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**A CRITICISM OF RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS
IN THE WRITINGS OF ALDOUS HUXLEY**

**A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Philosophy**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity**

**by
Richard Luecke**

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Approved by:

1923-
Thomas G. Fisher
Paul H. Bretcher

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I. INTRODUCTION

Aldous Huxley--"prince of the moderns" or enfant terrible in contemporary literature, as you prefer--has been with us for some time. In one way the present generation has grown up with him. Mr. Huxley has been giving the needle to society on an average of one book a year ever since the close of the first world war; no respecter of persons, not even of his clientele, he has been telling English-speaking people precisely what he thinks of them--and at a profit. Several modern writers have been more beloved than Huxley but few have been more hated and very few more read. The feeling making the rounds in literary circles is that everybody reads Aldous Huxley but that nobody knows what to do with him.

The controlling purpose of this study is to criticise the religious content and implications in Huxley's writings. The nature of the problem is more practical than theological or philosophical, bringing the Christian point of reference to bear on this man's writings and endeavoring to come up with a Christian attitude toward the man. This approach presumes an appreciation for ideas as such and for literary artistry. This paper will perhaps serve as an example of the sort of help which the church can give its people in interpre-

ting prominent literary figures who do after all popularize the ideas which move society.

Previous scholarship here is about as would be expected. Secular comment includes the numerous regular reviews and special articles in literary and philosophic journals, chapters in books like David Daiches' Novel in the Modern World and especially also C. E. M. Joad's Return to Philosophy which includes two huge polemics against Huxley as well as defences of reason and value in the modern world. There is much less religious criticism. The Roman Catholic church was quick to court Huxley in Gerald Vann's On Being Human: St. Thomas and Mr. Aldous Huxley, G. K. Chesterton's quasi-religious comment in secular journals and Theodore Maynard's in Catholic World. Finally, Huxley's Perennial Philosophy attracted the attention of the Lutherans and made the "Literary Scene" in the Cresset for January, 1946.

Our approach to this study is dictated by Huxley's own literary development which divides nicely into two distinct periods. One of the most fascinating stories about contemporary literati is the phenomenal metamorphosis of Aldous Huxley "from frustrated romantic to satisfied mystic," to use the phrase of Daiches. The later Huxley is a complete and avowed repudiation of the earlier Huxley; it is left for the reader to choose which of the Huxleys he prefers. This paper will treat them both, distinguishing the two phases of Huxley's writing, properly enough, as law and gospel--his

criticism of man and society and their salvation in mysticism and its ethic. In the earlier period it will trace Huxley's disillusioned search for values in the modern world in his novels and essays until approximately 1930, including his temporary humanistic solution in the Lawrencian equilibrium of the balanced excesses of reason and sense; criticism here will involve a defense of reason and value and a demonstration of the anti-Christian elements in this vitalistic humanism. In the later Huxley it will examine his development of mysticism with its private and social ethic, including pacifism, in the writings since 1930; and the criticism again will be a summary of the anti-Christian characteristics and content in Huxley's particular mysticism and ethic, private and social.

We shall be prepared in conclusion to define a wholesome Christian attitude toward Aldous Huxley.

II. LAW

Under the impact of the new scientific thought and consequent philosophical liberalism of the past century traditionally accepted standards which lent value to human life and served to unify society in the past have crumbled away. No new generally accepted standard of value, valid enough to withstand the usage of time and human experience, has arisen to replace them. To this fact has been attributed the social and ethical chaos of modern times descending to the "lost generation" feeling of recent decades. The frustration of valueless humanity has led to a strain of romantic protest in literature of which Aldous Huxley must be considered one of the most thorough exponents.

In an article in The American Review titled "The Huxley Heritage" G. K. Chesterton has called Aldous Huxley "a wit at his wits' end," prefacing his remarks with this Scripture: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

The Victorian generation of scientific sceptics assured us again and again that science satisfied them, that scientific ethics would be strictly ethical, that the world had not really lost anything in losing its creeds. They were assuring us because they were assuring themselves. . . . I think this unnatural nervous condition is due to the fact that our fathers or grandfathers refused to recognize a fact: that the supernatural is natural, in the sense of normal. They tried to keep their morality and lose their religion; they tried to pretend that it made no difference to abandon the whole idea of a

purpose in things; and the result has been that their descendents are living at a strain, even more painful than theirs. A man who has a morality and has not a religion is like a man permanently standing on one leg. It can be done; but after a century or so it begins to get on the nerves.¹

It would appear that Huxley's case of "nerves" is a twentieth century heritage of the Victorian problem, that he is one of many ranking writers in our time whose pessimism and criticism of life are directly traceable to this "drying up of traditional sources of value," as Daiches calls it, under the influence of new scientific and psychological thought and the breakdown of the stability of a social and economic system.² Life will not permit Huxley to believe anymore in the easy optimism of the past century, in inevitable progress as preached by Macaulay and others, in science as bringing with it intrinsically this progress, which was the faith of his biologist grandfather T. H. Huxley. Traditional formulae of ethics have been made impossible and no new satisfactory standards have arisen to replace them. In self-torturing bitterness the early Huxley, looking in vain for something to cling to in a world that had become desolate and valueless, became the prince of modern nihilists, criticising not only society as he found it but withering also the most popular criticisms of that society.

1. G. K. Chesterton, "The Huxley Heritage," one of "Two Essays" in The American Review, VIII (1937), pp. 484-87.

2. Cf. David Daches, The Novel in the Modern World (Chicago: University Press, 1939), pp. 188-210. Daches identifies the early Huxley as a "frustrated romantic."

The Search for Value in the Modern World

Huxley's England is hopelessly at war with herself. The pattern of conventional society, woven in a previous age when relations between men were organized in the light of rigidly held dogmas, is altogether in shreds as England emerges from the first world war with her standards wrecked, purpose shattered; and every search for a new pattern for purposeful living is frustrated. "The Bitch-goddess Success," William James' term but a frequent recurrence in Huxley, has arisen to replace obsolete standards for the masses of people and the few remaining aware persons find an outlet for their energies in endless sexual play and pointless sophisticated conversation.

Crome Yellow, published in 1921, was Huxley's first venture into fiction,³ containing a lot of metaphysical talk around a dinnertable in a country house which permits of equally endless and purposeless sexual intrigue. The young poet-hero, his serious study rendered pointless in this social whirl, renounces purpose and yields himself to sensuality and ennui.

