, and not till then, can God in mercy reveal Himself as Saviour and Life. 'Then cometh the life-giving Spirit. He brings Life'.

Nothing could be clearer. Paramount in importance in the pathway of conversion is the recognition of utter human impotence and helplessness, and further, that the life which is born in man is not a direct increment of the natural life of man - no, it is literally a new life, something given, something brought down to man after the utter death of self-renunciation and self-despair has occurred. For man to be reclaimed and reborn there must be the sovereign act of the Living God through the Holy Spirit. The Divine Revelation comes that it may lead men to life, but first in the blinding ray of its unique and unparalleled manifestation, it must lead man through the dark waters of death.

(c) The Gift of Faith: This new life to which the soul is brought is a life of Faith. The Revelation of God is grasped and appropriated by man only through Faith. On the other side of this death that has just been described the first gift received from the life-giving Spirit is the gift of Faith. Kierkegaard, as we have seen, was accustomed to emphasise that the opposite of vice is not virtue but Faith; only through the perception of Faith is the Righteousness of God - the Revelation of God - apprehended; and by such apprehension alone can the

fatal bias within the human heart be overcome. He evidently held that in the very moment of the impartation of Faith through the power of the Spirit of Life, the new life was implanted within the spirit of man. To quote further from 'The Spirit Giveth Life' (page 101): "He brings faith: Faith, that only being in the strictest sense faith which is the gift of the Holy Spirit after death has come between. For we men are not precise in the use of words; we often speak of faith when in the strictest Christian sense it is not faith. In every man, with differences due to natural endowment, a stronger or weaker spontaneity (immediacy) is inborn. The stronger, the more vitally powerful it is, the longer it can hold out against opposition. And the power of opposition, of resistance, this vital confidence in oneself, in the world, in mankind and (among other things) in God, we call Faith. But this is not using the word in a strictly Christian sense. Faith is against understanding, Faith is on the other side of death. And when thou didst die, or didst die to thyself, to the world, thou didst at the same time die to all immediacy in thyself and also to thine understanding. That is to say, when all confidence in thyself, or in human support, and also in God as an immediate apprehension, when every probability is excluded, when it is dark as the dark night - it is in fact death that we are describing - then comes the life-giving spirit and brings faith. This strength is stronger than the whole world, it possesses the power of Eternity. It is the Spirit's gift from God; it is thy victory over the world in which thou dost more than conquer."

From all this the outlines and lineaments of Kierkegaard's position are becoming still clearer. Arising from the Divine initiative in grace, from the Self-revelation of God, man has seen not only the way of God but also his own utter incapacity to walk therein; this is the condition of absolute despair. If there, however, be a willing and obedient heart he is led through sorrow for sin and repentance - the goodness of God leading him thereto, - on to the place of entire self-surrender, of self-renunciation, of submission to the working of God. Herein the gift of faith culminates in action which makes the soul to rest in the will of God. All is of faith since all is of God.

Kierkegaard's Christian Discourses are full of this emphasis. Witness for instance the following passage from 'The Woman that was a Sinner' in 'Training in Christianity' (page 266): "Thou canst learn of the sinful woman, what she well understood, that in relation to finding forgiveness she herself could do nothing at all." To this, Dr. Lowrie, the translator, adds a footnote: "Soren Kierkegaard firmly believed in the Lutheran doctrine of man's impotence to do anything to deserve salvation." It is by the leap of faith that the new relationship with God is established and man himself re-born and transformed.

(d) Notes on Kierkegaard's Views of Faith:

(I) Faith, as a gift of God, is primarily a Passion. For Kierkegaard, Faith was one of the abiding miracles of all life. We have already noted how strongly he emphasised the fact of its

being a gift of God, only given after man has come to an end of himself. There is nothing in man himself out of which Faith in a natural way could develop: even the very condition in which the affirmation of Faith can alone be made, must be provided by the Divine Teacher. This, of course, was very largely set against the current opinion of his day where Hegel, conceiving of Faith as 'immediacy' - unreflective spontaneity - had felt free to treat it as a transient factor which should be superseded by philosophy "The philosopher must advance beyond Faith." Against this Kierkegaard waged ceaseless war. "Modern philosophy" he writes in Training in Christianity (page 140): "as a whole has done everything to delude us into the notion that Faith has an immanent quality, that it is immanency: and this in turn is connected with the fact that they have done away with the possibility of the offence, made Christianity a doctrine, done away with the God-man and the situation of contemporaneousness. What the modern philosopher understands by Faith is what properly is called an opinion, or what is loosely called in everyday speech, believing. Christianity is made into a doctrine: this doctrine is then preached to a person, and then he believes that it is so as the teacher says. The next stage, therefore, is to comprehend this doctrine, and that is what philosophy does. On the whole this is quite right, in case Christianity were a doctrine; but since it is not that, this is a crazy proceeding. Faith in a pregnant sense has to do with the God-man; but the God-man, the sign of contradiction, refuses

to employ direct communication - and demands Faith."

It was this very conviction that led Kierkegaard to affirm that Faith is a Passion. The recognition of the Divine Revelation and the response thereto made by man, means a shaking of his whole existence which can be compared only to what we call a Passion. It is no easy thing for the soul to turn to God. The power of God has to enter into the closed self like a wedge and break it open. Dr. H.R. Mackintosh in Types of Modern Theology (page 233) in referring to this emphasis of Kierkegaard's says: "Kierkegaard thought of Faith as something done for us, something given, by which our whole nature is convulsed," and again: "Faith is the deepest passion, the most audacious and incredible paradox in which the human spirit can ever be involved." As Kierkegaard himself writes in the Unscientific Postscript (page 118): "Faith is the highest passion in the sphere of human subjectivity." And again (page 176): "It is only momentarily that the particular individual is able to realise existentially a unity of the infinite and the finite which transcends existence: this unity is realised in the moment of Passion."

(II) While Kierkegaard emphasised this distinctive fact that Faith being an organic part of the Christian Revelation must be a gift from above, he none-the-less also recognised and stressed that this very gift, being an activity of the soul, must be man's task. In this again he well saw he was moving in the realm of absolute paradox but that - as he was so wont to

declare - was of the very nature of things where dimensions meet and part. Only through the coming of the Christian Revelation which includes the Faith which answers to it, could the gulf between God and man be bridged; nevertheless, when this has been said it remains true that Faith is a task which calls for all the energies of the soul. In fact, first and foremost, Kierkegaard said that in the moment of the reception of Faith it is the will which is empowered and energised in such a way that a decision for God is accomplished. Faith was linked inextricably with the will in all his thinking. Dr. Lowrie, writing of this in his biography of Kierkegaard, remarks (page 316): "Soren Kierkegaard's notion of Faith was a consequence of his pronounced tendency to voluntarism," and he quotes from one of the earliest entries in the Journal, Kierkegaard exclaiming that: "Faith must be an expression of the will inasmuch as man is held eternally accountable for it." Because of this energising of the will, it is now able to embrace the Revelation of God and in the developing activity of the new life created thereby to act in accordance with the will of God.

(III) Faith - to be 'grounded transparently in God'. In Sickness unto Death in the chapter Despair is Sin, Kierkegaard defines his concept of Sin as 'Before God in despair not to will to be oneself or before God in despair to will to be oneself.' That for him was an all embracing definition and he sets it in opposition to the definition of Faith as he regarded it. Here are the words in which he refers to this (page 132): "This definition" - the definition of Sin just quoted - "must like a

net embrace all forms. And that is precisely what it does as can be seen when one tests it by setting up the opposite, namely, the definition of Faith, by which I steer my course in the whole of this work as a mariner watches a certain mark. Faith is - that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself is grounded transparently in God." It is at this point that he proceeds to develop the theme that the opposite of vice is not virtue but Faith: "Too often" he writes, "it has been overlooked that the opposite of sin is not virtue, not by any means." This is in part a pagan view which is content with a merely human measure and properly does not know what Sin is, that all Sin is before God. No, the opposite of Sin is Faith, as is affirmed in Romans 14, verse 23: "whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin." And for the whole of Christianity it is one of the most decisive definitions that the opposite of Sin is not virtue but Faith.

For Kierkegaard, this definition of Faith as being grounded transparently in God was filled in with the full content of the Christian Revelation. The God before whom we are made to stand is the God and Father of Jesus and we stand before Him with the knowledge of ourselves that we have received through Jesus. Christian Faith is unique by reason of its particular orientation. From this, Kierkegaard never deviates for one moment; the object of Faith is ever God as made known in the God-man. To bring this home to the heart and conscience of his day, he used every form of approach that was available to him

and often methods that were provocative in the extreme. In a day when the discipline of the true spirit of Christianity was scarcely known, and membership in the Christian Church was as much a matter of birth as anything else, he was persuaded that he must present the truth in the most startling fashion and not be another prophet of a false peace. Thus it is that there is in parts of his writings so much of persistent emphasis on the reality of the Offence in true Christian experience, on the essentially paradoxical nature of belief in the God-man, on the fact of contemporaneousness with Him - particularly in suffering - as the greatest proof of vital trust in Him, on such statements as 'Faith is the crucifixion of Reason' and the like, on the utter folly of trying to state Christianity in terms acceptable to the mind of man - "Christianity needs no apologetic based upon the probabilities of logic or the demonstrations of reason." In all this, however, his attention is never once deflected from the significant emphases of the Christian Faith: Jesus Christ is ever central in all his thought and that alone is Faith which terminates in God as revealed in His Son, The God-man.

(IV) The concrete characteristics of Faith.

Some of the most distinctively Christian writings of Kierkegaard are to be found in the Christian Discourses which he published together with other larger works, and it is certainly there that we will discover his most direct statement on the

characteristics of Christian Faith as necessary and evident in the hour of Conversion. In Training in Christianity, for example, the beautiful address on The Woman that was a Sinner is added at the close and it is doubtful if in the whole realm of his writings there is a more precise and telling statement of the outstanding features of the saving acts of Faith as he saw them. Looking at this discourse of Kierkegaard's we note the following points:

(1) The centrality of Christ to the woman's faith and need. "From a woman, therefore, thou dost learn then humble Faith in relation to the Extraordinary Man, the humble Faith which does not incredulously, doubtingly, ask - 'Why', 'Wherefore', but humbly believes like Mary and says: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord' From a woman thou dost learn the hushed, profound, God-fearing sorrow which is silent before God, from Mary: for it is true that the sword pierced through her heart, as was prophesied, but she was not in despair, either at the prophecy or at its coming to pass. From a woman thou dost learn concern for the one thing needful, from Mary the sister of Lazarus, who sat silent at the feet of Christ with her heart's choice, the one thing needful." Kierkegaard sets this first of all; it is when the soul 'Stands before God silent and with the consciousness of a great need' that the experience of saving Faith commences. The facts of Sin are in the heart and mind and there is a conviction born of God that the only way of deliverance is through the Grace of Christ: the woman that was

a sinner was wholly occupied with her Saviour and it is to Him that all her fears and hopes are brought.

(ii) The consciousness of utter impotence to do aught for herself. "She did nothing at all. She did not wait before going to that house where she would find Salvation - she did not wait until she felt herself worthy. No she would thus have remained a long time at a distance, perhaps never gone thither or entered in; she decides to go at once in her unworthiness, it is just the feeling of unworthiness that impels her, hence the decision is to enter in at once; thus it is that she did nothing or understood that she could do nothing. Can this be more strongly expressed than when the feeling of unworthiness is that which determines her? She perfectly understands that she can do nothing at all, but also that He is able to do all."

Here then we see another facet of the view which Kierkegaard held of Christian Faith: not only is there the realisation that it is in the presence of the Son of God that all can be accomplished and the soul be forgiven, there is the utter despair of self-help and a consequent dependance upon the Mercy of the soul's Redeemer. In Him, the soul sees the power that alone can save and waits in the silence of absolute humility for his word of Grace; it is on this power of the Son of God that the heart fastens and rests, it is there that the new life of forgiveness begins.

(iii) The complete trust in the word of the Lord spoken to her. "Then she hears Him say: 'her sins which are many are forgiven' - that she hears. He says even more but I assume she did not hear that. So she goes home again - a dumb person in the whole scene. Who could guess what this expedition meant to her, this expedition when she went there in sin and sorrow and came again in forgiveness and joy."

In this way the final and authentic word of Salvation is spoken to her, a word of forgiveness and life; and in that word she most fully trusts. Together with the utter confidence in His power to save and forgive, there is an equal trust in the word which He speaks in Grace. The Forgiveness of her Sin is accepted in the joy of Faith and a new life floods the soul with sweetness and with power.

Thus we see that Kierkegaard is emphasising the great factors that the writers of the New Testament at all times stress: a consciousness of great need, a simple trust in the power of Christ to meet that need, a realisation that all is of God in the act of Salvation, an assent to the word of promise and of grace, an entire abandonment to His sovereign control, and a sense of a great deliverance through the power of the Living God.

(iv) To all this Kierkegaard adds an additional note and one to which we too must pay heed. It has been often remarked that for Kierkegaard the Cross was not as central as it ought to have been - that the Incarnation bulks much more largely in

his thinking than the Passion of Calvary. Faith thus in his view cannot be the full-orbed and assured experience that the New Testament warrants for the heart of man; in this Kierkegaard comes short of the full glory of God's purpose for man. To this we shall return again in our critique of his position, but at this point the following words from the same Discourse should be noted. He is speaking of the way in which the Cross is the last great answer to the questions of the human heart and of the certainty of the word of Forgiveness that is spoken therefrom; he proceeds - "But then He dies. And His death alters everything infinitely. Not that His death abolished the fact that at the same time He is the Pattern; no, but His death becomes the infinite guarantee with which the striver starts out, the assurance that infinite satisfaction has been made, that to the doubtful and the disheartened there is always this strongest of pledges tendered - impossible to find anything more reliable - that Christ died to save him, that Christ's death is the Atone-
ment and Satisfaction The Christian who lives many centuries after Christ, when he is tempted by the doubt whether his sins are forgiven him, will find comfort in hearing as it were Christ saying to him, 'Believe it, nevertheless, for I have laid down my life to procure the Forgiveness of thy sins'. So believe it then, a stronger assurance is impossible." He concludes the discourse with the following words - and the words mark too the end of the greatest of his works, Training in Christianity: "Only when Christ is offered as the sacrifice of

atonement, not till then, is the comfort of the forgiveness of sins at hand, the comfort which makes the doubt of the forgiveness of sins as impossible - yea, as impossible as it can possibly be: for then it is only for Faith that this comfort exists."

(e) Divine Response and Action: In the experience of Faith, Kierkegaard held, man's soul came to its true inheritance and entered upon a life at once unique and supernatural. It is in the hour of the apprehension by Faith of the Divine Revelation that the crisis of the experience of Conversion is reached and God and man are at last united. Faith steps out upon the seeming void and finds the rock beneath. The first step had to be taken by Heaven: only through the blinding flash of Eternal Light was it ever possible for anyone to see their true estate and desire a better way. Even Faith itself, which could alone apprehend the righteousness of God, was Heaven's gift, given when man had come to an utter end of himself. But now, through the Divine Revelation and the response of Faith to it, the gulf between God and man is bridged and at-one-ment achieved.

This was the grand activity of God in grace and mercy reaching down to succour and save the soul. All Kierkegaard's powers of language and insight were brought to bear upon this mighty aspect of the activity of God on man's behalf, and here it is only possible to glance at the ways in which he spoke of the Divine Response and Action to the faith of the soul yielded

to the control of the Spirit of life. In this as in all else his approach was essentially Scriptural, and the terms he uses are New Testament terms; to note them will help us to a yet clearer grasp of his view of Christian conversion.

(1) Regeneration: We have already noted Kierkegaard's strong statement of the reality of regeneration in the heart of man and here it is only necessary to re-emphasise the fact. Under the inspiration of the Spirit of God a new life is born in the soul when Faith is born. With the Pauline statement that 'if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation', Kierkegaard was in most whole-hearted agreement. Witness again words already quoted above: "It is the Spirit which giveth life. And this bestowing of the Spirit is not a direct increment of the natural life of man, immediately continuous with it. It is a new life. A new life, yes, and this is no mere phrase, as when the word is used for this and that, whenever something new begins to stir in us: no, a new life, literally a new life; a life on the other side of death, yes, that is a new life."