Antic Hay, which appeared in 1923, continued Huxley's desperate search for values in a bleak modern world. Again there is the group of wastrels without resource of faith in

3. This discussion will confine itself to Huxley's early novels and essays. Three little volumes of verse preceded Crome Yellow of which only Leda was published in this country; and several volumes of brilliant and significant shorts appeared at about the same time. It is difficult to say precisely why Huxley chose the novel as his medium of expression. Edwin Muir in his essay in the little volume of criticisms entitled Aldous Huxley, Satirist and Humanist (New York: Double-

any noble purpose, suffering infinite boredom, and seeking without success for escape in endless sense indulgence. Below the gaiety, the glitter, the filth, the artifice, the wit, "a wounded spirit turns Here, on its bed of pain." Each character represents some "dried up source of value,"⁴ and each makes clear the depravity of the others. Religion, "God as a sense of warmth about the heart, God as exultation, God as tears in the eyes, God as a rush of power or thought--that was all right," reflects Theodore Gumbriel Junior in the opening pages, "but God as truth, God as $2 + 2 = 4$ --that wasn't so clearly all truth, God as $2 + 2 = 4$ that wasn't so clearly all right;"⁵ and when it does not square with personal suffering, with the agonizing death of one's own mother, it becomes ineffectual as a standard of reference in human life. Gumbriel

day, Doran & Co., n.d.), p. 31, feels that "there is no necessity why he should have chosen the novel rather than another form for what he has to say. It provides him with a loose frame for his intellectual fancies; in that frame his ideas are more piquant, perhaps, than they would be without it. But it is an improvisation, not a form; it has a utilitarian but not an aesthetic reason for existing." Huxley himself in an interview with Ross Parmenter of the New York Times referred to this form as "that strange mutt of literature--the novel of ideas;" accused of being an essayist rather than a novelist Huxley replied, "Perhaps I am," that as for the novel, "It's like catch-as-catch-can wrestling: you can do what you can get away with" (Cf. Ross Parmenter, "Huxley at Forty-Three," The Saturday Review of Literature, XVII (March 19, 1938), 10-11). Beside his freedom with the novel form, one consideration which makes Huxley appear incongruous as a novelist is perhaps the amazing resource of acquaintance with Greek and Latin Renaissance and Victorian philosophy and literature commanded by this son of the Arnolds and the Huxleys and Oxford scholar.

4. Cf. Daiches, op. cit., pp. 192-97.

5. Antic Hay (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1923), p. 8.

Junior discovers further that modern education is helpless to provide him with liveable standards and, failing to find himself even in his work, young Gumbril goes sorrowfully off to the manufacture of pneumatic trousers. Sincerity is no guarantee of value for Lypiatt believes staunchly in his own ability but remains a bad artist still and, disillusioned for the last time, commits suicide.⁶ Shearwater, capable but characterless physiologist, peddling away on a stationary bicycle in a sealed compartment in order to weigh the various sorts of excrement which he has cast off, satisfies us that in science as such is least of all, perhaps, to be found the solution to the problem of human values. Coleman, who will reappear as Spandrell in Point Counter Point, represents the attempt at amorality and he suffers the consequences. Finally romantic love is proved a fraud in Mrs. Viveash, one of a long line of Huxley's male-devouring female characters.⁷ Disenchantment over the spectral value of love becomes painfully intense in the masque which interrupts the story: the hero of the masque, a rather human monster and thoroughly addicted to the traditional ideal of romantic love, hopes with love to "recreate the world from within," but in the closing scene, having suffered the most

6. Daiches (op. cit., p. 194) indicates that a complementary character to Lypiatt is Rodney Clegg of Huxley's "Two or Three Graces," who is an insincere artist but, despite tongue-in-cheek methods, eminently successful.

7. "You can't say 'dreams', not in this twentieth century," says one of the characters in Antic Hay to a fatuous romanticist. The closing lines of the title poem in Leda:
 There they sat in blissful calm
 Quietly sweating palm to palm.

intense disillusionment over his ideal, climbing to a chair and stretching upwards to symbolize still the liberation of the human spirit through love, "falls heavily, head foremost, to the floor, and lies there quite still."⁸ This and other symbolism⁹ leave unmistakable Huxley's sentiment that it is useless to look for human values in contemporary society. Nor does the book ever end. In the concluding chapters Gumbriel and Mrs. Viveash with infinite ennui drive back and forth, back and forth, in futile search to find somebody, anybody, to call on. Only the scientist is in and he is demonically and purposelessly absorbed with his stationary bicycle. Heartbreak, failure, suicide, sadistic rape--untouched by them, though they touch these and more, Gumbriel and Mrs. Viveash ride back and forth, back and forth, yet always by way of Piccadilly Circus, always evoking Mrs. Viveash's endlessly exasperating iteration: "I should like to see the lights again. They give one temporarily the illusion of being cheerful." This endless, empty ride is altogether one of the most vivid and hideous in literature. They arrive nowhere; but at the last they are still looking.

8. Lines from the "First Philosopher's Song" in Leda:

But on the sound of simian mirth
Mind, issued from the monkey's womb,
Is still umbilical to earth.

In this thought, perhaps, lies a key to Huxley's scepticism and despair.

9. Daiches (op. cit., p. 196) cites Gumbriel, Jr.'s false beard which makes possible a successful amorous exploit as a suggestion that there is no absolute distinction between true and false, the unreal and the genuine, and the loose cafe scenes as symbols of valueless society.

Morality, philosophy, science, and sensualism are examined in turn. Those Barren Leaves, published in 1925, which views ideals and the characters who cherish them as having become dead in the lifeless whirl of a world gone desolate. Each traditional standard of value put to the test of experience proves to be only appearance; the world, in a state of spiritual decay, is clearly beyond the control of any individual or any form of life in it. Once more there is the country house, the sensualism and the talk, and again each character appears to represent some "dried-up source of value," and each cancels out the standard of the other. Mr. Carden, versed in all cultures, is an outright cynic who has the bearing of one who has lived too long in a world from which value has departed. Chelifer, journalist, tries not to understand in his process of adjustment to life but only to follow the alternate promptings of sense and reason at war within him;--this depreciation of intellect and exercise of the instinctual side of human nature is the approach to life suggested by the early Huxley.¹⁰

Richard Calamy, who loathes himself for his sensual excesses and, struggling to free himself, flees to the forest to regain self-mastery as well as to satisfy an insistent mystical sense of something beyond the world of time and craving, of real value perhaps existent there, is an early premonition of what is to become more and more an obsession with the author.¹¹

10. See the discussion of Huxley's humanism below, pp. 14ff.

11. Cf. Those Barren Leaves (London: Chatto and Windus, 1925), pp. 362-80.

Point Counter Point appeared in 1928 and summed up the law preaching of Huxley to this point. It is still a lunatic world of eternal talk and aimless characters who break from the world of sham and hypocrisy which inherited but outworn ideals have contributed towards modern confusion, and who cross and recross each other's paths in modern counterpoint --instead of harmonies only unresolved chords and broken rhythms. There is a fierce rejection of the modern search for value in the freedom of unrestrained romantic love by Walter Bidlake who learns that this clinical approach to love has even less of abiding value to offer than the traditional confined variety. Society on every level, that of the elite Lady Tantamount to that of the pariah Illidge, is represented as operating without an effective standard of reference and as failing to give significance to human life. Science is redone in the person of Lord Edward Tantamount and it emerges again as pointless, characterless activity--as Edward grafts the tailbuds of newts to the stumps of their amputated legs.¹² Philip is an earnest writer but learns, like Lypiatt, that sincerity is no criterion of value; while Burlap, sickly and hypocritical follower of St. Francis, creeps his slimy way to

12. A frequent Huxley symbol for the removedness of scientific activity from human needs. In Shearwater's laboratory in Those Barren Leaves could be observed "The cock into which Shearwater had engrafted an ovary not knowing whether to crow or cluck. The beetles, who had had their heads cut off and replaced by the heads of other beetles, darting uncertainly about, some obeying their heads, some their genital organs. A fifteen-year-old monkey, rejuvenated by the Steinach process, was discovered shaking the bars that separated him from the bald rumped, bearded young beauty in the next cage."

external success. John Bidlake, ageing Rabelaisian artist, is a further example of apparent success turning upon closer analysis into real failure. Webbley, an early portrait of a fascist leader, demonstrates that exhibitionist activity leads only to disillusionment and failure. Spandrell tries amorality here, committing murder to satisfy a craving for artistic accomplishment, and goes out to the strain of a carefully selected phonograph record, having tried unsuccessfully to demonstrate to himself that bad is good and having ruined Illidge, communist rebel against society, by leading him into a murder against his will. Ramplon delivers the long speech towards the end of the book which makes clear Huxley's early belief in the equilibrium of balanced excesses, accounting for human frustration, with Lawrence, in the tragic predominance of reason in the war between reason and sense.¹³ The writer Quarles is a case in point: he has the wit and the ambition to write a story of the aimless coming together of many lives, but his self-consciousness which comes of an over-intellectualism and too highly developed culture leaves him powerless to act.

Point Counter Point and its associate volumes of essays represent Huxley's last-ditch effort to find values on the human level. He pretends in this period to have found an

13. The fundamental war between reason and sense is given as the theme of Point Counter Point; this is Huxley's early solution. It is expounded systematically in the essays of this period which are discussed below under Huxley's humanism.

approach to life in being strictly human, which to the early Huxley means the avoidance of complete animalism on the one hand and of any spirituality on the other. In his next novel Huxley is already moving away from this early position but it is significant in this discussion for its utter repudiation of applied science as a source of human values. The Victorian belief in science as guaranteeing progress was perhaps the most painful fraudulent source of value for the grandson of T. H. Huxley to exhibit but in Brave New World he devotes himself to this subject exclusively. It is a delirious reductio ad absurdum of the present day trends of science and scientism. The world has been completely standardized in the year of Our Ford 692, made safe by science and psychology as promoted by the eugenicist and behaviorist. Pain has been abolished, disease is unknown, babies are manufactured in testtubes, the word "mother" has become obscene. There is no deviation from pleasure: each social class, alphas to epsilons, is conditioned before birth by the Bokanovsky process and after birth by hypnopaedia, scent organs and feelies administer to the senses, copulation is unrestricted as all women but free martins pack Malthusian kits, there is soma to provide escape from any possible disappointment in a delirious traumatic vacation without effort and without hangover;--everyone is happily damned in this thoroughly antiseptic hell, more desolate actually than Dante's, toward which contem-

porary society is travelling at top speed. Here "everyone belongs to everyone else" and the only crime is to be individual or alone. In bringing "happiness" to men, Mustapha Mond explains to the Savage, a primitive who is unable to survive in the brave new world, the science of mechanism has had to take God away from him. "God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness. You must make your choice." Virtue, chastity, self-denial, tears are the price of God; the Brave New World prefers to do things comfortably. And the Savage makes the choice that puts value on an altogether different plane: "But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin." Pressed by Mustapha Mond, the Savage admitted defiantly that he was claiming the right to be unhappy.¹⁴

Huxley's Early Humanism

The volumes of essays which preceded or directly followed Point Counter Point continue, of course, what John Strachey called "Huxley's now almost automatic gesture of holding his nose" but they were chiefly preoccupied with the problem of the relation of body and spirit, between intellect and the other forces in man, between the rational and non-rational elements in human nature. Huxley's early

14. Cf. Brave New World (New York: Harper Bros., 1932), pp. 281ff.

contention that intellect is not the highest power in man and that balance is achieved in human nature by suppressing the reason and by the uninhibited expression of the non-rational visceral instincts within,¹⁵ his progression from what Kunitz and Haycraft refer to as a "too anxiously intellectual" approach to life to an "anti-intellectual" one,¹⁶ is important to this study for its significance as Huxley's last-ditch stand to find value on the strictly human level and then for its instrumentality in paving the way for his later return to value-seeking on the supra-human level of mysticism.

Proper Studies, 1927, makes clear what Huxley will later vehemently deny, that man's proper level for study and activity is man--the strictly human level where diversity and non-rationality are the rule prescribed by personality.¹⁷ In Do What You Will, 1930, Huxley, the complete nihilist, declares the need to recognize the instinctive, intuitive, passionate side of human nature, to find again the pagan vitalism of the Greeks in the exercise of the Dionysian, Panis, Phallic forces as well as the Apollonian and Minervan, and so achieve the fully developed humanity in the modern industrial

15. The influence of his friend D. H. Lawrence is strong here. Cf. John Hawley Roberts, "Huxley and Lawrence," The Virginia Quarterly Review, XIII (1937), 546-57; also Henry Alexander, "Lawrence and Huxley," Queen's Quarterly, XLII (1935), 96-108. For Huxley on Lawrence see either his introduction to the Letters of D. H. Lawrence (New York: Viking Press, 1932), or "D. H. Lawrence" in The Olive Tree (New York: Harper Bros., 1937), pp. 203-242.

16. Twentieth Century Authors (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1942), p. 698.

17. Cf. Proper Studies (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1928), pp. 273-305.

state. St. Francis is condemned for his rejection of vital physical living, Pascal as an apostle of death who feared to seize life fiercely, Baudelaire for his puritanism turned inside out--substituting debauchery for asceticism, and Wordsworth should see the jungle and get over his Anglican pantheism¹⁸ just as Swift should have overcome his unnatural hatred for the human body. Men of the renaissance and others, on the other hand, are praised for their espousal of the increased exercise of the vital powers in human life. Especially in the essays "Spinoza's Worm" and "Pascal"¹⁹ is the source of modern man's frustration traced to this dividedness of human life which must, after all, be lived on the human level; and the passing of the ideal of the Greeks is mourned as it has been "despoiled" by the Christian tradition. In a number of short stories Huxley treats brilliantly the same theme: "Super-humanity is as bad as sub-humanity" he cries in "Chawdron" and in "After the Fireworks" becomes bitter again that the Homeric ideal of pagan vitalism was sold out to the Platonists, Stoics, Christians, and, curiously, to the modern mechanists.²⁰

18. Daiches (*op. cit.*, pp. 202-203) sees in Huxley's criticism of Wordsworth's nature philosophy an evidence of his "frustrated romanticism." Cf. Texts and Pretexts (New York: Harper Bros., 1933), pp. 61-63 for Huxley's comment on Wordsworth's poetry. In a later connection Huxley speaks of Wordsworth's experience of Reality in nature as something short of complete mysticism; cf. The Perennial Philosophy (New York: Harper Bros., 1945), pp. 68-69, 171-72.