For Kierkegaard there was no confusion in thought as regards the terms Conversion and Re-generation. For him the former was a long process; "Fear not to tread the toilsome path of Conversion however laboriously it leads to Salvation." Regeneration, on the other hand, was the instantaneous action of God, the act which made the conversion process capable of being completed, the importation of a new kind of life. This life is born in the moment of the birth of Faith. The Divine word of

revelation entering into the human heart is met by Faith and from that union a new life is created. That is the first and fundamental result of the Divine response and activity - a new life; regeneration.

(2) Justification: Side by side with the reality of regeneration goes the fact of God's justification of the sinner. This also is consequent upon Faith. Speaking of this Kierkegaard would often refer to Luther, the 'mighty protagonist of the doctrine of justification by faith'. For example, to take but one instance in Judge for Yourself (page 201), in a passage where he has been describing the normal outlook of the Middle Ages on the question of works of merit before God, he writes: "Then Luther came forward. 'This situation' said he, 'is spiritual apathy.' It is a dreadful apathy: otherwise you, who by your good works, think to merit the blessedness of Heaven, must perceive that this is the sure path, either to presumptuousness (and with this the forfeiture of blessedness) or to despair (and with this the forfeiture of blessedness). For to wish to build on good works - the more thou dost practise them and the stricter thou art with thyself, the more dost thou develop in thyself simply anguish of dread and ever new dread. On that path - if a man is not entirely spiritless - on that path he attains exactly the opposite of quiet and rest for his soul, he attains disquietude and unrest. No, a man is justified only by Faith." And further on he adds: "Yes, Luther was quite right; he was not at fault; a man is justified solely and only by Faith."

In his use of the word Justification there is no doubt that Kierkegaard embraced it with the content that it has uniformly held in the Reformed Theology. The wonder of the Divine acceptance of man was deepened for him immeasurably by the fact that in receiving him God not merely pardoned but accounted and accepted his person as righteous. This is demonstrated forcibly in one of the Christian Discourses on The Publican (page 376) where speaking of the Pharisee who was rejected in his praying and of the publican who was justified though he could only stand afar off and not even lift up his eyes unto Heaven, he writes: "And now for the conclusion. The publican went down to his house justified. For to this publican applies what the Scripture says of all publicans and sinners, that they drew near to Christ - just by standing afar off he drew near to Him, whereas the Pharisee stood far, far off. Thus the picture is inverted. It begins with the Pharisee standing near, the publican afar off; it ends with the Pharisee standing afar off and the publican near. He went to his house justified. For he cast down his eyes; but the averted eye sees God and the eye cast down signifies the lifting up of the heart he went to his house justified. For self-accusation is the possibility of JUSTIFICATION before God to wish to justify oneself, that precisely is to denounce oneself as guilty; but before God, to smite oneself upon the breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner, the precisely is to justify oneself, or rather it is the condition for God's pronouncing thee justified."

Kierkegaard's references to Luther are very frequent and ever and anon he returns to re-affirm his belief in this cardinal truth of Christianity that justification is by Faith, a free gift of God's Grace to the needy heart of man. The only fear in his mind was - and we shall return to this later - that man might become so obsessed with the reality and the power of faith that he forgets his responsibility to follow Christ in the discipline of life and in the ministry of sacrificial service and labour. "The Lutheran doctrine is excellent, it is TRUTH. I have only one misgiving about this excellent Lutheran doctrine. That does not apply to the Lutheran doctrine but to me it does apply: I have reason to know that I am not an upright fellow but a crafty one. So it doubtless would be well to examine a little more carefully the subordinate clauses (works, existence, witnessing and suffering for the truth, works of love, etc.) the subordinate clauses of Lutherism."

(For Self-Examination, page 49). That was a wholly correct attitude but it in no way lessened the miraculous nature of the fact of God's justification of the sinner in grace and in love. Side by side with the great reality of regeneration, he set firmly the truth of Divine justification.

(3) Forgiveness: On the subject of the forgiveness of sin, Kierkegaard wrote with an imaginative power and a wealth of impressive and forceful diction such as have rarely been found in Christendom. It is all the more to be wondered at therefore that so far as he personally was concerned it was a

long time before he could grasp the reality of God's forgiveness of his own sin. Of this Dr. Lowrie remarks (page 399): "If Kierkegaard while believing in the forgiveness of sin in general, found it peculiarly difficult to believe in the complete forgiveness of his own sin, this was at least partly due to the sense he had of being a 'single individual', picked out from the crowd, deprived of the security one feels in the companionship of men, and standing directly under the eye of God. He felt to the full how intolerable this position is to any man let alone to a sinner."

For Kierkegaard, the forgiveness of sin was a paradox, no less paradoxical than that of the God-man, which could be accepted only by faith. As he writes in the Unscientific Postscript (page 201): "Let us take the paradox of the forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness is a paradox in the Socratic sense, in so far as it involves a relationship between the Eternal Truth and an existing individual; it is a paradox 'sensu strictiori', because the existing individual is stamped as a sinner by which existence is accentuated a second time, and because it purports to be an eternal decision in time with retroactive power to annul the past and because it is linked with the existence of God in time. The individual existing human being must feel himself a sinner: not objectively, which is nonsense, but subjectively, which is the most profound suffering. With all the strength of his mind, to the last thought, he must try to understand the forgiveness of

sins and then despair of the understanding. With the understanding directly opposed to it, the inwardness of faith must lay hold of the paradox."

Faith, again, is the fountainhead of the joy of forgiveness, faith which grasps the fact of Divine Revelation and the Divine word of command. Here for example are two most striking Journal entries which deal with this: Danish Edition VIII A 675: "Something about the forgiveness of sins.

Just as the first expression of a true and deep experience of human love is the feeling of one's own personal unworthiness, so the longing after the forgiveness of sins is the evident sign that a man loves God. But no man by himself can hit upon the idea that God loves him. It must be proclaimed to him. This is the Gospel - Revelation."

Danish Edition IX A 177: "Essentially this is the everlastingly comforting thing about the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins; Thou shalt believe it. For when the anxious conscience begins to occupy itself with heavy thoughts and it seems to one as if in all eternity it would be impossible to forget - then the word is: Thou shalt forget, thou shalt stop thinking about thy sin, thou hast not only a right to stop, it is not merely that thou mayest make bold to pray to God for permission to dare to forget it; no, thou shalt forget, for thou shalt believe that thy sin is forgiven."

It will be seen from these quotations, that the reality of Forgiveness was for Kierkegaard one of the most miraculous and outstanding facts of the way of Conversion. Forgiveness was the ultimate astounding benefit of Divine Grace, a thing which baffled the mind and demanded Faith. Justification and Forgiveness went hand in hand, the latter being the proof as well as the basis, so to speak, of the former. The soul thus quickened into newness of life, justified and forgiven, faces the world again with new vision and new powers. As he writes in a loose leaf of the Journal: Danish Edition VIII A 673:

"When one hath thus verily experienced and experiences what it is to believe in the Forgiveness of Sins, he has surely become another man; all is forgotten - yea, with him it is not as with a child which, when it is forgiven becomes the same child again. No, he has become an Eternity older, for he has now become spirit, the whole of immediacy, with its selfish clinging to the world and to itself is lost. Humanly speaking, he is now old, prodigiously old, but eternally he is young."

In Sickness unto Death, Kierkegaard cites this operation of Divine Grace as one of the evidences of the infinitely qualitative distinction between God and man: "Sin," he writes, "is the only thing universally predicted of man that cannot in any way be affirmed of God. It may be affirmed of God that He is not finite as man is, and so, via negationis, that He is infinite; but to affirm of God that He is not a

sinner is blasphemy. As a sinner, man is separated from God by a yawning qualitative abyss. And obviously, God is separated from man by the same yawning qualitative abyss when He forgives sins. In case it were possible by a converse kind of accommodation to transfer the divine attributes to a human being, in one respect man will never in all Eternity come to resemble God, namely, in forgiving Sins." (page 199).

Furthermore, it was the realisation of one's forgiveness that called forth love to God and the things of God. Of this Kierkegaard never tired to speak. In one of his Communion Addresses given from the text Luke 7, v.47 - But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little - he elaborates this with a sympathetic beauty and insight into the experience of those who have been forgiven, which could only have been inspired from the tale of his own heart's love.

"Thou art promised" he writes in For Self-Examination (page 10): "Forgiveness of all thy sins. If thou dost rightly hear that promise, takest it quite literally as 'The forgiveness of all thy sins', then shalt thou leave the altar as light of heart, in a godly sense, as a new born babe upon whom no anxiety weighs, even lighter of heart, forasmuch as much has been weighing on thy heart. Then cast them all from thee, and the remembrance of them as well, (lest in that way they be retained) and also the remembrance that thou didst cast them from thee (lest in that way they be retained by thee)." Further on too he remarks: "Therefore I comfort myself with this word, and I

close every way of evasion, and I put aside all excuses and palliations, and I lay bare my breast where I am to be wounded by the word which condemningly pierces me with the verdict, 'Thou hast loved but little', Yea, I comfort myself, for precisely this condemnation of me, this sentence of death upon me and my paltry love, implies at the same time something different, that God is unchanging love."

Dr. Lowrie remarks upon the difficulty of knowing where to stop in quoting from Kierkegaard, and in no parts of his works is this more true than in those in which he speaks of the marvel of Forgiveness. This was the abiding miracle; and all else in measure took substance and power therefrom. However hard he found it to appropriate the blessedness of this Heavenly gift he none the less saw with undimmed vision the glorious realities of this mighty act of God. The soul that, having come to an end of itself turns in Penitence to God, is at once gifted by the Spirit of Life with the power of Faith and of Life, and, being justified by God's Grace, is forgiven freely and raised into communion with its God. The gulf that has for so long been established is at last bridged, the dead is quickened, the sinner is forgiven. The way is opened for the operation of the new powers of the new Life; and the soul thus redeemed and forgiven must manifest the fruits and works of Righteousness. It must now be our task to examine the marks of this developing life as Kierkegaard saw it; he never thought of the way of Conversion as having been fully travelled when those experiences

that we have already noted had been passed through; further on, there were ever new paths to be trodden and new heights to be scaled, and he ranked as being of the very first importance the manifestation of the great Christian virtues in any authentic Christian life. The life of Faith is a life which worketh by Love. To this study we now turn.

CHAPTER VI.KIERKEGAARD'S VIEW OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION.
(Continued)

(1) The Experience of 1848. Before proceeding to study what Kierkegaard viewed as the necessary outflow of the experience of Re-generation and Forgiveness, a vital experience through which he passed in 1848 should be noted. In a very real sense this year was the crisis of his whole career and during it he was led into a much fuller knowledge of spiritual things. We have already seen how, when he was aged 25, he was brought to conversion, and the record of the following ten years work and witness, if indirect, was sufficiently forceful to shew the certain reality of his grasp of Christian faith. None the less, on 19th April, 1848, a new consciousness of God's claim and God's grace came to him which completely revolutionised his outlook and orientation of his work. Of this year he writes himself in the Journal: Danish Edition X²A 66. "1848 potentiated me in one sense, in another sense it broke me, that is to say, religiously, it broke me, or as I put it in my own language, God had run me to a standstill." It is necessary to note this well if we would understand Kierkegaard's view of the consummation of the conversion process, for it was only in this year that in his own personal experience he came to realise what all was entailed in being claimed of God. Here is how he describes the day and climax of his new experience of 'becoming a Christian'.

"N.B.

N.B."

"Wednesday, April 19th (Wednesday in Holy Week, 1848. My whole

nature is changed. My closeness and reservedness are broken.- I must speak. Great God, grant me grace Such a strange coincidence; just when I had decided to speak my physician comes in. However, I did not speak to him, it seemed to me too sudden. But my resolution to speak holds firm now by God's help I shall become myself. I believe now that Christ will help me to triumph over my melancholy. In this melancholy I have still loved the world for I have loved my melancholy. Everything has helped to key up my relationship higher; her suffering, all my exertion, and finally that I have lived as an object of derision, has by God's help, now at the end when I am brought to the pass of needing to be anxious about my subsistence, conduced to prompt me to break through."

It is impossible here to follow out the development of this remarkable experience which had thus come to him, save only as it serves our immediate purpose. Certain things became clear then to Kierkegaard and became part of his own soul's possessions, and while it is true that he could never come to speak of himself as actually being a Christian but only of becoming one, there is no doubt that in this experience he was brought to a vantage point of spiritual vision and life and entered more fully into the power of Christ. 1848 was the consummation and climax of 1838; the two experiences are complementary, the first creating the condition for the second and it in turn being the natural development of the former. The most specifically Christian writings and those involving more of

the direct method naturally were written after the later date.

(2) The Witness to the Truth:

(a) Witnessing: The most striking phrase in the Journal entry which chronicles the experience of Wednesday in Holy Week, 1848, is beyond question - "I must speak". Up till now, Kierkegaard's approach to the world of his day had been by choice and design an indirect one. But now he feels that his tongue has been loosed as if by a miracle, and in this sense almost more than in any other it is true that his whole nature was changed. It is beyond doubt that Kierkegaard would not have considered a man truly converted who was not by experience, conviction and practice a witness for the truth. In the Journal (809), for example, he writes: "Yet the communication of Christian truth must end at last in 'witnessing'. Maieutic cannot be the last form. For, Christianly understood, the truth does not reside in the subject (as Socrates understood it) but is a revelation which must be proclaimed.

"The Maieutic method can perfectly well be used in Christendom just because the majority actually live in the illusion that they are Christians. But since Christianity is after all Christianity, the Maieutic teacher must become the witness."

Again speaking of the urge to witness to the world which has been born within him he writes in one of his occasional Papers: "To speak out - just as distinctly, as directly, as openly, as conciliatorily as possible. Now that I regard it

religiously as my duty to speak, I shall by God's help speak in that spirit candidly, and for the rest, as well as I know how. My heart is enlarged - not that it has ever been narrowly constricted within my breast, but the inwardness which has been my life and which I thought would be my death has now found vent; the dialectical band is broken; I dare to speak freely."

On one occasion he referred in his Journal (1318) to the witness for the truth as 'being quite simplement a Christian', and certainly he put the greatest emphasis on this characteristic of the activity of the soul that has been reborn and forgiven. It will be the greatest and most privileged calling on earth and must be undertaken by everyone desiring to walk in the way of the Will of Christ. He never tired of affirming the fact that it was by such quality of witness-bearing that Christianity had spread in the world. For instance, in Judge for Yourselves (page 144) he states: "Christianity was served by 'witnesses for the Truth' who instead of having profit from the doctrine, and every sort of profit (and here is the decisive point which made this doctrine something else than a doctrine), made sacrifices for the doctrine and sacrificed everything: it was served by 'witnesses for the Truth' who did not live on the doctrine along with a family, but lived and died for the doctrine. Thereby Christianity became a power, the power which mastered and transformed the world Thereby Christianity became 'THE POWER' in the world."

To this task of witnessing the believer must dedicate himself with utter abandon. In doing so he is but fulfilling the command of Christ: "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me"; and every ransomed power of heart and life must be brought to this mighty task. In doing so the example of Christ will naturally be followed particularly in dissociation from the crowd - which is ever 'untruth'. As he writes in The Point of View (page 117): "The witness for the truth, who naturally has nothing to do with politics and must above everything else be most vigilantly on the watch not to be confounded with the politician, the God-fearing work of the witness to the truth is to engage himself if possible with all, but always individually, talking to every-one severally on the streets and the lanes in order to disintegrate the crowd, or to talk even to the crowd, though not with the intent of educating the crowd as such, but rather with the hope that one or another individual might return from this assemblage and become an individual."

What more emphatic statement could be desired of the desirability - of the necessity rather - of the experience of Regeneration being consummated in the ministry of witness. The Christian must be vocal and not dumb; he will act as the mouth-piece of Eternal Truth and thus will the Faith become more vital and ever more forceful. For Kierkegaard the need of the hour was for truly consecrated witness-bearing, and certainly the devotion of his own life to this mighty task was unstinted and entire.