19. Do What You Will (New York: Doubleday, Doran, & Co., 1930), pp. 67-96, 251-331.

20. In Brief Candles (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1930), pp. 13, 239-41.

A Christian Criticism of the Early Huxley

Much of what Huxley has said to this point is excellent law preaching. Men and society have sought for ultimates in fraudulent sources of value, in secular education, in science and the myth of progress, in a quasi-religious devotion to the arts, hoping to find in these the meaning, the purpose, the end of human life. In repudiating each of these Huxley has served not only as the most fascinating spokesman of a generation disillusioned by war and intellectual confusion but as a prophet of our time crying "vanity" as truculently as any preacher of religion. But his easy dismissal of traditional religion as a bringer of point and purpose into human life and his call for a return to de-Christianized pagan vitalism remain to be criticised by the Christian reader.

Briefly in this section we shall trace Huxley's pessimism to its source in an evolutionistic premise, we shall let the philosopher C. E. M. Joad guide us in a discursive defence of reason and value in the modern world, we shall expose "paganism" as a glitterword of doubtful referent and vitalism as an altogether unchristian concept, and we shall suggest that Huxley's presumption of Christianity's defunction as the source of meaning and value in human life was unconsidered and very premature.

Huxley's early frustration, apparent in the self-mocking poems in Leda²¹ and in the early novels and essays, is traceable

21. Cf. note 8, page 9 above.

to the philosophy of evolution and the science based upon it which he feels have done their work so cunningly that no one can wholly reject their teachings, though none can find in them either the guide or the consolation which he seeks. For Adam they have substituted the age, for character the hormone, and for the soul the complex. Eagerly Mr. Huxley pretends to intimations of the godhead but sadly he is convinced that he is the descendent of the ape. From every flight of the soul this worldview hauls him down, showing him morality as rooted in the stubborn stupidity of custom and love in "the imbecile earnestness of lust." He is compelled to take his own soul into the laboratory where the Shearwaters of modern society will reveal by experiment the only things we can really believe²² but these things will be fatally removed from our needs. No morality, no esthetic, no religion can be founded on them. They tell us nothing of what we should do or what is worth doing. They leave us possessed of souls in a soulless world.²³

The Christian reader is not seduced by such luxurious melancholy. He must know that, however attractive this frustration

22. Cf. note 12, p. 11 above.

23. If we return to psychology we are worse off than before because "Gall and Mesmer have given place to Freud. Filippo Lippi once had a bump of art. He is now an incestuous homosexual with a bent toward anal-eroticism. Fifty years hence what will be the current explanation of Filippo Lippi? Something profounder, something even more fundamental than faeces and infantile incestuousness, of that we may be certain. But what, precisely what, God alone knows. How charming is divine philosophy!" (From Those Barren Leaves) Cf. Joseph Wood Krutch, "Aldous Huxley" in Aldous Huxley, Satirist and Humanist (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., n.d.), pp. 54ff.

may be to the modern mind, it is radically untrue. Gifted with divine revelation concerning human origin and destiny he does not stand, nor ever can stand, with Huxley and the moderns between two worlds, one animal and one spirit, one dead and one powerless to be born. Besides its status as theory and its refraction into numberless theories and beside its inability to demonstrate a mechanism, which facts remain true of the evolutionistic theory of human origins, the grandson of T. H. Huxley has made abundantly clear once more the logical and psychological implications of the theory of evolution in human life and society. The impasse and despair and meaninglessness would all be true if the premise were true. But the Christian reader is liberated from all of that by the knowledge of his God-relatedness, of his creation, of his frustration and death in sin, of his redemption, of his new life for God and with God and by the power of God. There is a morality, there probably is an esthetic, and there is a religion for him and for all men if by God's grace and life they can be brought to know and believe it. There is meaning, there is purpose, there is value in sonship to God through Christ. There is knowledge of what we should do and what is worth doing. There is a place to bring our souls.

C. E. M. Joad in his Return to Philosophy has included two huge polemics against Aldous Huxley and made his defence of reason and value in the modern world.²⁴ Among the incon-

24. London: Faber and Faber, 1935. Cf. pp. 73ff.

sistencies and logical difficulties in Huxley's doctrines he enumerates the obvious one inherent in the denial of absolute truth: if there is no such thing as truth then it cannot be true to say so and the arguments against absolute truth are no truer than the contrary arguments in its favor; he makes clear that having disavowed value Huxley proposes a direct judgment of life as an absolute value and that all of Huxley's disgust for "lowbrowism" and "lower values" is incongruous if all values are subjective and that Huxley has revealed in a number of pieces his own hyper-sensitivity to the values in music;²⁵ and finally he asserts that Huxley's criticism of philosophy and practically every major philosopher on the ground that they oppose science and common sense is depleted by his own rationalizing methods to disprove philosophy, by his refusal to subject science to the same criticism, and by the fact that common sense notions of reality are a mass of dead metaphysics in our time.²⁶ Joad concludes contending for his thesis that reason can reach objective truth, that the emancipation of reason from instinct and desire is a good and, he feels, the hope of the race.

25. Curiously, Joad refers to Huxley as "the arch highbrow . . . more complete than any age has yet produced." Elsewhere he is accused of having "enriched the mind and cleansed the morals of our generation." Illustrative passages on music in Point Counter Point: early in the book Lord Tantamount abandons his laboratory and appears shamefacedly among his guests drawn by Bach's Suite in B Minor for flute and strings; Spandrell at the end of the book, prior to his suicide, finds in Beethoven's A-Minor Quartet Opus 132 an answer to the riddle of the universe. See also the title essay in Music at Night.