(b) Suffering: It was a most natural development of this emphasis that Kierkegaard viewed the fact of suffering as an indispensable condition of becoming a Christian. It was inevitable, he held, that the life that was willing to be set apart for the high and holy ministry of being a witness for the truth, should pass through suffering as Christ Himself suffered while on earth. No statement of Kierkegaard's views on Christian conversion would be complete without precise reference to this fact. The Christian, rightly so called, was for him one who must, really must, by reason of the nature of his experience and calling pass through the deep waters of suffering and tribulation. In his own experience he was to realise this to the full when he undertook the challenge of the work of reform in the Danish Church, and he held with all the conviction of his heart and mind that while in this he was certainly in a sense 'the exception', at the same time any true Christian experience would be wanting in some most vital facet were suffering not present and undergone.

In For Self-Examination (page 49) in making reference to the necessity for adequate safeguards against the too easy interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith, he says that it is vital that "the subordinate clauses also of the doctrine should be scrutinised with keen insight - works, for example, existence, works of love - and to them he adds 'witnessing and suffering for the truth'." These two were for Kierkegaard truly inseparable and complementary. The witness

must also be prepared to be the martyr () which in any case is at the root of the meaning of the word 'witness'. The advance of the Church in the first few centuries was accomplished because of the Church's willingness to accept the suffering of martyrdom in the act of the proclamation of the Eternal Evangel. "But then" he says again in For Self-Examination (page 144), "later, instead of transforming the world, they began to transform Christianity. Worldly shrewdness hit upon the idea of turning the life of these witnesses, their suffering, their blood, of turning it into money, or into honour and prestige; people shrewdly spared themselves suffering, and the fact that the 'departed' had suffered, the preachers turned to their own advantage."

This emphasis of suffering as the badge of the disciple was no late development with Kierkegaard though certainly it deepened and became intensified with the passing of the years. "What I have constantly aimed at is to get this problem stated (before God and before man, if I may so say): Can one be a Christian without being a disciple?" What being a disciple implies was so clear, said Kierkegaard, that at a very early time Christians ceased to apply this title to themselves and reserved it for the immediate followers of Jesus, seeking thus to escape from the implications of the word. Of this aspect of Kierkegaard's views, Dr. Lowrie writes (page 538): "Soren Kierkegaard had always associated suffering with Christianity. And it is not easy to dismiss it for he held the New Testament

in his hand as he preached, and he could turn to chapter and verse. He could shew that what he was urging so zealously is implied in the very notion of discipleship. It is a fact that the disciples were required to follow their Master, and that in the New Testament imitation of Christ invariably meant imitation of His sufferings. There is only one expression of it more general, when St. John says that one ought to 'walk even as He walked'. Though it is in accord with St. John's thought to say that the path in which He walked was love, yet St. Augustine justly observes that this path led Him to the Cross."

This theme could be developed almost to any length for Kierkegaard was full of it and has given extensive expression to the atmosphere and outlook of his mind particularly in his later works. But enough has already been noted to demonstrate that for him the Christian who would be a witness for the Eternal Truth must of necessity be a disciple in the fullest sense of the term that that implies; and that being so, it was his firm conviction that for the true Christian suffering will be an essential part of his life even as it was with Christ. As he says so aptly and so typically of his mind and experience: "There are two ways: One is to suffer; The other is to become a professor of the fact that another suffers. The first is THE WAY; The second goes round about (the adverb 'about' is so aptly used for lectures and for sermons) and perhaps it ends by going below." (Journal 1362)

(c) The Imitation of Christ: All this question is of course linked with the even major question of the Imitation of Christ. How far must such imitation go and at what stage will one presumably be regarded as a true Christian, one fully converted unto God? Kierkegaard, as we have noted, was always unwilling to commit himself to saying that he was a Christian; he was only in the process of 'becoming' one. But it is beyond peradventure that his view of conversion in its purest essence included the imitation of Christ and that to an unspecified but great degree. The Christian must ipso facto be a witness for truth, therefore he must suffer, and all because and arising from the fact that he is endeavouring to imitate his Master. For example, in Judge for Yourself, (page 197) he says tersely: "Imitation, 'the following of Christ', this precisely is the point where the human race winces, here it is principally that the difficulty lies, here is where the question really is decided whether one will accept Christianity or not. If pressure is brought to bear at this point and a strong pressure - in that same degree there are few Christians. If at this point a convenient accommodation is made (so that intellectually Christianity becomes a doctrine) many enter into Christianity. If it is done away with entirely (so that Christianity becomes, existentially, as easy as Mythology and Poetry, while imitation is exaggeration, a ludicrous exaggeration) then Christianity widens out to such a degree that Christendom and the world almost correspond, or all become Christians, then Christianity has

triumphed completely - in other words, it is done away with."

The most explicit statement of all comes in the same section of Judge for Yourselves (page 215): "Christ is the PATTERN, and to this corresponds Imitation. There is only one true way of being a Christian - to be a disciple. The disciple has this mark among others that he suffers for the doctrine." At the risk of over-emphasis one more section may well be quoted from the same book (page 207): "Imitation must be introduced to exert pressure in the direction of humility. It is to be done quite simply in this way: everyone must be measured by the Pattern, by the Ideal. We must get rid of all this bosh about this being said only to the Apostles, and this only to the disciples, and this only to the first Christians, etc. Christ no more desires now than He did then to have admirers (not to say twaddlers), He wants only disciples. The disciple is the standard: Imitation and Christ as the Pattern must be introduced. That as a consequence I am plucked or barely pass is a thing I can humbly put up with. But I and everyman shall be measured by the ideal, in accordance with the ideal it shall be measured." The way of conversion truly is not easy, though its difficulties should not deter the soul from stepping out upon it. "Fear not to tread the toilsome path of conversion", Kierkegaard wrote, and beyond doubt he viewed it as an arduous and taxing endeavour. Becoming a Christian is not easy, is never easy, and the measure of the hardness of the road may be taken from the milestones to be passed upon the way: sin, guilt, Repentance, Death, Life, Faith, Forgiveness,

witness-bearing, Suffering, The Imitation of Christ. There was of course the other side to it - the side of Grace, and of this Kierkegaard was fully conscious. He knew the power of Christ as all-sufficient for every need and claim of duty and very beautifully he spoke concerning it. But the need of his time was for a sterner note and this he shunned not to give. In a day when high ideals of Christianity had been watered down almost to vanishing point, he stood alone and proclaimed the Eternal Standard. He knew what being a Christian really meant and out of the abundance of his heart his mouth spoke.

(3) The Works of Love: It will have been for long apparent that for Kierkegaard Faith was the all important factor in the process of Conversion. He firmly held the Lutheran doctrine of the utter impotence of man to do anything to deserve Salvation, but - and it is an important qualification - he held this in the widest possible sense, and maintained continually that in such Faith the powers and virtues of the Graces of Christianity are ever present and must be made manifest to the world around. To this aspect of the Life of Faith, Kierkegaard devoted his undivided attention in The Works of Love, a book that in the opinion of all is one of his greatest and most authentically Christian. Dr. Lowrie, writing of Kierkegaard's views on the question of the Works of Faith, says: (page 375) "With respect to the doctrine of works Soren Kierkegaard was clearly not in sympathy with the position characteristic of the Reformers, notwithstanding that he was emphatic in rejecting the

notion that any merit can attach to man's work before God. The words 'faith alone' while necessary and right in their appropriate context, could be used in another sense not only monstrous but impossible, equivalent to 'faith without works'. A clear enough sign of this tendency is his predilection for the Epistle of James which Luther scornfully rejected as an 'epistle of straw', but in which Soren Kierkegaard found the texts he best liked to preach on He engaged in no controversy against the central Protestant doctrine of 'faith alone', but without any show of hostility, and without any possibility of rebuttal, he could insist that LOVE must prove its reality by its works, that we cannot have Love alone or Love without works."

The Works of Love, a book of 365 pages, was published in 1847, the year prior to the mighty reviving experience which he passed through during Holy Week. Therein he describes how the soul, born of God, will show forth to the world the evident reality of fruitful works of good. This hidden life of Love, nurtured and led of God issues in untold ways of blessing. Though hidden in essence, it is known by its fruits and there is an impulse in love to reveal itself in its fruits. It is impossible to imagine a Christian, rightly so called, who does not bear evidence of the works of love. As he wrote in the Journal (637) in the same year as he published The Works of Love: "Good works, in the sense of merit, are naturally an abomination to God. Nevertheless, good works are required of men. But they should be and yet not be; they should be and yet man should be

humbly ignorant of their existence or that they have any importance. It is like a right which is only a right under particular conditions of service: thus, good works should be served in humility, in faith. Or else it is like a child giving its parents a present with what it has received as a present from them: all the pretensions which are concealed in making a gift disappear if the child has received from its parents the present which it gives them." And again, (Journal 932):

"Luther is right again in this. No one can see faith, it is invisible, so that no one can decide whether a man has faith. But faith shall be known by love. Now people have of course tried to make love into something invisible, but against that Luther protests with the Scriptures; for to the Christian, love is the works of love. To say that love is a feeling or anything of the kind is really an un-Christian conception of love. That is the aesthetic definition and therefore fits the erotic and everything of that nature. But to the Christian, love is the works of love. Christ's love was not an inner feeling, a full heart and whatnot, it was the work of love which was His life."

This mighty theme he developed at length and with great beauty and power in this book The Works of Love. The believer by reason of the very nature of his faith will love. The first section is devoted to an exposition of the nature of love by an emphasis in turn of the separate words of the command:

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It is specially Christian love, he says, that discovers and knows that our neighbour exists, and that everyone is our neighbour. If it were not our duty to love, the idea of neighbour would not exist. He lays great emphasis on the 'Thou shalt' of the commandment. It is the unique responsibility of the follower of Christ to fulfil this commandment, to lay aside all personal prejudices. Not to allow mere personal relationships to hinder the wider love to our neighbours, even to our enemies, and even in spite of much ingratitude. Other verses on which he writes and whose thought and implications he develops are:- "Love is the fulfilling of the Law": "The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart and of faith unfeigned": "If a man say I love God and hate his brother, he is a liar; for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?": "Owe no man anything but to love one another": and finally, Paul's glowing testimony to the power and permanence of love, described in 1 Corinthians, 13. There is no escape from it. There is no possible way in which a man could be described as truly converted unto God who does not in life and influence manifest the fruitful works of Love. "Love fulfils the Law": and Love is the fulfilment of the believers faith and hope in Christ. In the service of God and in all witnessing for truth, the believer will live and act in love. Born in the heights of heaven, it will flow through the narrow confines of the soul and refresh the world around. Ever and always all is of God, but

the believer will continually strive to ensure that all his life is an expression of the Love Divine. Thus, and thus alone, will Faith receive its due consummation.

(4) Christian Assurance: This study would be incomplete without some reference to Kierkegaard's views on the great matter of Christian assurance and certainty of salvation. That it was a vital fact in all true Christian experience, he of course knew and proclaimed, but he was ever emphasising the need to remember that this certitude was the certitude of subjectivity, of faith, and could never be reached by any measure of rational proof or objective statement. "It is an eternal change" he writes in The Christian Discourses (page 203): "more remarkable than the most remarkable occurrence in the world when a man comes to love God. Whether this happens, when this happens, no one can tell the man. The preacher in his inmost parts can help him to become attentive, help him to seek with personal concern the certitude of the Spirit, when God's Spirit witnesseth with this man's spirit that he loves God. But God alone can give him this certitude."

"God alone can give": that was the unique wonder about even this. So much of the preaching of Kierkegaard's time was devoted to apologetic and the rationalising of belief that it came to be held almost generally that there was a certain quality of certainty that could be attained through knowledge based on probability and historical evidences. This, Kierkegaard held,

was the very negation of Christianity. There is no possibility of coming to know Christ from the evidence of the historical, and he cites the words of Jesus to the disciples of John: "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk and - Blessed is he who is not offended in Me." The works, the evidences of Christ's life and work, are not stepping-stones by which we can rise higher and higher to the vantage ground of the assurance of faith. No, faith is the 'subjective certainty which corresponds to objective uncertainty and which is grasped with the apprehension of the most passionate inwardness'. In other words, assurance is something which is possessed momentarily and is the expression of a faith pregnant and operative. There is a continual sense of risk in faith and that is not faith which abandons the passion of inwardness and contemporaneousness with Christ for the beggarly elements of objective proofs.

Out of this operation of faith and the witness of the spirit there is born the believer's assurance of Eternal Things. Kierkegaard would not have said that the lack of any such conviction would ipso facto reveal a man as non-Christian, but he certainly held that as the soul in quest of God by faith lives in the power of God and does the will of God, a certitude is born which transcends all other approximations of reason or of proof. The crown of all certainty is, he would have added, not possible here in time; as he writes in the Unscientific Postscript: "Only Eternity can provide an Eternal Certainty; existence must be content with a fighting certainty."

"A fighting certainty": no more typical word of Kierkegaard's could conclude this note on the believer's assurance.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

So we come to the end of this sketch of Kierkegaard's view of Christian conversion and it may not be amiss at this point on the road to look back and see again the dominant features of the landscape across which we have travelled. As we do, we see once more the supreme fact of the prevailing consciousness of God and of God's activity in grace. Were it not for the Fountain of Eternal Love, there would have been no springs by the way to refresh the traveller, and no energy indeed whereby the soul could even begin to address itself to the way. The sovereignty of God is ever present in all Kierkegaard's thoughts: not a sovereignty cold, hard, and calculating in omnipotence, but infinitely beneficent and wondrous in love. So it is that the first essential condition of man's redemption - the willingness of Heaven - is reaffirmed, hope is born, and the work of eternal mercy is seen in operation.

Mercy indeed! For man is man in revolt; impotent through the weakness of sinfulness and yet rebellious against God's eternal decree. This is another of the prevailing and fundamental characteristics of Kierkegaard's thoughts. There is no health in man, no power by which he can elevate himself into the dimension of the spiritual. And not only so: not only is he sinful in nature; as he stands before God he is guilty and self-condemned. But mercy and truth are met together and Grace

reigneth. Before man thus helpless God manifests Himself in love in Christ, and the sight of this revelation creates a condition in which man can be led to repent. The condition is born in which a change of mind, which will lead to a change of heart and will under God's grace, can be made. The goodness of God leadeth to repentance, and so to an utter end of all self-love and self-confidence. This is the point, said Kierkegaard, to which God wills that all be led - to the place of death, the death of all endeavour, thought of merit, and hope of self-help. Then God works His own unique work of sovereign power - He creates within the soul an entirely new life, born of faith and hereafter to be nourished by faith. We have seen how strong was Kierkegaard's emphasis on this and regarding it Dr. H.R.

Mackintosh writes in Types of Modern Theology (page 249):

"Human nature, for Kierkegaard, as it stands shews no point of contact for renewing grace. God's gracious action, accordingly, can take no form but that of infinite supernatural force. When He re-creates a man in and by faith, the thing is done by breaking all the ties with the past and bringing into existence what, not only in figure but in fact, is a wholly new personality. Discontinuity is all, continuity has nothing to say."

On the God-ward side this reality is consummated in Justification and on the part of the soul in Forgiveness. Few writers have attained to the exquisite grace, delicacy of touch, and warmth of emotion with which Kierkegaard expressed himself in writing of the forgiveness of sins. This is the most

staggering event of all, and one almost incapable of apprehension: were it not indeed for the Divine 'Thou shalt believe in the forgiveness of thy sins', it would be wholly unbelievable. And, he adds, (Journal 688): "When the thought of God does not remind him of his sin but that it is forgiven, and the past is no longer the memory of how much he did wrong but of how much he was forgiven - then man rests in the forgiveness of sin."

Rests in forgiveness! Yes, but he rests only in the activity of the work of God. This glory of a life Divine in the human heart will be, must be, made manifest to men first by the witness of one's words and then by the witness of one's works. So there follow these great realities in glowing succession in the life of the believers - 'Witnessing for the Truth'; 'Suffering for the Truth'; 'The Imitation of Christ'; 'The Works of Love'. Faith is the effective agent in all but it is always faith which worketh by love. In the most vital sense Kierkegaard held that the work of grace is only half-done when a man has been brought to the place where faith is found. Christian conversion is an experience of passing from death unto life - Yes, life, and life expresses itself in activity, and the Christian life in activity of love.