26. This paragraph is unfair to both Joad and Huxley. Actually Huxley would not feel discredited by Joad's arguments. In his

Huxley's "vitalism" is subject to the stock criticisms levelled against that doctrine. He is guilty of Mill's "pleasure-good" fallacy, assuming that "life" is intrinsically good and qualitatively uniform. Actually "life" is quantitatively the same in a polyp and in a human being but there is obviously a qualitative difference there; a smaller vitality may be qualitatively superior; of two lives equally vital one may be superior. Hermann Goering was excessively alive. "Life" produced the Inquisition, negro-lynching, slave trade. The good cannot be equated with the vital. The Christian, as a matter of fact, has learned to equate what Huxley calls the vital with death, the "flesh," "self," "concupiscence," "sin." Huxley himself makes much ado over his thesis that Christianity is fundamentally anti-vital, that together with the Platonists and the Stoics it has sold out the human race so far as valuable vital living above and below the belt is concerned. He calls for a return to the spirit of the Renaissance or better still to the Greek ideal. The art of life for the Greeks, according to Huxley and other moderns who glamorize the pagans, consisted in giving every god his due.

essay titled "One and Many" he acknowledges, "I am assuming it is an act of faith that more and intenser life is preferable to less and feebler life;" but makes the idolatry obvious, too, "God, for our human purposes, is simply Life." Some of his best lines remain those against the lowbrows and signal succinctly how the vulgar and base must appear to the detached and sensitive intelligence in the modern world. He submits to the exact sciences because they "do not prescribe to reality but only record it," and to common sense only as a corollary to his repudiation of reason ("What is the final, the theological reason for the grass being green and the sunflowers yellow?"). Recall, too, Huxley's repudiation of applied science. All of this may be attributed to his last ditch desperate effort to find value on the human level in vitalism: "The best answers are those which permit the answerer to live most fully."

These dues were various. Dionysius' due was very different but no less binding than the debt owed to Apollon. No god must be cheated and none overpaid.

The concept of pagan vitalism has acquired its glamor only in modern times and then chiefly for those who choose to misunderstand it. Actually Greek life was not instinctive: Aristotle's ethic, requiring the fullest development of manhood, was very rational; Plato's horses plowing in different directions required a charioteer,--reason was to guide the various impulses of life. But beside a possible misinterpretation of paganism Huxley has very definitely misinterpreted Christianity whose function is not to kill life but to create it. If it were the Greek gods we worship we should be compelled to inquire of Huxley whether Athena is not a goddess too. But we do not worship these. It is the God of Life we worship apart from whom there is no life but only frustration and death. In Him alone is there fulfillment of self and the going forth into the farthest reaches of human existence. The Christian reader will recognize in Huxley's doctrine of the equilibrium of balanced excesses a dangerous humanism. He will perhaps be led to wonder too why Christian people, presumably the only live things on God's earth, have not appeared more vital to the pagan eye.

Which brings us, perhaps, to the basic grievance the Christian reader will bear to Mr. Huxley's early writings. Throughout in his criticism of valueless society Huxley has

blandly assumed the inability of any traditional form of religion to supply meaning and value for life in modern times. He bemoans the passage of traditional standards but he is quite sure that they have passed; Christianity is only one more dried-up source of value. This is altogether uncritical and presumptuous of Mr. Huxley. And there are passages in Huxley which require a marginal question mark for precisely this reason. One such instance of Huxley's tacit presumption of Christianity's defunctio is cited by Mary Butts in an article entitled "The Heresy Game:" in Huxley's anthology Texts and Pretexts he quotes a piece by George Herbert and in his comment glibly presumes the non-existence of the Christian "Lord" and posits the assertion that Herbert, aware of this fact, refers only to "the gods within."²⁷ This passage and a thousand like it tag Huxley as one of many in modern literature who recognize the painful impasse of contemporary godless society but who are scandalized at the thought of a return to traditional Christianity which has provided a degree of ethical and ideological unity for society in the past and given point and purpose to countless human lives in all ages. Reading Huxley, the Christian must assert both academically and from conviction that he has begged one fundamental question here, that whereas he has preached the law to contemporary society with an astonishing degree of severity, he has no salvation to offer, least of all in his early sug-

27. Cf. Texts and Pretexts (New York: Harper Bros., 1933), pp. 89-90. Mary Butts' article in the Spectator, CLVIII (1937), 466-67.

gestion of finding freedom and expression on the "strictly human level," in the Lawrencian "cult of the primitive," in a divinity of the abdomen, in subordinating intellect to the inclinations of an altogether unregenerate solar plexus.

Noone knows this today better than Aldous Huxley himself. In the books which followed Brave New World and the volumes of essays in the early '30's Huxley turned on himself completely, twisting the knife where it hurt the most, insisting vehemently that there is no value on the "strictly human level of time and craving," that "the strictly human level is the level of evil."²⁸ It is one of the most surprising and significant occurrences in contemporary literature and one from which the modern bookreading public has not fully recovered. Aldous Huxley, the complete nihilist, turning his back suddenly upon anti-rational and anti-spiritual vitalism to point men and society to value and redemption on the suprahuman level of what he considers the most traditional religion--mysticism! But that is another story and the Christian reader will have quite another complex of ideas to consider. For many the early Huxley remains the most fascinating. It is this Huxley that remains one of the most incisive spokesmen for the twentieth century "lost generation." By the Christian who reads these novels and essays intelligently the young Huxley will be remembered as a law preacher extraordinaire, an intellectual with a prophetic scorn for the sordidness of earth, but as a literary youngster who was very far, too, from knowing the way

28. Cf. After Many a Summer Dies the Swan (New York: Harper Bros., 1939), pp. 134, 172-73.

to the cleanness of heaven.

"All that it requires to appreciate Aldous Huxley," one critic has written, referring to his early works, "is to have been born too soon--and that includes most of us." It does not include the Christian. Actually there can be very little kinship of spirit between the Christian reader and Mr. Huxley apart from the pious consideration that, given Mr. Huxley's intellectual honesty and keenness of insight, "there, but for the grace of God, might go I."

III. GOSPEL

PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS--the phrase was coined by Leibniz; but the thing--the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being--the thing is immemorial and universal.²⁹

With this long sentence Huxley introduces The Perennial Philosophy, an anthology of some five-hundred texts chosen not from philosophers but from saints and mystics, Taoist, Buddhist, Hindu, Moslem and Christian, in approximately that order of prominence, and accompanied with his own dogmata concerning life in general and the sins of Christendom in particular. In the volumes leading up to and culminating in this anthology at last is published the Huxley doctrine of salvation.

Eyeless in Gaza and Ends and Means, companion volumes published in 1936 and 1937, begin the development of Huxley's doctrine of mysticism, the first an apologetic "novel" and the second a book of essays criticising and pronouncing doom upon contemporary society, establishing an empirical foundation for mysticism and proposing a program for its ethical application to the modern industrial state. In After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, published in 1939, he repudiated once more every presumed value on the strictly human level of time and self and pointed men

²⁹The Perennial Philosophy (New York: Harper Bros., 1945), p. vii.

to the supra-human level of the Eternal Now and detachment from self in the fundamental unity which men must strive to realize with the Ground of Being. Grey Eminence, 1941, was a biographical treatment of the same problem illustrating the application of the mystical ethic to politics in the life of the seventeenth century Father Joseph. Time Must Have A Stop endeavored to make clear to Huxley readers in 1944 the urgency of the mystic ethic as the author envisions it with a special attention to the implied doctrine of pacifism. The Perennial Philosophy summed up Huxley's mystical thinking in 1945 and documented his system from the writings of the mystics; the discussions in this volume will provide the most important bases for criticism in the present study. Among the pamphlets which have appeared most recently perhaps Science, Liberty and Peace, an earnest plea for pacifism in the Western World and a penetrating study of modern nationalism, is most significant.