In it all the soul possesses the witness of the Spirit that it rests in God. This certitude born and nurtured of faith like all the other graces of the Christian life, is a constant endowment of God, and is altogether separate from such approximations of probability as may be discovered by the customary

operation of human reason. The Church triumphant is that which is filled by such people, who being conscious of the Grace of God in their own lives and being called of God to witness to the reality of these mighty truths, are banded together for the greater glory of God and the spread of the Truth as it is revealed in Jesus Christ His Son through the power of the Eternal Spirit. That is the life well-pleasing to God and that, as Kierkegaard saw it, is the true way of conversion.

PART THREE

CHAPTER VIII.

CRITIQUE OF SØREN KIERKEGAARD'S VIEWS OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION.

(1) Introductory:

(a) Existentiality: Certain great emphases of Kierkegaard stand out like mountain peaks from the rest of his prevailing concepts, and any appraisal of his work and teaching must of necessity begin with them. Foremost among them all is the constant insistence on the need for reality in religion, for experiential appropriation of the very things that the Christian Faith offers to men, for EXISTENTIALITY - as he called it - in the things of the spirit. For Kierkegaard, all human life had value only as it is 'permeated with personal decision'. The claim of God upon man differs from that made upon us by neighbours in being a demand for unreserved self-committal or self-surrender on man's part to the Divine decree and will. Truth can only be known in the passion of personal appropriation. 'Only the truth that edifies is truth for thee'. Clement C.J. Webb, writing in 'philosophy' in April 1943, states: "No satisfactory philosophy of religion is possible that does not take as its starting point the normal human consciousness of an existential relation to God. So Kierkegaard taught, and I do not doubt that a passionate realisation of this truth is the principle contribution to the philosophy of religion made by a great man, the grounds and significance of whose influence on contemporary thought well deserve investigation." Entrance into

life will not be by way of contemplation, but by the way of supreme decision - that is the burden of all Kierkegaard's teaching. Truth is only truth as it becomes true for the individual by his personal relationship to it by decision. "Thus it was" writes H.V. Martin in his delightful little brochure on the life and teaching of Kierkegaard (page 20), "that Kierkegaard like Jesus was concerned to awake men from the sleep of cold objectivity and plunge them into the rushing waters of Decision."

(b) The Moment: As a direct development from this major motif of his thought there followed his peculiar insistence on 'Immediacy' and 'Contemporaneousness' on the cruciality of 'the Moment'. To understand this we must remember that there runs through all the thought of Kierkegaard the idea of the infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity. Though man's life is lived out in the dimension of time, he is surrounded by eternity. Hence, not only is he in a position of paradox but of need. For life to be found, there must be contact between time and eternity in the soul of man; this, argues Kierkegaard, comes, and comes only, in 'the Moment' of supreme decision.

(c) Either - Or: Another development of his philosophy of Existentiality was his favourite and famous antithesis - EITHER-OR. Life for Kierkegaard was not as Hegel viewed it - 'a process rising dialectically from thesis and antithesis to a higher synthesis until the supreme height of a

philosophical world view is reached, in which the Finite and the Infinite are seen as one' - rather was it a continual contradiction, a perpetual duality of opposites in which man has perforce to decide. Life is a matter of life and death, of time and eternity, of the finite and the infinite - and for these man must take the attitude of Existentiality and choose. Only by such a decision does man find life.

(d) New Testament Emphasis: For all this we cannot be too grateful to Kierkegaard. It is unmistakeably the New Testament position. Only in the crisis of great decision, is the issue of Life and Death for the soul of man resolved. For the individual to enter into Life as revealed by Jesus Christ there must be the great encounter with the God of all flesh far out in the no-man's land of the spirit. Christian Faith is not discovered merely by the accident of birth in so called Christian communities, nor will it ever be found by the mere contemplation of the eternal verities. The prodigal in the far country had the advantage of the former of these things and lots of time for the latter when feeding the swine; but not till he said: 'I will arise and go to my Father'; and acted upon his resolution, did he enter into the blessedness of forgiveness and restoration to the home that he had abandoned before. Nor can it be doubted that there is a clamant need for this major emphasis of Kierkegaard to-day. It cannot be doubted that in our time the fundamental necessity for this act of 'decision' of 'choice', of the need of 'individual appropriation of the

benefits of Christ's work', - Eternity meeting Time in the passion of 'the Moment' of crisis - has been largely obscured if indeed it has not altogether been obliterated. No amount of 'instruction' can compensate for the experience of believing trust leading to the joy of the Love of God within the heart and life. The Biblical voices are such as: 'Thou art the man'; 'Choose you this day'; 'Come unto Me'; and it is beyond a peradventure that in this emphasis upon decision, upon existentiality, Kierkegaard is proclaiming the foundational truth on the New Testament.

(2) Divine Grace and Man's Responsibility: This very emphasis on Decision, poses an immediate question in our study of Kierkegaard's position. By what power is this decisive act carried through? According to Kierkegaard no positive activity of the will is possible in favour of Goodness, Truth and Life. The natural course of the sickness of sin is unto death. All human activity must tend towards Despair. Only in the moment of absolute despair of self - which is veritable death - will man bring himself to the place where the life-giving spirit can bestow faith, re-create the will, and empower for the decisive Leap and appropriation of God's grace. The very experience of regeneration is first and foremost the Supreme Passion - the experience of having God 'breaking through to bestow the gift of faith'. Hence Kierkegaard's emphasis on the Passion of Faith. All is of God's initiative and all man's salvation is the outcome of Divine Grace.

It is difficult to see - if this indeed be an accurate picture of what Kierkegaard taught - wherein the supreme question of human responsibility can here enter. That man is guilty and responsible to God, Kierkegaard of course taught, yet at the moment of the greatest crisis of his destiny, namely of entrance into life, he appears altogether inactive. While it is true that in his emphasis on the need for existentiality and decision, Kierkegaard uses language which is active in import, it is none the less evident in his analysis of the experience of regeneration that he viewed the power of the Spirit of God as transcendant. Admittedly we are here at the portals of unending debate and certainly it is unwise to dogmatise. The teaching of Jesus was clearly aimed at the securing of decision by man for the things of God, and such words as 'Come', 'Follow', 'Go', so frequently on the lips of the Master, surely imply the responsibility of the hearer for action. It was at least within the power of certain of the hearers to be disobedient to the heavenly vision. We are in the realm of paradox. No one could have written with greater urgency on the need for man to choose and arise and thus become the pattern of God's election than Kierkegaard, and in that he is assuredly voicing the spirit of the New Testament. If indeed he carried his analysis of the process of conversion too far - beyond the bounds of certain truth so as to make man appear a mere automaton in the hour of salvation - there is no doubt that in doing so his principle aim was to emphasise to the full that all is of God, and that man can no more work out his own salvation apart from God than he

can solve the very mysteries of life and of death. Divine election and human responsibility are both great New Testament truths, and if at times they appear to be contradictory in contemplation they are most certainly not so in experience. It is surely the common experience of the redeemed of all the earth that having 'Come' in response to the Divine invitation, they are persuaded within themselves that it was all of God's grace, that they have been in truth 'elect according to the good counsel of God'.

(3) Sin:

(a) The gaping wound of human existence: Among the most profound of Kierkegaard's writings, are his studies and statements on the question of human sin. Sin - this gaping wound of human existence - is, as we have noted, man's peculiar estate; it is the fundamental fact of man's spiritual and moral position. No hope can be entertained at all of an entrance into Life until this disruptive and pernicious factor of human existence is recognised and reckoned with. Turn where he will - to Aesthetics, to Ethics or to Religion, man cannot escape the consciousness of personal guilt, the realisation of 'original' or 'total' sin. Over against man there stands ever the transcendent absoluteness of God creating disturbance and disquiet, and arousing the sense of Dread which is of the essence of Sin. Thus it is that the Absolute is man's ultimate malady. Freedom and deliverance therefrom can only be found by the 'leap' of

Faith, whereby the soul chooses God and Divine Grace flows down to meet human need.

(b) The new Testament Emphasis: Quite obviously, in all this Kierkegaard is at one with the temper of the New Testament. The stresses that he makes are those that Paul and John and all the other inspired writers make. The New Testament is radically realistic in its view of man, and the starting point on the way of Life and Salvation is always a fundamental change of mind as regards Sin. Man is in rebellion and estranged from God his Creator. Sin is in essence man's self-centred denial of his distinctive endowment; its final ground is pride which rebels against God and repudiates His purpose; its active manifestation is self-love which changes the glory of the incorruptible God into the image of corruptible man. The outcome of such rebellion is 'alienation from the Life of God' (Ephesians 4, v.18), and 'the wrath of God' which is the awesome way in which this alienation works out for the individual and for society. 'The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hinder the truth in unrighteousness' (Romans 1, v.18). All, too, suffer from this malady - 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3, v.10) - and this inbred sin has laid its entail upon the whole family of mankind, diffusing itself from soul to soul by heredity and environment. Birth sin is race sin. 'For as by one man sin entered the world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men for that all have

sinned' (Romans 5, v. 12). In virtue of his sin man is guilty before God, and an enlightened conscience will bear witness to that guilt. At the same time, he is utterly impotent to improve his condition - 'How to perform that which is good, I find not: Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me?' (Romans 7, v.18): while the doom that faces him is the loss of himself in an absolute sense - the final devouring death of the eclipse of the soul with its sin.

(c) Kierkegaard's View essentially Christian:

We need not develop this at length as already it has been enlarged upon in our New Testament study. From what has here been noted, however, it is abundantly clear that Kierkegaard, in painting the picture of man's situation in the darkest of colours as he did, was not in the slightest deviating from the strict pathway of the authentic Christian Revelation. All suggestions that his own views were warped and distorted by his peculiar personal experiences and that he is prone to generalise too much from his particular contacts with life, are wholly beside the point. The essential fact is that in this great realm - the question of man's sin - the gravity of his view is not one whit greater than that of the Bible. In a day when he saw all men everywhere and not least within the fellowship of the Christian Church, holding tenuous and light-hearted views of man's position before God, he felt the pressing need to cry aloud and spare not: to assert the fundamental facts of the Divine Revelation in the clearest of clear terms. Thus it was

that he challenged the world of his time with his emphatic proclamation of the exceeding sinfulness of Sin, and the need for the most radical of all cures; and it cannot be doubted that in doing so, he was in the way of the great Reformers of all the ages, and in the line of the Revelation made known in Christ. The whole of the Sickness unto Death and the essential teaching of The Concept of Dread can be placed alongside Romans, Chapters 1 - 3 and 7; their inspiration is manifestly drawn from such great parts of the New Testament record and from the implications of the life, teaching and death of our Saviour. Nor can it be doubted that Kierkegaard's outlook upon the question of man's place in the world, is needed to-day.

(d) Must Conviction of Sin always precede knowledge of Salvation: An important question arises at this point and we must consider it in some detail. Is it universally true that only through the consciousness of sin can man be led to an experience of the Love of God? Kierkegaard would have emphatically answered in the affirmative, would have instanced the significance of the fact that the purer the person may be in all life and conduct the deeper can be the sense of sin, and urged that it is not possible for anyone to appreciate the reality of the divine Love apart from a realisation of the situation which it comes to meet. As against this it has been pointed out that in experience for many the consciousness of sin has not been the great determinant in seeking the help of the Saviour of men. A sense of incompleteness, of the need for

a strengthening companionship, of desire for service in the world, of vision of the beauty and attractiveness of holy things, have often played their part in bringing the heart to the place of surrender to the will of God. Does not the spiritual life come for some mainly as an intellectual experience involving the clearing up of the mind, the convinced acceptance of things previously disbelieved or doubted? Does it not come for some others like the silent breaking of the day upon a life yearning for better and more glorious living? Must all suffer the rending storm of a bitter penitence and the lightning shafts of a burning contrition?

Concerning this much could be written but certain points demand expression. For one thing, it is unquestioned that where there is no sense of sin, wrought by an awakened conscience, there is little in the heart whereto the Gospel can appeal. The sense of sin is God's first MERCY to the sinner. The first work of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus is "to convict the world of sin because they believe not on Me" (John 16, v.9). As the late Bishop H.G. Moule has written: "The Gospel, while it carries in it a 'power of God' capable of raising and glorifying our whole nature, as no other force can do, immovably insists on man being treated first as a sinner, defiled and guilty before God. And where man refuses to see himself as such, there is no correspondence; the key lacks the lock, the root lacks its soil." Some words of John Bunyan come with force and illumination in this connection: "No man

hath an high esteem of our Lord Jesus that is a stranger to his own sore. Christ's Church is an hospital of sick, wounded and afflicted people; even as when He was in the world, the afflicted and depressed set the highest price upon the Lord Jesus. Why? They were sick and He was the Physician. But the whole had need of Him." (From the discourse upon: Justification by an imputed Righteousness, 1692). Let it be admitted that there are many roads to the Kingdom, and that God has 'His own secret stair into every heart': it is notwithstanding certain that no one will ever come to an experience of full Salvation, such as the Christian Gospel offers to all, without first a deep realisation of the need which the Gospel comes to meet. Kierkegaard in urging that the fact of Sin is all important and that it must first be dealt with, is in the true succession of the followers of Christ, whose first message to the world when He began to preach dealt with this, Repent - and turn from SIN.

It is surely, too, significant that in all the great movements of religious awakening which from generation to generation have stirred the life of the Church, there has been a profound consciousness of the facts of sin and guilt in the sight of God; and it remains true to-day as in the days of our Lord: "To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much." There can be no doubt of the need for mankind to be brought continually before the eternal judgment of Mount Sinai, the hill called Calvary, and the great White Throne. It is to the abiding credit

of Kierkegaard that he set before his contemporaries in thought and life a standard that was absolute and inescapable. However much it may be necessary to avoid unwise dogmatism upon the way of conversion, the great Evangelical principles cannot be broken and foremost amongst them stands REPENTANCE. To that Kierkegaard was profoundly true and the Church to-day could without doubt learn much from him in this regard.

(4) Faith:

(a) Kierkegaard's constant Aim - the creation of Faith:

It is impossible not to be impressed with the way in which Kierkegaard maintained his constant aim before him through all his writings, and also the manner in which he continually brought the necessity for Faith in God to the minds of the men of his day. Faith was the supreme and all important reality; nothing could in any way compensate for the absence of this gift of the Spirit of God, and no one could ever hope to enter into the joy of the Salvation of God apart from it. In a very real sense Kierkegaard would have subscribed to the doctrine of 'salus sola fide'; and every section of his works bear eloquent testimony to this great fact.

(b) The New Testament Emphasis: In this, of course, he is in full agreement with the New Testament doctrine. In our study of the essentials of the teaching of the New Testament on this all important question, we saw that it is only by the act and the apprehension of Faith that the sinner is delivered from the bondage of sin and is united to Christ. The

Righteousness of God is revealed only to Faith and not to the powers of reason or the activities of the mind. Grace is linked indissolubly with Faith in all the teaching of the Gospel; Salvation is wholly of God and is received as a gift in Faith at the hand of the One Who has made it possible. In Kierkegaard's time, this fundamental truth had become obscured, its significance glossed over and the absolute necessity for Faith in the sense of Trust in the Grace and Truth of God had been played down. He saw the issue as clearly as it could possibly be seen, and having grasped the implications of the situation he came to the front with the challenging word on his lips and from his pen. It is no exaggeration to say that the thinking world of his day was profoundly stirred by what he thus challengingly had to say.

(c) Impossibility of systematising his views on Christian Faith: One does not need to be long in the company of Kierkegaard to realise how impossible it would be to systematise his teaching on Faith. Any statement of his views must be inadequate since he maintained without essential exaggeration that the immense literature he produced had only one theme, namely, Faith; and that from beginning to end his whole effort had been to define what Faith is. Dr. Lowrie, speaking of this, refers to the work of Professor Bohlin on The Dogmatic Views of Soren Kierkegaard in which thirty eight pages are devoted to the discussion of Kierkegaard's notion of Faith and states tersely: "Too much and too little." It is beyond

doubt that any satisfactory treatment of this question would call for a major work, although even then there would no doubt be difficulty in regimenting him within definable limits. Here only the broadest of outlines can be emphasised and particularly those where the Term 'Faith' has more exactly the strict sense of 'Saving Faith'. That there is this distinction in Kierkegaard cannot be doubted. The Kierkegaard who is waging ceaseless war with the protagonists of Hegelianism is not quite the same as Kierkegaard the preacher, who with such exquisite delicacy of touch can portray the soul's need and the satisfying of that need through the grace of the Saviour. With this in mind we can turn to a closer examination of the outstanding points.

(d) Faith and the Paradox: It has been suggested that Kierkegaard in his statement of the meaning of Faith enlarged too much upon the way in which there can be no true object of Faith unless that very object be likewise the sign of offence. Faith is only possible where there is the supreme absurdity - the Offence. The God - man is the sole object of saving Faith, and what more absurd can there be than that? Dr. Lowrie in dealing with this sums up Kierkegaard's position admirably when he writes (pages 319-320): "It is clear that for him Faith finds its proper object in the Paradox. The distinctive Christian Paradox is the God-Man To the Paradox corresponds the notion of Offence. It is a stumbling block. It can be believed only by virtue of the absurd. Yet it is the only thing that can be believed in the strictest sense of Faith. Soren Kierkegaard

insists that the Christian religion is necessarily accompanied by a special suffering - 'the martyrdom of Faith'. The Offence is the sign by which we can recognise the Paradox; no Offence, no Paradox. To explain the Paradox is to do away with the object of Faith. When the Paradox has been mediated by the Philosopher (or Theologian), it is no longer a Paradox - and the believer is no longer a believer. To defend the Paradox in this way is 'like defending the circle by saying that it is a quadrangle'."

(1) Views essentially Anti-Hegelian: Two things must be said concerning this, one as regards his own day and the other as regards the abiding principle that is involved. Kierkegaard came to the arena of conflict at a time when the most distinctive elements of the Christian Faith were obscured by a maze of philosophical concepts, most of them asserting the sovereignty of Philosophy over all else. The man who wanted to discover the true meaning of life, must learn to go 'beyond Faith'. Faith was conceived of as 'immediacy' (unreflective spontaneity), and was therefore a more or less transient factor which should be superseded by Philosophy. Faith had come to be little more than the acceptance of sundry doctrines, the right or wrong of which could be decided by the normal exercise of the mind. For Kierkegaard there could have been no greater travesty of the Christian religion than that, and it was over against this utterly wrong view of things that he had to speak. It is not to be wondered at that his speech often times was extreme and passionate. Modern Philosophy had succeeded in destroying the

true standard; to bring that standard back again to the heart and conscience of his day called for methods that were at once forthright and challenging. As against the prevailing concepts of his day, there can be no possibility of doubt that Kierkegaard saw where the vital message of the Christian religion was being undermined and it is to his everlasting credit that with such courage and persistence he took up the task of bringing back those elements that had been so completely obliterated. That was the main inspiration of the manner in which he presented the meaning of vital Faith to the world of his day. The very heart of Faith is decision - decision on which the destiny of the soul depends. It is in the decisive leap of Faith that the soul is linked with the only One Who can deliver and save. But as concerning Him no value judgment is possible, for it is a manifest offence to the mind of man that he should be asked to accept this first-century Man of Galilee as the Eternal God by Whom alone salvation can be found. In its most pregnant sense Faith has to do with the God-Man. Pure Reason can hold no part or place in such Faith. All the canons of probability are mocked at in the experience of Faith. Religious Faith occupies a sphere of its own which is not continuous with rational belief nor to be reached by any approximations of proof or probability but only by a leap.

(2) No Rationale of Faith possible: As regards the abiding principle for which Kierkegaard contended, who can doubt that in asserting the essential quality of Faith as being

absolute decision for God as revealed in Jesus Christ - a going beyond all that the powers of the mind might advance or expect - an utter surrender to the Revelation of God as it affects heart and life - who can doubt that he was at the very nerve centre of the experience of Regeneration? Ultimately all who would enter into the joy of the Forgiveness of Sins must accept this of the hand of God as an altogether unmerited boon. There can be no rationale of Forgiveness. It is only the Love of God that makes this possible; but that cannot be discovered by the powers of the mind; it can only be apprehended within the passion of Faith. In the truest sense of the term, the Christian Faith is still as it was in the days of Paul - a stumbling block and foolishness to the wisdom of this world. The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Kingdom of God. All attempts at presenting the reasonableness of the Christian Faith should of necessity be suspect. So often in doing so the most distinctive categories of the Faith are watered down to such an extent as to make them essentially sub-Christian; so often too they are so effectively explained in terms suitable and acceptable to the modern mind as to be almost explained away. We need the iron of the message of Kierkegaard; we need his blunt and unequivocal proclamation of these truths. The Divine Revelation can only be apprehended within the passion of Faith, for thus alone is the soul brought into vital encounter with Jesus Christ. Only by the 'leap' of Faith is the soul in response to the Divine Revelation in Jesus Christ won to the side of God and thus redeemed and delivered from its mortal peril.

(e) Faith - a Gift of God: Kierkegaard's reiteration of the necessity for Divine action to provide the conditions in which Faith can be born and operate, as also his constant reminder that Faith is a gift of the Life-giving Spirit are fully in accordance with the views of the New Testament. In our study of the relevant passages of the Apostolic writers we were led to the following judgment: "All this work of Faith is the work of God through the Holy Spirit. To hear the word of God, to answer in Faith to the Revelation of God in Christ, to accept the Divine Truth, is not man's act nor man's possession. It is ever and always 'Grace through Faith'. It is in the communion of the Holy Ghost that the soul dares to lift up its head." With all this we could well compare the outstanding passage in Kierkegaard on the coming of the Life-giving Spirit. Full quotation has already been made from this notable work in which Kierkegaard pictures the soul travelling along the Via Dolorosa to the place of sheer blank despair, to the very place of Death. Only when this place has been reached does the Life-giving Spirit come with the heavenly gift of Faith: "Faith is on the other side of Death." Here once again it is clear that Kierkegaard is in accord with the Biblical view of man's salvation. Faith is not latent within the heart of man in the view of the New Testament; man is 'dead in trespasses and in sins' and the blight of that death extends over all. The power to apprehend the Grace of God must also come from above bound up within the very gift of that Grace. All is of God, since all is of Grace. The initiative

is always from on high and not least in the matter of the bestowal of Faith.

(f) Faith and the Atonement of Christ: Another important question that arises in this connection is that of the extent to which the Atoning work of Christ entered into the content of Kierkegaard's concept of Faith. In our study of Paul we saw that for him - as indeed for all the New Testament writers - 'To believe' was filled in with all the content of the Gospel of the Grace of God. "Moreover brethren I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Faith, it is evident, involves knowledge and acceptance of these great facts. The Cross and the Resurrection are the grand themes of Paul and nothing was ever allowed by him to obscure these final facts. "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." As against this it has been often urged that for Kierkegaard there was not the same measure of emphasis upon the actual accomplishment of the work of the Son of God at the Cross, that the Incarnation, for instance, bulked much more largely in all his approach to the Christian Faith than the Atonement; and that in this he definitely comes short of the full-orbed

Revelation of Holy Scripture. It must be admitted at once that in many ways Kierkegaard does stress the significance of the Incarnation. The God-Man - the manifestation of the Eternal God in time - He it is who calls forth the Faith which is so vital for the soul's health. "This is the Gospel-Revelation" - so Kierkegaard exclaimed and so he passionately believed. Faith must link the soul with the Son of God not only in His power and sufficiency to save, but in the spirit of His humiliation and the lowliness of His habit and walk in the world. It is as He is seen in the person of the God-Man that the Eternal God becomes real to our own hearts and we are able to partake of His Grace through the virtue of contemporaneousness with Him through Faith. In all this we must of course keep in mind the situation of the Christian Church of his day. He saw a form of Christianity without the spirit of suffering or sacrifice, a Christianity that accepted the dogmas of the Faith without being willing to accept the implications of their demands, a Christianity as dissimilar from that shown in the records of the Early Church as night is from day. The question that faced him in endeavouring to bring back the true spirit of the Faith into the Christendom of his day, was in principle one of emphasis. Here was a Church which accepted all the great dogmas of the Reformation, but did not show the power and spirit thereof to the world around. There was but one hope of salvation for the Church and that was severity; it was his conviction that he had a part to play in bringing back this spirit again into the midst of the Church's fellowship

and Faith, and to do so he was persuaded that the discipline of the Christian spirit had to be made clear to all who desired to embrace it. It is here that we discover the secret of his particular emphasis upon the question of contemporaneousness with Christ and of identification with Him in all things though most particularly in His humiliation and suffering. Faith in its vital nature has to do with the God-Man and that is not true Faith which refuses to follow Him in the pathway of His appointing.

It must at the same time be affirmed that to say Kierkegaard did not know nor acknowledge the prime necessity for the work of Christ upon the Cross is simply to darken counsel. Here, for instance, are some words from His Journal that illustrate how deeply he was convinced of this (935): "In truth I understand it perfectly: to wish to build one's eternal happiness upon any action whatsoever, to dare to come before God with such things - that is the most horrible sin, for it is to scorn Christ's Atonement. Christ's Atonement is everything, unconditionally, to that extent what a man does is all one. But then the infinity of the Atonement should neither make a man completely indolent nor stifle the simple and childlike wish to do what one can as well as possible, always be it noted, with God's permission, never off one's own bat, always gratefully and always treating it as nothing where the infinity of the Atonement is concerned." Nothing could be more emphatic than that. "Christ's Atonement is everything." The Cross was at the very

heart of Kierkegaard's life and witness, and it is impossible to imagine that he could have come to be the preacher that he did of the infinite love of the Saviour - his Communion discourses are most eloquent testimony to the depths of his feeling as regards this - had he not found in the Cross the veritable Grace of Heaven. Faith for him is obviously Faith in the work of the Son of God in life and death and Resurrection; Faith terminates in God as revealed in Christ - the God-Man, crucified and yet risen again. However true it may be to say that the dominant emphasis of Kierkegaard is on the Life of the God-Man and the great fact that in Him the Divine Revelation has come to men, it is none the less certain that the Cross is basic and foundational in all his views of the Christian Faith.

In one of the most telling of his discourses - that on The High Priest (Christian Discourses page 361) the following passage occurs, and there could be no better commentary on what we have been discussing: "He put Himself entirely in thy place. For when He, when the suffering and death of the Atoner is the satisfaction for thy sin and guilt - being a satisfaction it assumes thy place, or He, the Substitute, steps into thy place, suffering in thy place the punishment for sin, that thou mightest be saved, in thy place suffering death for thee that thou mightest live - did He not put Himself entirely in thy place? Here indeed it is more literally true that He entirely puts Himself in thy place than it was when we talked of this in the foregoing, where it merely denoted that He could understand thee

entirely, whereas thou remainest still in thy place and he in His place. But the satisfaction of Atonement signifies that thou dost step aside and that He assumes thy place - does He not then put Himself entirely in thy place? For what else is the Atoner than a substitute (stedfortraeder) who entirely puts Himself in thy place? And what is the comfort of it but this that the Substitute puts Himself entirely in thy place and mine? So when retributive justice, either here on earth or hereafter at the Day of Judgment, seeks the place where I a sinner stand with all my guilt - it does not find me, I no longer stand in that place, I have left it, Another stands in my place, Another who entirely puts Himself in my place. For this, I thank Thee Lord Jesus Christ." No more need be said: Faith in Christ is in truth in the CRUCIFIED.

(g) Kierkegaard's View of Christian Faith truly

evangelical: Kierkegaard's view and statement of Faith are indubitably evangelical. Here and there are emphases which seem overdrawn and exaggerated but the basic realities of the affirmation of his own Faith was an utter dependance upon God revealed in Jesus Christ: a launching out into the deep, a resting over 70,000 fathoms of water: it was a trust in a God of the miraculous and impossible, One who could perform the miracle of Forgiveness and give to His alienated creatures the blessedness of true immediacy and an experience of an up-to-date power of Christ for service and for life. As against the dull and lethargic acceptance of dogmas of the Church by the masses of

Denmark of his day and the world at large, there is no question but that Kierkegaard proclaimed and lived the reality and the power of utter Faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

(5) Christian Assurance: On the subject of Christian Assurance, Kierkegaard had not as much to say as might have been expected. There is a certainty, he claimed, that is born out of the operation of Faith, but it is momentary and must be kept only by the continual act and attitude of Faith. "Only Eternity can provide an Eternal Certainty. Existence must be content with a fighting certainty." A fighting certainty! That is not quite the same impregnable confidence and deathless hope which shine out of every page of the Epistles. In them we witness a sovereign confidence in the purpose of God and a firmly founded consciousness that God has indeed for Christ's sake redeemed and saved His people, that none shall 'ever pluck them out of His hand'. That assurance - gifted to the soul by the same Spirit through Whom the gift of Life had been brought - was the prerogative of all the members of the family of God, and could not be disrupted or broken by any of the changes and chances of this earthly life. A quality of assurance was given that altogether transcended every other form of conscious knowledge, so that the realm of the unseen became the abiding and the real. The city of God became the true habitation of the soul and the presence of God the safe abiding place of the spirit. "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.": "For if the earthly

house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we know that we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." That is the uniform and optimistic atmosphere of the New Testament from the earliest to the latest writers.

As against this Kierkegaard could never bring himself to call himself a Christian; he was always in the process of 'becoming a Christian'. No doubt in this he was once again motivated by the condition of things that he saw in the State Church of his time. There he saw so much blank acceptance of the dogmas of the Christian Faith without any attendant manifestation of the graces and powers of the Faith, so many regarding themselves as Christians by virtue of being baptised into the Christian Church at birth, so little of the fervour that characterised the Early Church in all its gallant crusade against the might and strength of established evil. Kierkegaard set himself to oppose this fatal spirit; to introduce a new sense of values - values that were essentially and manifestly Christian. His mission was to re-introduce Christianity into Christendom. All that he himself dared to claim while engaged in this high task was that he was on the road that led to life, and was following as hard as he could after the gleam. Beyond that he would not go. "I have never fought in such a way as to say: I am the true Christian, others are not true Christians. No my contention has been this: I know what Christianity is, my imperfection as a Christian I fully realise - but I know what Christianity is. And to get this properly recognised must be I

should think, to every man's interest, whether he be a Christian or not, whether he be intent to accept Christianity or reject it." (Point of View, page 159).

Obviously in this there is much that is of note. True Christian Assurance is of course the assurance of Faith; the Christian Life is a Life of Faith. Furthermore, in his assertion that he could not take upon himself the name of Christian, Kierkegaard was emphasising the fact, common to all believers, of his sense of failure and weakness in the service and powers of the Faith. It is arguable that to do so is to confuse the whole question of the Christian Life. Sanctification must follow Regeneration, but it is part of the glorious heritage of the believer in Christ that in the very process of Sanctification the witness of the Spirit of God is a mighty factor, and the deep conviction that is born in the heart that God for Christ's sake has pardoned and welcomed the sinning one, is a potent inspiration to further advances in the Christian Faith. It was the promise of the Saviour that the Spirit when given would abide for ever, and in the hour of the soul's awakening the good Spirit of the Lord God is manifestly given. It is not shallow or superficial thinking, nor is it spiritual arrogance or the foolishness of highmindedness, which can assert with supreme confidence: "One thing I know, whereas I was blind now I see," Such conviction is definite divine endowment which

experience substantiates through each successive period of life and service. It is a fact of Evangelical Revelation that as God's Love is for all, so the heart of man in awareness of all that God has done for the salvation of mankind can rest in the satisfaction of Faith.

Luke records that he wrote his Gospel: "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." That surely is the full and authentic New Testament position. It has been said with truth that 'mystery involves all spiritual truths'. But if this is so, it is not the mystery of vagueness and confusion, but of Truth's divinity and glory. It is not the mystery of fog but of sunshine, a mystery 'dark with excess of light'. New Testament Christianity is a Christianity of assurance: "I know"; "I have"; "I believe"; "I am persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In endeavouring to assess Kierkegaard's view on this great subject, with the evidence before us of his own personal experience which for so long was fitful and incomplete, it is difficult to escape the conviction that in a certain measure he did not come to the realisation in the fullest sense of the term of the fulness of the Love of God in the gift of 'the rest of Faith' and 'the assurance of Faith'. We noted in our study of his views on Forgiveness, how hard he found it to grasp the reality of the forgiveness of his own sin. The oppressive consciousness that he was a unique individual set apart by

Providence for some exceptional task, undoubtedly played its part in thus making it difficult for him to feel the power of a sovereign Forgiveness; and that, too, despite the fact that he wrote of Forgiveness with a wealth of forceful and impressive words and with an imaginative power such as have rarely been found in Christendom. In this matter one feels that he was unable to follow his own advice to others to 'launch out into the deep and rest over 70,000 fathoms of water' - in dependence on God. The Gospel message is surely of a Forgiveness and a blessedness knowledgeable here and now, and of a certainty of hope which passes beyond the present to the future, sure that God, Who has loved as He has, will love His children to the last.