It is not the purpose here to criticise mysticism as such. It would be altogether unfair to presume to pronounce upon the truth or the error or both of mysticism on the basis of Huxley's writings. Any of a score of books on mystical theology written during the past fifty years are more adequate treatments of the same subject than Huxley's achievement in volumes published to date.³⁰ In the literature of the Lutheran Church itself there appears to be a scarcity of material regarding both Christian

30. We think of the several volumes by Evelyn Underhill or the Bishop of Oxford's great work on the Vision of God and many others.

and non-Christian mysticism. There are things to be said in appreciation of mysticism, more especially as developed within the Christian framework. There is, perhaps, a sanction in Biblical precedent both in the Old Testament and in the Johannine and Pauline writings. Mysticism has provided relief from stereotyped sacerdotal and ceremonial types of religion.³¹ Above all there could be cited in its favor the treasure which its representatives have contributed to devotional literature.³² On the other hand adverse tendencies have been cited against the mystic tradition. Here could be mentioned an extreme emphasis on the divine transcendence which is an inheritance of the Neo-platonic tradition and un-Christian in its depreciation of non-mystical revelation. Moreover the requirement that in its ascent by the via negativa the soul must be stripped of all characteristic features and functions and in this way be assimilated to the undifferentiated divine essence, involving as it does the apparent de-personalization of both man and God, is unsupported by the Christian revelation. There is the insidious habit in the mystical tradition of depicting union with God in essentially pantheistic terms, whatever the specific meanings put into the terms may be. Finally there could be remarked the rather conspicuous tendencies to schematize religious ex-

31. A controversial question here is the measure of influence exerted by 13th-15th century mystics on the Reformation. Luther's appreciation for the Theologia Germanica and for the writings of Tauler as well as his little deference to John Wessel are matters of history.

32. Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Meister Eckhardt, John

perience too completely and to exalt the value of absorption in contemplation to the extent of disparaging the worth of practical activity. But this is only meant to be a nod toward the discussions pro and con regarding the tradition of mysticism.³³

So far as the mystical experience itself is concerned this discussion is content to pass it off with William James' studied comment for the uninitiated at the conclusion of his analysis of mysticism in The Varieties of Religious Experience:

(1) Mystical states, when well developed, usually are, and have the right to be, absolutely authoritative over the individuals to whom they come.

(2) No authority emanates from them which should make it a duty for those who stand outside of them to accept their revelations uncritically.

(3) They break down the authority of the non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness, based upon the understanding and the senses alone. They show it to be only one kind of consciousness. They open out the possibility of other orders of truth, in which, so far as anything in us vitally responds to them, we may freely continue to have faith.³⁴

Leaving quickly the expansive and highly controversial subject of mysticism in general, of the validity of the mystic

Tauler, Ruysbroeck, Walter Hilton, Thomas à Kempis, the Spanish Teresa and St. John of the Cross, Jacob Boehme, Francis de Sales, the Cambridge Platonists, William Law, Jonathan Edwards, would be among those mentioned here.

33. Many of these points discussed by Henry C. Sheldon, Pantheistic Dilemmas (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1920), pp. 221-71.

34. Mine is the Modern Library Edition, p. 414. James' is the typically pragmatic opinion and altogether in accord with his thesis in defense of the right to believe whatever science cannot disprove. Quoting him here is not meant to signal an assumption of his spirit. All Christian attitudes are subordinated to and confined by Revelation, not science. But it is meant to signal a shrug of the shoulders in this instance regarding the problem of the mystic experience.

experience, of a consistent Lutheran Christian attitude toward these things, this study will confine itself to Mr. Huxley's particular mysticism, bringing the Christian point of reference to bear on his specific doctrines and pointing out specific non-Christian elements in them. Similarly in the criticism of Huxley's private and social ethic, presumably derived from the mystic cosmology, there will be no thoroughgoing effort to analyze his doctrines from point of view of philosophic ethics or political theory but only to expose for the Christian reader specifically un-Christian elements, to make clear radical departures from revealed truth.

Huxley's Empirical Mysticism

The most incisive negative criticism of The Perennial Philosophy appeared in The London Times Literary Supplement entitled "Eternity Man-Made."³⁵ The review charged that Huxley's is a conveniently rational and irrational mysticism by turns, that he has only ascended to another level of grinding his axe of disgust and caricature, and that his is an intellectual alliance of empiricism with mysticism rather than a straightforward preachment of the mystic salvation to his generation.

What is interesting is its relation to Mr. Huxley, the alliance, as it were, of empiricism with mysticism and his readiness to plunge into the tide of infinite self-naughting without shedding any of his familiar self. He has always been a mirror of his time and place and is so still. . . . There is nothing surprising in

35. Saturday, November 2, 1946.

Mr. Huxley's discovery of mystical technique: it was his next stage for it was implied in his empirical situation. It was natural to seek the highest common factor of "mysticism." The question is how much he has discovered and whether his selection and interpretation of mystical texts really takes us, or was even intended to take us, very far towards the "unitive knowledge of God."³⁶

The article is careful to indicate that in this book titled Perennial Philosophy Plato is mentioned casually once and Aristotle twice, and all the Western philosophers together appear to have made a smaller impression than a single page of the Bhagavad Gita, that the bibliography includes sufficient volumes to introduce the reader to the religions of China and India but only two books on Western theology, and that it would appear that the perennial philosophy has changed considerably since Leibniz. In view of Huxley's literary past his resort to mysticism looks suspiciously like an intellectual effort to escape the fact of evil. To accomplish his purpose Huxley "seems to prefer the Hinduism he has not seen to the Christianity he has seen and thinkers long since gone into the world of light . . . who have no practical relevance in the world he knows and endures."³⁷

How fair this evaluation of the later Huxley in the usually dependable Times Literary Supplement actually is would be difficult to determine. Far from acknowledging any escapism Huxley is at pains to lay an empirical foundation for his mysticism, as the reviewer acknowledges. In Ends and Means Huxley de-

36. TLS, VI (Saturday, Nov. 2, 1946), p. 530.

37. Ibid., p. 529.

votes an entire essay to a demonstration of this scientific basis for his doctrine: "Scientific investigation has shown that the world is a diversity underlain by an identity of physical substance; the mystical experience testifies to the existence of a spiritual unity underlying the diversity of separate consciousnesses."³⁸ Repeatedly he courts 20th century readers and satisfies his own 20th century mind in this fashion.