(6) Manifestations of the Christian Life:

(a) Emphasis upon Works: The Christian Life, Kierkegaard ever insisted, must be a life lived according to the pattern shown in Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world; it will accordingly be a life fruitful in works of Love. We have noted above how much at one Kierkegaard was with the great doctrine of Justification by Faith, but it was in the widest and most essentially Christian sense that he held this. No merit, he affirmed, could ever attach to good works, but none the less they must appear in any life that is truly to be called Christian, or else the reality of that life must at once be doubted. He had a predilection for the Epistle of James with its emphasis on the works of Faith and of Love, and it was there he found the texts on which he most loved to preach. "Good works" he writes

"in the sense of merit are naturally an abomination to God. Nevertheless good works are required of men. But they should be and not be. They should be and yet man should be humbly ignorant of their existence or that they have any importance." The publication in 1847 of his great work The Works of Love was a striking example of how deeply this conviction was rooted in him. Christian Faith must ever be, he insisted therein at great length, - will ever be, a Faith which worketh by Love.

(b) This a development of emphasis upon Existentiality:

Once again we are reminded of the existentiality of Kierkegaard's thoughts. Faith is the very life-blood of Christian practice, but it will wilt and die if it does not issue in the service and sacrifice of the Love of God. He saw in the clearest relief the peril latent in the statement 'SOLA FIDE', when interpreted in an exaggerated sense. No man could rightly be called regenerate or Christian who was not evidencing to the world the same quality of deeds as his Master showed in the days of His flesh. Love must be the determinant of the conduct of the life of Faith.

This surely is a most healthy outlook and truly evangelical. We know that the Reformers, in their zeal to have done with all the trappings of Rome, exceeded in some respects the bound of wisdom - at least in speech oftentimes - though it is evident - in Luther particularly - that the necessity of the Christlike life was never forgotten. Kierkegaard, living in a country and a generation that had been soaked in state religion for so long that each person accepted it as granted without

allowing it in any way to affect their conduct for the better, felt himself forced to insist on the radical necessity for demonstration of the spirit of Christ in all life. There are no more beautiful passages in all his writings than those in which he writes of the power, the glory, the responsibility of Love. It is doubtful if any other great Christian theologian has so powerfully emphasised both the power of Faith in Christian experience and the need for works as the manifestation of the Faith. Both are needed for a balanced statement of the Christian Way. There is no doubt that in certain circles of Christianity, particularly where a warmly evangelistic message has been proclaimed, there has been a fatal underplaying of the need for a full evidence of the works of Love. Christianity is more than a Faith; it is a Way of Life - the Way Christ lived. Conversion must manifest its reality in such a life as His. Anything else can only be regarded as a travesty of the true standard. In this great emphasis Kierkegaard is in the centre of the great procession of enlightened evangelical minds, and any critical estimate of his view on Christian Conversion must concentrate and enlarge upon this most essential note. Though he was the prophet of a re-vitalised Faith, he was also the preacher of the quality and standard of life to which that Faith must lead. That memorial at least can never be taken from him.

(c) Christ as Pattern: In line with this, another concept that we had noted in Kierkegaard's view of the Christian

outworking of the experience of Faith was that of Christ as Pattern and the need for the Christian to identify himself as fully as possible with His suffering and humiliation. It is interesting to note again in this connection that the Living Christ for Kierkegaard is the Christ of the experiences of Nazareth, Judaea and Jerusalem. By the 'Leap of Faith', the soul becomes contemporaneous with Him, and it is the glory of the Christian experience to be able to enter into the mystery of His suffering and in all things to be made like unto Him in His rejection and His humiliation. It was impossible for the Christian not to be a disciple. The Early Church, said Kierkegaard, saw this so clearly that at a very early stage they began to reserve that title for the immediate followers of Jesus, thus seeking to escape from the implications of the word. To avoid that way, however, was to avoid the Christian way, the way of identification with Him in the fullest sense possible. Only in this sense will the believer truly follow Him, 'imitate' Him - as he must if he would enter into Life. The Cross must be taken up and carried as Christ carried His. No following of Christ that is without persecution can be reckoned as valid. The Christian will be a witness to the world in the degree in which he is a martyr. This is the life of true blessedness. The disciple, walking in the way in which Christ trod, suffering within, persecution without, is conscious at the same time of the divine benediction. The suffering will be essentially inner suffering - the suffering of a paradoxical relation to God and

of relationship to the life which is appointed and evidenced in the God-Man. Suffering is of the very essence of the Christian Life.

In all this, Kierkegaard's own personal experience had played a great part. It was developed more and more in the latter years of his life and particularly after the 'CORSAIR' attack forced him into a life-hostile asceticism of spirit. The rejection of his overtures and message by the representatives of the State Church and the outcome of his last great attack upon organised Christianity, confirmed him fully in his view that suffering is of the very essence of the Christian Life. That his statement was exaggerated and excessive, there is no doubt whatsoever; to make martyrdom a test of vital Christianity is not the teaching of the New Testament. Most certainly to walk in the way of Christ is oftentimes to walk a way that is barren, unpopular and difficult. There must be identification with Him in all the great principles which He affirmed and in the quality of Life which He lived. None the less, the Divine promise is that 'all things work together for good to them that love God' and that 'no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly'. Is not the bearing of the Cross of which Christ spoke the crucifixion of self and all for which it stands, together with the enthronement of Christ and His commandment? The Christian must certainly be prepared to meet with equanimity and confidence whatever is appointed for his soul's good, but surely there have been countless people who have lived close to

Christ and borne His yoke who have found not only 'His Rest', but their 'lives approved unto men'.

(d) The Witness to the Truth: Of the believer as a witness to the Truth, Kierkegaard often spoke. "The communication of Christian Truth must end at last in witnessing; maieutic cannot be the last form. Christianly understood, the Truth does not reside in the subject (as Socrates understood it) but is a Revelation which must be proclaimed." To that position he was himself brought. There came the hour in his own experience when he was forced to cry out: "I must speak". The power of the Christian Revelation so possessed him that at length all suggestions of indirect methods had to be abandoned, and he was constrained to address his generation in words the import of which were unmistakeable. In this, Kierkegaard is in line with the great emphases of the New Testament as we have noted. The acts of Repentance and Faith must be followed by Confession and Witness. We are what we say we are. Faith will be vital as it is vocal. The command of Christ to the Church is 'Ye shall be witnesses unto Me'. How fully Kierkegaard realised that, the works he wrote bear witness. It was his burning desire that the Truth should ever be made manifest through all that he did, and in that we cannot doubt he in very large measure succeeded. Conversion for him was consummated ultimately in 'Direct Speech' to men of what God had done and could do; and in that he certainly acted aright.

(7) Summary and Conclusion:

(a) Dominant consciousness of God: Out of all the ground covered in this study of the Kierkegaardian position, certain pinnacle peaks emerge above the rest and by their commanding eminence arrest the attention. First and foremost of all these is a most profound and satisfying sense of God in all that he wrote - a God, sovereign it is true, and separate from man by a seemingly unbridgeable gulf, yet a God of infinite pity, wisdom and love, Who bursts through all barriers that would hinder, to seek and to save His fallen and rebellious creatures. The miracle of the Divine Initiative was ever with Kierkegaard and was foundational to all his thinking and writing. And it is there of course that the theme of Conversion must ever begin - in the good intent of Heaven, in the desire of the Almighty for fellowship with the sons of men. Revelation must come down and what is Revelation but God Himself. So Kierkegaard affirmed as do all the voices of the Scriptural record - it is 'God Who has so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son'.

(b) The Absolute Standard: By reason of the very fact of this emphasis upon the Sovereignty of God, Kierkegaard was also constrained to maintain unequivocally the reality and the claim of the 'Absolute Standard'. "Relate yourself relatively to the relative and absolutely to the Absolute." Profound and helpful counsel! It is only thus, Kierkegaard argued, that everything in life assumes its proper perspective, and the soul

of man finds its proper and satisfying destiny. The Christian standard is a standard of perfection, else the Gospel would be an unholy Gospel. Alike over sinful man and regenerate man, the same standard is set, and to avoid it is to avoid Life. There can be no hope of individual salvation, until the soul in the light of the standard revealed in Christ, has despaired utterly of helping itself; and only by a constant contemporaneousness through Faith in Him Who is the Lord of Life, the God-Man, can the full-orbed influence of His power work in the recreated life. That claim impends not only over the individual but over the Church of Christ; there too the same fire and flame must scorch and wither all the dross of lesser things. It is Kierkegaard's imperishable glory that in spite of contumely and rejection he continued himself to follow in the pathway that he saw to be right, and held aloft with all the verve and challenge of the true prophet the banner of an absolute Christian standard.

(c) Kierkegaard's consistency of Purpose. His view of Christian conversion evangelical, expansive and worthy:

Any study of Kierkegaard's view of Christian Conversion must of necessity be somewhat arbitrary and circumscribed. Kierkegaard never systematised his theological position: it is doubtful if he could have said himself what he was. To-day, both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism acclaim him and hold him as one of themselves. Any selection of his writings is perforce limited and incomplete, and even those taken may not always seem in complete harmony with one another, for Kierkegaard's writings

are those of a constantly developing and expanding mind. None the less the broad lineaments of the outlined picture never vary. From beginning to end Kierkegaard's aim was to make clear what it means to be a Christian; there is not one of his works that has not to do in great degree with the question of Faith and relationship to God and it is beyond doubt that the process of conversion which he envisages and that in so large a measure he travelled himself, is consistent alike within itself and with the broad lines of the New Testament Revelation. Conversion could never for him be regarded as easy, though the difficulties must never deter the soul from treading its toilsome path.

All the major emphases which we found in our New Testament statement are to be found in greater or lesser degree in Kierkegaard. The plight of the soul through Sin, the coming of Love in Jesus Christ, the necessity of Repentance, Faith and Confession, the fact of Justification and the joy of Forgiveness, the manifestation to men of the reality of the soul's satisfaction in the service of Love, the Imitation of Christ - all are here in Kierkegaard, as they are all truly evangelical in inspiration and extent. There are overdrawn emphases and misplaced stresses, it is true; there are patent omissions of certain fundamental aspects of Christian Truth. These we have already noted and here it is only necessary to emphasise Kierkegaard's hesitancy to embrace the fulness of the true Apostolic view of God's Salvation as it covers all man's sin and gives the blessedness of Adoption to the soul redeemed; and also his faulty and

exaggerated demand of suffering as the badge of the true Christian. But the portrait of essential individual Christianity which Kierkegaard has portrayed, is evangelical, expansive and worthy of the most profound study by the Church to-day. That study may perchance bring much to light which might well be avoided as unhelpful; but it would most certainly unfold infinitely more to which it would be well to take heed. The dynamic of Kierkegaard's view of Christian Conversion and its outflow into the Church of Christ was never more needed than it is to-day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE CONVERSION EXPERIENCE.

(1) The Christian and the Church: No discussion of the theology of Christian Conversion would be complete without some examination of its relevance to the question of membership in the Christian Church, and to that we now turn in this concluding section of our study. Such questions as Church Membership and the prime function of the Church in the community are clearly bound up with any doctrine of Christian conversion, and it is fitting therefore in this final section of our study that these issues should be passed in review.

(a) The New Testament Emphasis: It will be well to recall first of all the main emphases of the New Testament concerning this. At Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended in power upon the waiting disciples, Peter, under the inspiration of the Spirit preached the word to the people of Jerusalem, and the response was instantaneous and overwhelming. "The same day there was added unto them about three thousand souls." From that unique beginning the Church grew and multiplied and we read again: "Moreover the Lord added to the Church, day by day, those who were being saved." Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, writing of the way in which they had been called of God out of darkness into his marvellous light passes on immediately to speak of the privileges to which this very experience has brought them, the wonder of the mystery of membership in the body of Christ:

"You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world but God who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." In these words Paul is stating the reality of salvation by grace through faith and he follows this immediately with a declaration of the implications of this wondrous experience; "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and followers but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone: in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians Chapter II)

The experience of turning to God in faith and of receiving the quickening forgiveness of the Divine love, is climaxed, says Paul, in the wonder of the fellowship of the faith amongst the great family of God. A believer is not merely a citizen of the City of God, he is primarily a 'fellow-citizen with the saints of all the ages'. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the remarkable passage XII, v.22-24, makes the same great emphasis: "Ye are come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant Ye are come to the general assembly and church

of the First-born which are written in Heaven." We need not labour the point which is already sufficiently clear. The New Testament knows nothing of isolationism in the experience of Conversion; a converted man is ipso facto a Church-man.

The counterpart of this truth need only be mentioned. It is this very 'called-out' company which is the divine instrument for the 'calling-out' of others. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," said our Lord to His disciples on Mount Olivet "in Jerusalem, in Judaea, in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts I,v.8). The New Testament records make it clear that this became the main burden of their life's ministry. Their preaching was a proclamation of accomplishment - of the triumph of God in Jesus Christ on Calvary and the vindication of His Son in the Resurrection. It was in view of the fact of what God in Christ HAD DONE that they summonsed men everywhere to repent and believe. "Therefore" says Peter (Acts II, v.36) "let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ." And the record proceeds: "Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are afar off even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The Church of Christ, founded upon the confession of Jesus as Son

of God and Saviour (Matthew XVI, v.18) was the very instrument under God for these affirmations of the faith through which alone others could come to the place of surrender and of salvation.

(b) The View of Kierkegaard.

(1) The Church of his day: The transition from this exalted conception to the Danish Church of Kierkegaard's day may seem an abrupt and an arbitrary one, but the very contrast will help towards a practical issue of the present discussion. The Church which Kierkegaard found and which latterly he came to castigate so strongly, was a State church with everyone automatically being 'born and baptised Christians'; a Church honoured in the land, time-serving as Kierkegaard thought, and following hard upon the heels of the rulers of the earth. There was no clear and insistent proclamation of essential Christian truth, because the Church - so Kierkegaard insisted - was not fully convinced of the truth herself and could not therefore pass it on to others. Let him speak in his own words of this: (Training in Christianity, page 214): "The situation is this: when everyone in turn qualifies himself as the Christian like 'the others', then if you will, there is really no one who confesses Christ; on the other hand, it is, if you will, recognised and confessed of everyone that he is a Christian of sorts. Everyone is baptised as an infant; later, but while he is still a child, he is confirmed - presumably in order that as early as possible everything may be arranged about

that sort of passport which is so necessary if one is to get through the world without receiving a reproof from the magistrates. And of everyone who as an infant was baptised, as a boy or a girl was confirmed, it is certain that he is a Christian - by consulting the parish register one can ascertain this. But presumably he cannot in later life get to the point of confessing Christ because in fact he lives in established Christendom where it is acknowledged and confessed of all - compare the parish register - that they are Christians." Such is the dreadfully ironical indictment Kierkegaard makes against the Church of his day. He pled for a Church purified from all the dross of custom and conventional Christianity. He sought for a Church wherein Christ would be confessed and none should really be admitted within its fellowship who could not from the heart confess Christ. Mass produced catechumens were anathema to him. He was not an individualist - though Bishop Martensen accused him of being so - he was bent on urging that everyone should individually - quite literally as an individual - relate himself to God personally; that in his own words was the 'formula for being a Christian'.

(ii) Christendom and Christianity: All the concerted power of Kierkegaard's invective and denunciation were more and more concentrated on this system commonly called Christendom. "Christendom" he cries, "has abolished Christianity"; and the greatest of all tasks awaiting is the re-introduction of essential Christianity into a Christendom

that knows nothing of its vital spirit. In the Journals of the last year, this topic occupies far more space than all the other polemical topics put together, and in the issues of The Instant also he gives vent to his outraged feelings on this 'travesty of the Christian faith'. "Christendom is a conspiracy against the Christianity of the New Testament." So he declared repeatedly in the last months of his life. Not a new conspiracy, of course, but one with its roots far back in the history of the Church when the Church made peace with the rulers of the world around. The one great factor which had succeeded in bringing Christendom about was its altered emphasis from 'intensity to extensity'. By abandoning those very principles which the early Church had so consistently and challengingly maintained in its assault upon the kingdoms of this world, this illusion had been brought forth and Christianity 'changed into optimism'. He maintained in the most extreme manner that Christianity not only did not exist but that it was non-existent to such a degree that the very thing people are warned against as detestable and ungodly - precisely that was New Testament Christianity. For such a parlous situation there was but one hope. Since Christianity had been spread too thin, the zeal for extension must be checked in favour of a deeper intensity. Only the Church pure could conceivably be the Church powerful and to become so she must submit to the severity of the New Testament standards and let judgment perform its salutary work. "For us" he writes in Training in Christianity (page 222):

"there is but one salvation - Christianity. And verily for Christianity there is but one salvation - Severity by Severity alone it must be reinstated in its rights as sovereign."

(iii) Only the Church Pure could be the Church Powerful: We must not forget that all Kierkegaard's agitation concerning this was with the aim of making the Church's witness to men to be charged again with the very power of God and that men hearing the voice of the Son of God through the Church which is His body might hear and live. He was convinced in the fullest sense of the term that there was 'nulla salus extra ecclesiam'. For him, the experience of Christian conversion was one only capable of creation within the power of the fellowship of believers - hence his urgent insistence on these things we have just noted; and in this light of the New Testament emphases, who can doubt that he was proclaiming fundamental and ineluctable realities of the faith?

(2) The Function of the Church:

(a) The unchanging Problem: The practical issues of all this for our own day are apparent without any emphasis. The situation as regards Christendom has changed fundamentally to a degree that is bewildering, but the problem confronting the Christian Church is basically the same - the reintroduction of vital Christianity into the world. Whereas in the day of Kierkegaard, the principle enemy was a nominal view of the Christian Faith, to-day mass secularism is beyond question the

prime foe; yet the task is unchanged. The role of the Church is unchanged as it is indeed unchangeable. "The role of the Church is to be the Church": So stated the Oxford Oecumenical Conference of 1937 regarding the Universal Church and the World of Nations and it proceeds: "Let the Church know herself, whose she is and what she is. Discerning clearly her own status as the Community of Grace, the organ of God's redemptive purpose for mankind, she must by a process of most merciless self-scrutiny become what God intended her to be. Nothing less than that nor yet anything more than that. In penitence and humility must the Church re-discover the meaning and implications of that word which comes to her from the earlier ages of her own history, 'to be to the eternal goodness what his own hand is to a man'. This involves a revived sense of God as the real living God, the God of the whole earth over against a God who is no more than a dialectical process or a member of a polytheistic pluralism. This means concretely that the Church recognises herself to be the Church of Christ, the organ of God's purpose in Him. It must be her ceaseless concern to rid herself from all subjugation to the prevailing culture, an economic system, a social type or a political order. Let the Church live; over against all these let the Church stand."

(b) Functions of the Church: Prophetic: Communal: Worshipping: Regenerative: So much is clear. Another question, however, equally crucial immediately poses itself: "In what way can the Church best fulfil her God-appointed role? What are the

functions that she must fulfil if she is in very truth to be the organ of God's Will to the world?" There is for one thing a great prophetic mission which the Church must fulfil. In the midst of a world that has violated the eternal decree of the living God, the Church must point the world to the inexorable moral laws of the Universe as appointed by God and proclaim that there can be no possibility of concord until that law is observed. In the midst of society and of the State, the Church must be the veritable voice of conscience denouncing wrong and unholding righteousness. Ill fares the land where the voice of the prophets is silent, the Church must ever be alive to the realities of the world and the communal situation, and must speak the law of God in no uncertain voice. Again, there is a communal function that the Church must fulfil. Where around her she finds only dispeace and separation, she must make manifest the reality of the Christian community, of a Christ in Whom there is 'no East nor West, no North nor South'. There is but one hope for the peace of mankind - the Christian Church, and she must exercise her universal function as the great unifier of the nations and the only truly supranational brotherhood amongst men. These are fundamental, but they are not the sole nor even - if we are to follow the New Testament in all things in principle and in practice - the primary functions of the Church. In the New Testament we see the Church primarily at worship, a called-out company waiting before the Throne of God. Worship of the Living God was the very life-beat of those

who had been claimed of the Spirit of God, and it was from the blessedness of communion with the Lord God that they went forth to proclaim their undying message to a waiting world. That message was the prime instrument in the fulfilment of their function as a regenerative agency. The first objective of the early Church was ever new men and not new conditions in which men were living. The chief concern of the Church of New Testament times was not to transform the conditions of the people of their day but the regeneration of the people themselves. This was primary and foundational in all their work and ministry. New men, Christian saints were the world's greatest need then as they are to-day, and it was towards bringing such men to birth that all the activities of the Apostles were devoted. It was out of this experience of regeneration that they were led into, that the community or fellowship of the faithful was discovered and enjoyed. Brotherhood had meaning only in Christ. True peace one with the other was ever and only to be found within 'the peace of Christ'.

If then we are to take the New Testament as our supreme rule of faith and life, this concentration of the Apostles should characterise the Church of our day. The Church's prime function in the fulfilment of her role as the Christian Church, should be Regenerative, the bringing of men and women to the point of renewal through faith, of conversion from idols and all they imply to the knowledge and service of the true God which is Life indeed. The conversion of the individual hearer should be the principal objective of the ministry of Christ's

Church in regards to the outside world. It is not the function of the Church to create a new civilisation; it is the Church's function to create the creators of a new civilisation. The importance of all our study hitherto comes to be seen as altogether crucial when this is seen. The final commission of Christ to His disciples is still the same: "Go ye and disciple all nations; baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." There is at once the Church's Charter and the believer's commission. All else must become subsidiary to that.

(c) The Church and The Holy Spirit: We are now at a position where, having studied in detail Kierkegaard's view of Christian conversion together with the New Testament doctrine of this experience, and having posited that it is the prime function of the Christian Church in addition to being the community of the converted wherein worship finds its glory and consummation, to be a regenerative power in the world, some general conclusions can be presented concerning the way in which the experience of conversion as the New Testament portrays it can best be brought about. By what means can the men and women of to-day or of any day be led to turn from their own way to the ways of God in Christ? What must the Church do?

It should scarcely be necessary to remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit alone can bring to the deadness and darkness of the human heart, the light and life of the Love of God.

'The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound

thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The almighty power whereby the soul is quickened into supernatural life is the power of the Spirit of the Living God. Ere facing the task then of a wayward world, the Church must remind herself of such words as these: "Without Me, ye can do nothing":

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His":

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

It was on the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit was poured forth without measure, that the Church was quickened and established and the disciples' words made mighty and creative. In this, as in all else, all is of grace for all is of God. Notwithstanding, it is clear that the instrument which the Spirit of God does use is the Church which is the body of Christ. In dependance then upon the sovereign grace of God in Christ made triumphantly real and dynamic to the Christian Church through the Holy Spirit, the Church addresses herself to the task of the conversion of men, and faces first and foremost the question - Quomodo?

(3) The Church's Methods: In the earliest Gospel we read that Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and saying, Repent ye and believe the Gospel. It is significant that in this recorded statement of the first appearance of our Lord in His ministry in Galilee - He came preaching. 'How shall they hear without a preacher' writes Paul adding point to this that we have already noted and it is

from such words of inspired scripture that we begin to discern the outline of the Church's method in her approach to the world.

(a) The Proclamation of the Holy Gospel: The Church must proclaim the truth of the Holy Gospel. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" said our Lord. Fearlessly and without any equivocation, the whole counsel of God must be proclaimed, for only the truth can save. The first step God-ward which any soul will ever take will be the willing hearing of the truth of God. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach." Until this word is indeed made nigh - even in their mouth - there can be no possibility of conversion of men. Hence the pre-eminence of the place of preaching. The Church's first task is to mediate Christ to men and that can be done only by the telling of the truth concerning Him. The Church therefore takes her place in the footsteps of her King and Head, Who, when He first came to the battlefield of His earthly ministry, 'came preaching the Gospel'.

(b) Such Proclamation will be Biblical and Dogmatic: This proclamation must be a full-orbed one of the Will of God in Christ, who is the Truth. Of necessity it will be Biblical and stamped with the authority of the scripture of truth. Christ will be the end and the beginning of it, for 'in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead', and 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Him'. It will be primarily factual and dogmatic. As has been well said: "The Church must proclaim in all its

simplicity the redemptive evangel, with full relevance to the situation of men everywhere. The Church affirms that the everlasting silence has been broken, that God Himself has spoken in such fashion that there is a remedy in Jesus Christ, the Crucified-risen One, for the evils which destroy human personality and human society. The Gospel entrusted to the Church is not a great imperative, but a great indicative. It does not consist primarily in a call to realise certain human ideals, but to accept certain divine realities. It does not invite men to achieve something: it invites them to receive something. It makes available for them new life which God Himself offers them upon the basis of which a new world may be built."

(Dr. J. Mackay: Christian Theology: page 175).

(c) The Centrality of the Cross: The focal point of all this great proclamation will be 'the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'. It is at the Cross that sin is judged for what it is with absolute finality: it is at the Cross that the love of Heaven shines most clearly even amidst the gross darkness of the evil around it: it is at the Cross that God in Christ triumphs over all antagonisms to the good, and by accepting the age-old burdens of human wrong, transforms it into an occasion - the occasion - of grace: it is at the Cross that the consummation of all our Saviour's life and ministry was reached: it is at the Cross that we see the sign - CHRISTUS VICTOR: 'It is finished', was the exultant cry of the strong Son of God in the moment of

glorious victory. It was this that the Apostles proclaimed as they were scattered abroad. Their preaching was a record of divine triumph - the glory of the Cross and the vindication of the Resurrection; and that - if we are still to follow in the pathway of this revelation - must be the burden of the proclamation of the Church to-day: "I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." This is of the very essence of the truth of the Gospels and it must be proclaimed. Man's sin is so terrible and his need so great that only the Message of the Cross can deal with it. There must truly be no slurring over of the great ethical demands of the Gospel, and the commandments of Christ must be obeyed; but these all are confluent at the Cross, and like Paul the Church must determine to 'know nothing amongst men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified' if she would win men for the Kingdom. Any Gospel proclamation which overstresses what Christ can do as against what He has done is not the form of New Testament proclamation.

(d) Call to Penitence and Faith: The outcome of such presentation of Christ to the mind and conscience of the hearer, will be the call to Repent and Believe. If man without exception is truly in the condition in which the Bible states him to be, there can be no alternative to this message. For the manner in which Kierkegaard has made this for our day so clear, the Christian Church can not be sufficiently thankful. In the light of the Love of God in Jesus Christ, seen so triumphantly on the Cross, the need for a radical change of

direction and alteration of mind in man is clearly necessary; and since man in himself is wholly incapable of doing so apart from the grace of God, there is a supreme need for faith in this God who at Calvary is made known as omnipotent holy Love. As we have already seen, these two are inseparable. Repentance and faith are bound together in bonds that cannot be broken asunder, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God' - and hence impossible to repent. None the less, repentance is the very condition in which saving faith becomes possible. "In repentance" says the Westminster Confession of Faith, "the sinner so grieves for and hates his sins as to turn from them all unto God purposing and endeavouring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandment": while, by faith "which is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaketh therein; but the principle acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification and eternal life by virtue of the covenant of grace."

(e) The Love of God: The whole range of this proclamation of evangelical truth will be saturated with the warmth of the reality of the Love of God. Nothing is possible apart from this. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." The initiative that bursts forth in saving grace upon man made supremely manifest in history in the gift of Christ

is that of an eternal love. Everything spoken as regards man and his sin, his plight and his need, the condemnation of divine holiness upon man's rebellion and waywardness, the issues of eternal life or eternal loss, the call to repent and believe - all must be spoken within the context of the unchanging love of Heaven. Yet that love must be understood in the fullest Biblical sense and must be correspondingly proclaimed. Love must be viewed in the light of the infinite radiance of eternal holiness before which seraphim and archangel bow down and worship. Only as man comes to the knowledge of the true character of the God whom he has defied, will he most truly repent and cast himself upon the mercy of Heaven.

(f) The Miracle of Regeneration: In this way is the miracle of regeneration and conversion brought to pass. As a result of the proclamation of the evangel of divine love, a love actual and present in Jesus Christ, the heart of man receives the seed of the Word, meets it with faith and obedience under the inspiration of the life-giving Spirit of God, and is thus re-born into the redeemed family of God. In this grand act of faith and obedience, the whole man participates; the mind approves, the heart desires, the will consents and acts, and thus in the totality act of faith the entire personality is converted to God and becomes a 'fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God'.

(4) The Basic Minimum of Knowledge necessary for

Conversion: All this must be at the very core of the proclamation of the Gospel, though there are as many ways of making it known and appealing as there are men and women who will proclaim it. These facts that we have noted should be regarded as foundational and fundamental in the Church's message, and it is certain that no one will ever come to a full experience of Conversion to God without personal appropriation of their reality and significance. One question however must be faced. Must all this be known before the soul can turn to the Living God? Is it not possible that many will experience true Conversion as a result of the vision of the glory and the power of Christ Jesus, of a conviction that He alone can satisfy some deep-seated need of the heart when all else has failed to do so? Must a strong conviction of Sin precede a saving knowledge of the grace of Christ's forgiveness and love?

It is a vital question and must be considered. There must be no confusing of it with another - the question of the particular road by which a soul comes to Christ: there are 'twelve gates into the City', and from our study of the different emphases of the New Testament writers, we have seen how varied the experiences of these several writers were: Christ had come to them along the very road they themselves were questing upon, whether it were the road of the mind or the heart or the conscience or of their communal life. 'The roads to Christ are many, but there is but one Christ.' It is here

that we shall best see the answer to our main question. One Christ! And in Him is all the Gospel of God, the Holiness and the Love of the Father, the power drawn from love's infinite sacrifice to heal and to save the soul of man, the endowment of a new dynamism through the indwelling of His Spirit. There is but one way to the Father - through Christ. The all important question, therefore, is of personal encounter with Him; and personal encounter with Christ will ever be - if the heart be desirous of knowing the Truth - a saving encounter no matter what be the particular aspect of His saving power that presents itself at the time. For Paul outside Damascus gates, it was encounter with the risen and exalted Son of God that broke his proud spirit and led him bound captive into the city. And it is beyond doubt that multitudes experientially come to know Christ before they come fully to know their own need, that many are within the fold of God before they are cognisant of the full redemptive implications of the work of Christ. Conviction of Sin will often follow encounter with Christ and thus will the heart be led to the Cross and to a deeper realisation of the mystery of the Divine Forgiveness in Christ. The basic need of man is to meet Christ, and given that and a willing mind, there is already an experience of Christian Conversion. But not until all that which we have called the very heart and core of the message of the Evangel is proclaimed and grasped, will the soul be 'rooted and grounded in the Truth', and assurance of God's free mercy in Christ be obtained.

The message of the evangelical Church must be Christ, in all His capacity and willingness to satisfy and save the souls of men. In thus proclaiming Him, He will be now the Christ of humiliation, now the Christ of exaltation and of glory, now the Man of Galilee in happy service and radiant ministry, now the Friend of all mankind, but ever and always He will be the Christ of Calvary, lifted up that all might live - the Christ Who from His Cross condemns man's Sin and leads Him to utter despair of himself, but Who again calls and challenges and makes man's heart to hope again with the promise of a surpassing forgiveness. It is the light that shines from the hill of Calvary that sets in most glaring relief the desperate need of man for the Salvation of God, but also how regnant is the sufficient Grace of Heaven to come and deliver. Personal encounter with Christ is the all-important thing; but one cannot be long in the company of the Saviour of the world without coming to see the marks of the nailprints and of a thorn-crowned brow. Ultimately the Cross is the prime factor in man's experience of full Conversion to God.