It is only by making physical experiments that we can discover the intimate nature of matter and its potentialities. And it is only by making psychological and moral experiments that we can discover the intimate nature of mind and its potentialities. . . . If we would realize them, we must fulfil certain conditions and obey certain rules, which experience has shown empirically to be valid. . . . When poets or metaphysicians talk about the subject matter of the Perennial Philosophy, it is generally at second hand. But in every age there have been some men and women who chose to fulfil the conditions upon which alone, as a matter of brute empirical fact, such immediate knowledge can be had; and of these a few have left accounts of the Reality they were thus enabled to apprehend and have tried to relate, in one comprehensive system of thought, the given facts of this experience with the given facts of their other experiences.³⁹

The feeling here is that Mr. Huxley "doth protest too much." Despite his appeal to dead Orientals the climate of Huxley's mysticism is still very Western and very modern in its kindness to

'brute empirical fact' and to shrewd young men who judge swiftly whether men 'know what they are talking about' (this is the reason given for appealing to "saints" or "prophets" or "sages" or "enlightened ones" rather than to professional philosophers or men of letters),

38. Ends and Means (New York: Harper Bros., 1937), p. 348.

39. The Perennial Philosophy, p. ix.

. . . in which 'potentialities' are more significant than realities and indeed are the measure of all science. Thus it is a Western mind seeking to be as efficient in spirituality as others are efficient in mechanics.⁴⁰

In advance, then, of a consideration of specific un-Christian elements in Huxley's doctrine of mysticism these facts should be considered. Despite the fact that a recent issue of Life magazine exhibited Huxley as a follower of Vedanta studying Hindu mysticism with a Swami of a Los Angeles Vedanta temple,⁴¹ Huxley himself has nowhere laid claim to having enjoyed the mystic experience. Mystics themselves do not seek a "highest common factor" nor do they make anthologies of mysticism. There can be little doubt that Huxley's writings in behalf of mysticism have not had as their aim disinterested exposition. They may well be the natural product of his old hates. Mr. Huxley hates dogma, legalism, organization, the combination of spiritual authority with temporal power, the real Incarnation of God in time, the religious significance of historical events. The common factor in all of these things is that in each of them God reaches out to men; and Huxley is still scandalized by grace. Christianity, then, was impossible for him and hence his sentimental hatred for Christian theology which he finds "deplorably crude" from the central doctrine of the atonement and working outward, although he makes it abundantly clear that he has been at no pains to understand it.

40. TLS, op. cit., p. 529.

41. March 24, 1947 issue, p. 60.

The mystic tradition provided him not only with a handy whip with which to lash Western materialism and cruelty but also an intellectually satisfying technique of deliverance from time and self which he loathed. The root and the fruit of his "philosophy" may not lie in "unitive knowledge" or in the "beatific vision" so much as in his emotional disgust, and this fact possibly helps to account for the outbursts of rhetoric and the injustices done to the Christian tradition.

In short, the Huxley doctrine is not a product of mystic contemplation but of agnostic empiricism. As such it cannot claim exemption from dialectical criticism as mysticism validated by experience claims it. And the reader may proceed with the suspicion that the deliverances of Huxley's particular mysticism will be as abortive as every product of an a priori dialectic operating apart from Revelation must be.

Unchristian Elements in Huxley's Mysticism

In his development of a mysticism for Western society Huxley will be found to deny or distort virtually every fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith either by overt statement or by implication. Before this discussion of unchristian elements in Huxley's mysticism is ended his doctrines of Revelation, of God, of the Incarnation and the Atonement, of Justification and Salvation, of the Sacraments and Prayer, will have been considered. Another discussion will treat Huxley's private and social ethic and a Christian criticism of his writings will be complete.

Huxley's principle of revelation is altogether suited to his empirical system. The reason why attempts in recent years to work out a system of empirical theology⁴² have met with only a partial success, according to Mr. Huxley, is that the empirical theologians have confined their attention to "nice, ordinary, unregenerate people" and not to those who have actually apprehended divine Reality in states of detachment, charity and humility. Those of us who are not saints or sages must resort to those who are equipped with the moral "astrolabe of God's mysteries," who because they have modified their merely human mode of being by making themselves loving, pure in heart and poor in spirit, are capable of a more than merely human kind and amount of knowledge. Inspired writings for the Perennial Philosophy are writings which are their own authority because they are the product of "immediate insight into ultimate Reality." In India two classes of such "Scripture" are recognized: the Shruti, Huxley's norma normans since they are based on this immediate insight, and the Smriti, his norma normata since they are based on the Shruti and their authority is derived. In looking for this sort of "Scripture" in the West Huxley explains that he has gone most often to literature apart from the Bible because the canonical books are commonplace and less vivid to ears grown accustomed to them, that he quotes most frequently the Smriti of the West, the writings of saintly men and women "who have qualified themselves to know

42. Huxley cites Sorley, Oman, and Tennant here.

at first hand what they are talking about," and that these writings are themselves "a form of inspired and self-validating Shruti--and this in a much higher degree than many of the writings now included in the Biblical canon."⁴³

This is clearly not the orthodox view of Christian Revelation. Apart from the important fact that it operates entirely separate from the content of Christian theology and is as far a cry as it could well be from Luther's criterion "Was Christum treibet," it denies entirely the specific Christian revelation. The sufficiency, perspicuity, and plenary inspiration which have always been held of the Biblical revelation in orthodox, evangelical Christianity are categorically and implicitly denied by Huxley's assumption. Above all the uniqueness of the Christian revelation is repudiated.⁴⁴ Finally Huxley's "revelation" is not strictly revelation at all; he appears to have no need for it or for a God who reveals Himself to men who are blinded, dead, lost, for his anthropology leaves men able by following specific, self-imposed exercises to arrive at an ability to penetrate to ultimate Reality and, by writing down descriptions of this ineffable experience, furnish their fellowmen with an unrevealed and contentless "Scripture."

Huxley denies both the Trinity and the personality of God, neither of which could be expected to evolve from his theo-

43. Cf. The Perennial Philosophy, ix-xi, 14, 18, 127, 199.

44. The church grants an extra-Biblical revelation but limits it to those instances which Scripture itself indicates: Rom. 1: 18, 28-32; John 1:4, 9; Acts 14: 17; 17: 27ff.

logical method. Huxley prefers to think of God as Ground which, as his doctrine develops, eviscerates the concept of God as effectively as the eighteenth century deists. One of the prices he pays for his empiricism is this dissolution of the many in order to attain to the One. He refuses to think of God as Person because he dislikes human persons. For him, the universal and the particular cannot co-exist: essence denies existence and existence rebels against essence. And so Huxley dodges the problems of God and man and revelation by establishing a Reality men cannot know until they have passed beyond consciousness. At no time does Huxley come nearer the conception of the Trinity than in his fortuitous distinction between God and Godhead: "God in time is grounded in the eternal now of the modeless Godhead. It is in the Godhead that things, lives and minds have their being; it is through God that they have their becoming--a becoming whose goal and purpose is to return to the eternity of the Ground."⁴⁵ This is offered hopefully to solve the problem of God in time.