(5) A Typical Conversion: A Study of the Conversion of Saul of Tarsus: It has been borne in upon us in our study of the New Testament doctrine of Conversion that there can be no rule of line applied to the form in which Conversion takes place. This great change in the soul of man takes place under as many forms as there are leaves in the forest or waves in the sea. There are beyond doubt as many forms of Conversion as there are individuals who are saved; the distinctiveness ranges over the wide compass of human life. Side by side however with this extraordinary diversity of form, there goes a corresponding similarity of essential experience and it will be helpful for the full examination of our subject to review at least one of the great New Testament conversions and in the light of all that we have noted already to distinguish those points that are vital from those that are purely incidental and personal. No better example can be chosen than the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, for it is referred to so often in Scripture and is recorded in such detail with so much autobiographical information by the Apostle himself, that it may almost present itself to us as a type form; from it we shall learn what are essentials of a true Conversion to God, what are the fundamental factors in the soul's turning to the way of Righteousness and of Truth, what is vital and what is solely circumstantial.

(a) The Divine Initiative: With Saul, as with everyone, God took the initiative. "It pleased God" says the Apostle "..... to reveal His Son in me." (Gal. I, v.15). It was the

Father's good pleasure to bring this rebellious son of Israel to Himself. That first! Here Kierkegaard and Paul are one and one with the whole revealed counsel of God. It is in the mystery of the good intent of God for man, that the possibility of man's turning to the light and the life divine is born. The doctrine of the Divine Forethought is not 'Paulinism', nor 'Augustinianism', nor 'Calvanism': it is of the very nature of religion. God comes. "It pleased God." The new life originates with the living One: the new heart and a right spirit are the gift of the Eternal Love. Accordingly we see that the beginning of Conversion is some apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, a desire - however inarticulate, however faint - to respond to the love of the Father.

(b) The Conversion Experience: It was outside the gates of Damascus that this activity of God towards Paul became actual in his own conscious experience. The scene and the record of it are alike immortal and part of the Church's mighty heritage for all time. There Paul came face to face with a power, which he knew instinctively to be personal and from which there was for him no escape. Writing of that hour in later years to the Church at Philippi (3, v.12) he states: "I was apprehended by Christ Jesus." The Saviour stood on picket guard when the enemy of His people was descending on Damascus, and the persecutor was arrested. He was brought under swift and agonising conviction of Sin. For some time there had been uneasy stirrings of conscience, but as an unruly steer lashes

out against the goad that pierces his flanks, so Saul kicked against the pricks. Now however resistance was vain. "Who art Thou, Lord?" he cries in his anguish and the answer deepens his distress: "I am Jesus of Nazareth Whom thou persecutest." This answer, while it made Saul a convicted and a condemned sinner, was yet apparently couched in tones which gave rise to hope: "What wilt Thou have me to do?" he asked and was answered directly and definitely by the exalted Christ. Thus was this proud will subdued and mercy found. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" he writes and later: "I obtained mercy" (I Timothy I, v.16). Thereupon he committed to the Saviour that which was most precious, his immortal being (2 Timothy I, v.12); and thus the major steps in his conversion to God were complete.

(c) The Immediate Results:

(1) Fellowship with the Church: (2) Witness to the World: Two things followed. First of all: "Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus." (Acts 9, v.15). This conversion experience of Saul linked him immediately with the Church of Christ. He was brought at once into the fellowship of the Christian Community and his own experience was consummated within the communion of the other disciples of the Lord. Then secondly: "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues that He is the Son of God." (Acts 9, v.16). This was the other major result of his experience of Conversion - an open witness to the One Who had

saved him by his Grace. Paul never lost sight of the duty of Confession: it was to him an integral part of Conversion: so much so that in his Epistle to the Romans (10, v.9) he is led to say: "For if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto Salvation." There was no place for concealment of that which God had done, and an open challenging witness to the reality of the divine will and grace had to be made. For Paul, it was within the communion of the Church and in confession of the truth as it is in Christ, that the Conversion experience was made final, irrevocable and joyous.

(d) The Significance of the Experience -

Identification and Union with Christ: In a most pregnant and revealing passage Paul speaks of the significance of his Conversion, as not merely a surrender to Christ but as an identification with Him and the mystery of being indwelt by Him. Herein Paul is filling out the content of his own experience, making explicit to himself and to the Church what was implicit from the beginning. "I have been crucified with Christ" he writes, "Nevertheless I live yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2,v.20). No account of Paul's conversion could be complete without the inclusion of this revealing

statement: Paul in these words goes back in spirit to the day when the Lord Jesus bore the Sin of the world in His body on the tree. His Sin, he now knows, was there: it was because of his guilt that the darkness fell on Golgotha, and the Son of God cried out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And when the Saviour bowed His head upon the finished work, Saul the sinner, the guilty and rebellious one, died with Him. Then when the Crucified burst the bands of death and went forth in immortality, Saul of Tarsus rose with Him in newness of Life. There was here no confusion or exchange of personality: Saul was Saul still, and Christ was Christ forever: but Saul was indwelt by the Saviour who in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, brought into Saul's human nature the eternal life of the Son of God.

(e) Summary: To summarise the essential features of Saul's Conversion, then, these stages must be noted.

(a) There was **first** of all recognition of the Truth. "Who art Thou Lord?" - "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest!"

(b) There was a decision in the will - "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?" Herein was implied a renunciation of his evil way and a readiness to submit to the authority of the Redeemer.

(c) There was an act of reliance upon Christ as Saviour. His life was not only oriented Godward, it was united in faith to the Saviour: "Arise" said Ananias "and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." Thereupon he

cast himself upon the mercy of the Redeemer, finding repose for his troubled spirit in the finished work of Jesus; so he entered into that peace of God which passes all understanding.

(d) There was open identification with the other believers, and straightforward witness to the reality of Christ's person and work.

(e) There was finally the reception of the Holy Spirit in His fulness. To this Ananias bore witness; "Brother Saul, the Lord even Jesus, who appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, hast sent me that thou mayest be filled with the Holy Ghost." Thus all the avenues and recesses of his nature were opened to the control of the Spirit of Life, Holiness and Power.

These are essentials of any true experience of Conversion. Above all else, Jesus Christ will be central and sovereign, and God will be known in Him as Eternal, Redemptive, Holy Love. Life will be purposeful in and through Him, and all things will come to work together for good as all life is ordered by Him and for His glory. This is the heritage of the saints: this the glory of the LIFE DIVINE.

(6) The Fruit of the Spirit: In our study of Kierkegaard, we noted how emphatic was his emphasis that the Conversion experience was continuous and indeed lifelong. It became apparent in our examination of his work and teaching that there was in this some confusion between the actual experience of Conversion and the developing life of the believer through the

sanctifying grace of the Spirit afterwards. Yet the main emphasis is correct and entirely in agreement with the New Testament doctrine; and it will be well to keep company with Paul a little longer and with him to see some of the main ways in which the new life of the believer evidences itself.

(a) Discipleship and Obedience to Christ:

For Kierkegaard, the greatest of all great facts was the reality of a consecrated discipleship - a following of the Christ in all things, but in particular in His humiliation. Suffering was the badge of this loyalty to the Son of God, and no life could rightly be ranked as Christian that failed to bear witness to this aspect of our Saviour's life. Kierkegaard undoubtedly went beyond the bounds of strictly Christian doctrine in this. There is a way in which the follower of Christ must seek for identification with Him, but surely that means 'in spirit', and not in a manner of slavish copying of the very mode of His conduct of life. In this St. Paul is a healthy corrective. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death." Under the guidance of the Spirit, this Greatheart had been so utterly transformed, that whereas formerly there had been none other in his vision than himself, his whole horizon now is filled with Christ, and all life's glory is to be found in His service and

in abandonment and surrender to His call and cause. In no greater way was the reality of Conversion made clear than in this: "Old things passed away and all things became new": for Christ was central and dominant in all his thought and direction of his life. The demand of Christ is that the life be yielded to His dominion, and that it be lived according to the fashion that He appoints. Here is the first fruit of the Spirit of Life in the heart of the believer - a determination to know nothing amongst men save Christ and to follow Him whithersoever He leads. To this give all the Apostles witness and any Conversion experience which does not naturally expand into this controlling passion, must of necessity be suspect and doubted.

(b) Assurance: Another of the mighty acts of the Spirit of God is the impartation of an assurance of the Truth, and of the reality and eternal validity of the Grace of God in individual experience. "I know" says Paul, "in Whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." The testimony of the man to whom Christ restored sight recorded in John 9 was definite and incisive: "One thing I know." Of this the Westminster Confession of Faith states cogently: "Such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love Him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in a state of Grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them

ashamed. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of Faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of Salvation, the inward evidences of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of Adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God." That is a full and worthy statement of this great aspect of evangelical experience: "Ye have received the Spirit of Adoption" says Paul, "whereby ye cry, Abba Father." And again, "the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God."

(c) Christlikeness: For Paul the greatest of all developments of his experience of the Grace of God was the work of the Spirit of God in his own life in producing and developing a truly Christian and Christlike character and conversation. The pre-eminent aim was 'to be found in Him' and to 'come unto the perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' That this was wholly impossible in the power of 'the flesh' Paul knew only too well, but the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which had made him free from the law of Sin and death, brought forth within his life true fruits of Christian character, so that in a most practical way, Christ was made manifest in him. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and against such there is no law." Here Paul recalled the Early Church and the Church of all the ages

to the blessed realities of life in Christ and in the Spirit. Not in any accidental and extraneous phenomena, not in any spasmodic emotions or intermittent ecstasies were the real tokens of the Spirit to be found; but in the quiet, steady, normal life of Faith, in power that worked on moral levels, in the soul's secret inward assurance of its sonship of God, in love and joy and peace and patience and a character like that of Jesus. As Schleiermacher says, and says well: "The fruits of the Spirit are nothing but the virtues of Christ." (Christian Faith, page 576).

(d) Summary: Much more could be said, but sufficient emphasis has already been made to bring out the salient features of the developing life of the believer from the moment of conversion and regeneration. Christian Conversion is Conversion to God in Christ: not merely an acceptance of Christian standard, not only an assent of heart and will to the accomplished work of Christ in life, death and triumphant resurrection, but also a growth into the very likeness of Christ Himself, so that the individual life becomes a challenging witness to the reality of the Christian Faith and Spirit in its very quality and power of Christian conversation and behaviour. The Christian Ecclesia filled with men and women of such a calibre could most convincingly mediate Christ to the world and

so fulfil its historic as well as its eternal mission as the Body of Christ. Within the community of the Church and in the strengthening fellowship of its Faith, the life of Conversion should be developed and consummated, and thus more and more gloriously will the Christ be seen as an all sufficient Saviour.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

"Paul, as a child of his age, addressed his contemporaries. It is, however, far more important that, as Prophet and apostle of the Kingdom of God, he veritably speaks to all men of every age." It was in these words that Karl Barth launched his now famous commentary on the Romans, and they tersely affirm what is one of the greatest of all Christian truths: man's problem from generation to generation does not change, nor does the answer to the problem. Paul's problem is ours. And the hope of our time is to make Paul's answer ours too.

Kierkegaard saw this with all the intensity of his perfervid nature. In the light of the Eternal Love of God that has been made so wondrously apparent in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Sin of man stood out in wild and glaring relief: here was the last and final symbol of tragedy and confusion - and for it there was none other remedy than that appointed by the One Whose commandment has been scorned and neglected. Sin - this gaping wound of human existence - must first be dealt with before there could be any hope of a new life in God. The Revelation that came from the Throne on high was at once a condemnation and an inspiration, for both Grace and Truth came in Jesus Christ. All man's hope lay in the person and work of the God-Man, the Son of God, the Saviour.

It is quite impossible to evaluate our debt to Kierkegaard. For long it certainly seemed as though his contribution to the theological thought of the world would pass un-noticed, but at length Kierkegaard's own prophecy that history would discover his power and bring to him his proper disciples has been largely fulfilled. It is impossible to escape the conviction that the notable revival in recent years of the theology of the Reformation is in no small way attributable to his life and teaching. That to-day, the works of Barth are so widely studied, and Calvin's 'Institutes' and Luther's 'Commentary on Galatians' are in so many hands, is quite manifestly connected with the fact of the ministry of Soren Kierkegaard. On this, an interesting commentary has appeared recently in the Expository Times, Vol.55, page 141: "A striking testimony to the significance of this revival in the theology of the Reformation comes from the Roman Catholic Church. The theologians of that Church have been accustomed to regard modern Protestant thought as superficial and practically negligible, but now they take this revival of Reformation doctrine with all seriousness; on the one hand with a high degree of appreciation, and on the other hand with a sense that here where they differ from it is a foeman worthy of their steel."

Amongst the greatest of the services which this movement under the general guidance of Barth has performed for our generation is the constant and energetic protest it has made against what it regards as a quite arrogant tendency to push

systems and definitions into that ultimate region where God alone can speak. All such definitions only serve to show, as Barth declares, that "man has taken the Divine into his possession; he has brought it under his management"; and in doing so he has been forgetting that "only God Himself can speak of God." (The Word of God and the Word of Man, pages 68;214). Through this, the direction in which theology was moving has been reversed, and thus the biggest thing that a theologian has done since Luther and Calvin has been accomplished.

It is beyond question that the essential and all-important emphases which we have noted in our study alike of the New Testament doctrine and the works of Kierkegaard are present in this modern statement of the Evangel. In the grand assertion that Faith - viewed essentially as FIDUCIA, trust in a person and not assent to facts - rests solely in the divine Saviour Who speaks to the soul the creative word of life, we are once again hearing the trumpet accents of St. Paul and all the other writers of the Early Church. It is when this word of creative power is spoken to the heart of man, that he is able to rise and walk in 'newness of life'. The divine word of Grace brings its own power of response. It is ever the testimony of the believing heart that all is of Grace, that Salvation when received has come as the sovereign act of God.

All this is of course the work of the Holy Spirit. Dr. H.F. Lovell Cocks in his recent book 'By Faith Alone', writing of this says: "The Spirit not only brings Christ near to

us and illumines the Word which He speaks; He also creates our Faith. Not only the Word but also our hearing of it must be given to us. Brunner writes: 'God is known as the sole ground of my salvation only where He gives me not this content of knowledge merely, but my knowing of it, not only what I believe but my Faith itself, not only the message but also my Amen to it.' (The Work of the Holy Spirit, 23). Faith is God's gift to us through the Spirit; but it is also our act, our decision. We have already faced this paradox, and in the end we shall have to leave these two statements standing side by side. Faith, we said, is more than an act of freedom; it is the only act in which we are truly free and truly the men God created. But the believer knows that it was no coolly calculated choice of his that brought him into saving fellowship with Christ, and that his response to the Word as well as the Word itself was God's gift and work. WAS God's Word - there is some significance in the past tense; for it is when the believer looks back upon his experience of Grace that he confesses that in his very believing, God and not himself has been the primary agent. As Brunner points out, the same man of Faith who looking back declares that all is of Grace, will yet as preacher or missionary summon men to decision for Christ. 'The Bible gives us no occasion to proclaim divine Grace in such a way as to obscure human responsibility, or to overstress God's prevenient action to the point of leading men to wait passively on events.' (Ibid 45).

And it is true that the Bible summons us to 'have Faith in God' and to 'believe the Gospel' as though everything turned upon our readiness to receive the gift. 'God HIMSELF speaks His own word to thee. God speaks it to THEE, and thou THYSELF must hear it.' (Ibid 46). To the man that does not yet believe, everything does indeed turn on his personal decision. It is not the Holy Spirit who confesses Christ and surrenders to Him, but the human believer; it is not God who answers Grace with Faith, but man; and yet this Faith is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God through His spirit." (By Faith Alone, page 149).

With this statement we can well bring our study to a close. In the experience of Christian Conversion all the powers of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are engaged, as are also all the powers of man, thought, emotion, will. The need is as universal as the offer of life in Christ is; the conditions are clear and the blessedness of true and abiding fellowship with the God of Sovereign Love requires no telling. In every true Conversion, Grace manifestly reigns and yet it is also Sola Fide; but all is of the Love of God, a Love that is everlasting and mighty to save.