Even philosophically speaking the term "Person" for God is not inferior to "Ground," since we are speaking of the ineffable in any case; both words are metaphors analogous to human experience. "Ground" connotes the pre-supposed, "Person"

45. Cf. The Perennial Philosophy, 29-30; Huxley quotes Eckhardt on this distinction between God and Godhead. Cf. p. 21 for a paragraph on the Hindu and Christian Trinities. The idea of God's "personality" is one of Huxley's blind spots and for much of what has gone wrong in history he blames to this concept: Cf. Grey Eminence, 33f., 237ff., 92; Eyeless in Gaza, 431; Ends and Means, 271f., 276-82, 328f., 349; The Perennial Philosophy, 22-23, 30, 36.

the consciously encountered. We assume there is a "Ground" but "Person" exists within human experience and is the nearest men and women can come to real objectivity.

We cannot avoid "Ground," have no duty to it, cannot rebel against it; we apprehend it immediately in the sense that it is imposed upon us as necessity. Our intellectual and moral being has no communion with it; it is the nothing and the absolute of experience. As a name of God it has precisely those qualities and defects which Western missionaries have discovered in the dim, inert, inane, inarticulate civilization that drifted into being at the foot of these mystic Himalayas. On the summits and in the flattest dung-built village alike it is the "Ground"; and no one who really knows the "Ground" can speak of it except in negations.⁴⁶

Here is only another example of the stultified process of seeking an intellectually satisfying God apart from revelation. Huxley's God is neither satisfying religiously or morally nor adequate philosophically. Without revelation and a religion of which God is the subject as well as the object, the "Thou" who reveals Himself to man with an impact of Revelation which compels belief not only in "God" but in "the Lord God," an a priori dialectic must always reach such an impersonal unity as this "Ground" of its own coherence.⁴⁷ The Christian knows not only that God exists but that God is Person to whom he is responsible but who is also Love in Christ.

Huxley does indeed speak of an incarnation of God in a

46. TLS, op. cit., p. 530.

47. The Christian depends for his knowledge of God on the Revelation of Jesus Christ and the witness to it in Holy Scripture. The notions of God derived from the ontological arguments or from general revelation, read by the unregenerate, resolve themselves into inadequate, pantheistic, impersonal conceptions.

human being.

For Christians there has been and, ex hypothesi, can be but one such divine incarnation; for Indians there can be and have been many. In Christendom as well as in the East, contemplatives who follow the path of devotion conceive of, and indeed directly perceive, the incarnation as a constantly renewed fact of experience. Christ is forever being begotten within the soul by the Father . . . 48

Sainthood consists in absorption in God and a sloughing off of private personality and because of his refusal to identify his being with the inborn and acquired elements of his private self the saint is able to exercise his entirely non-coercive and therefore entirely beneficent influence on individuals and on whole societies. Having purged himself of selfness the saint becomes a channel of grace and power used by divine Reality in contacting selfish society. In no sense different from this is the nature and influence of Christ, the incarnation of God. What is true of the saint is only a fortiori true of the Avatar, or incarnation of God.

To talk . . . of worshipping "the personality of Jesus" is an absurdity. For, obviously, had Jesus remained content merely to have a personality, like the rest of us, he would never have exercised the kind of influence which in fact he did exercise, and it would never have occurred to anyone to regard him as a divine incarnation and to identify him with the Logos. That he came to be thought of as the Christ was due to the fact that he had passed beyond selfness and had become the bodily and mental conduit through which a more than personal, supernatural life flowed down into the world.⁴⁹

All of this is rather pale Christology. Christ, as an incarnation, is reduced to an example of a successful mystic and to fruitful material for contemplation. But the contemplative

48. The Perennial Philosophy, p. 21.

49. Ibid., p. 48.

must get beyond Christ to God, this is Huxley's repeated assertion, beyond humanity to divinity, and it is a defect among the Christian mystics that many of them never progressed beyond Christ to God. Every human being can thus become an Avatar, or incarnation. "By precept and by example, the Avatar teaches that this transforming knowledge is possible, that all sentient beings are called to it and that, sooner or later, in one way or another, all must finally come to it."⁵⁰

What scandalizes Huxley most in the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God is the concept of objective reality in time. Time is essentially sinful and a product of the Fall.⁵¹ And Huxley's mysticism calls for a repudiation of historic fact which cannot have religious significance. In its doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ Christianity demonstrates once more to Huxley its refusal to liberate itself from an unfortunate servitude to historic fact.

Christianity has remained a religion in which the pure Perennial Philosophy has been overlaid, now more now less, by an idolatrous preoccupation with events and things in time--events and things regarded not merely as useful means, but as ends intrinsically sacred and indeed divine.⁵²

50. The Perennial Philosophy, p. 56. Cf. p. 191 for the three ways by which the incarnate Avatar assists human beings to achieve this union with timeless Spirit.

51. That "time is essentially evil" is the theme of After Many a Summer Dies the Swan. Cf. George Catlin, "Time and Aldous Huxley," Saturday Review of Literature, XXI (January 27, 1940), p. 5. It is "for no other purpose than to assist the beings, whose bodily form he takes, to pass out of time into eternity" that the Logos passes out of eternity into time (Perennial Philosophy, p. 51). A favorite judgment of Huxley is that the overvaluation of events in time caused Christians to persecute and fight wars and has led to contemporary indifference to Christianity.

52. Perennial Philosophy, p. 52.

And what Huxley means here by "historic fact" he makes clear by referring to the Word which became flesh in the Fourth Gospel and to Krishna, the latter of which warns that "the Krishna Lila is not a history but a process for ever unfolded in the heart of man--that matters of historical fact are without religious significance."⁵³

All of this is in plain contradiction to Christian thinking which is rooted in historic fact and objectivity. Huxley is guilty once more of the old fault of syncretism, substituting the idea for the fact, the form for the substance. But the substance and the historic fact remain nevertheless and it is precisely in historic situations that moral judgment and value have their being. Lifting religion up and away from moral significance is a dangerous fallacy in "deliverance" religions which conceive time and this "manifold" world in terms of evil and illusion and which have no real doctrine of salvation because they do not really believe in man. But beside the moral implications of the Huxley doctrine of incarnation it is plainly in direct contradiction to the Christian revelation of the historic Christ and the objective fact and event of His unique ^{Incarnation} in time which as a creation of God, described in the Scriptures, was declared by the Creator to be good and not evil.

The doctrine of the atonement, still the central truth of the Christian Gospel, stands or falls with the reality or non-reality of historic objectivity. And Huxley is not hesi-

53. Ibid., p. 51

tant to assert that the Christian view of expiation is a provincialism to the Perennial Philosophy and must be outgrown,--as must all preoccupations with events in time.

Can the many fantastic and mutually incompatible theories of expiation and atonement, which have been grafted onto the Christian doctrine of divine incarnation, be regarded as indispensable elements in a "sane theology"? I find it difficult to imagine how anyone who has looked into a history of these notions, as expounded, for example, by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, by Athanasius and Augustine, by Anselm and Luther, by Calvin and Grotius, can plausibly answer this question in the affirmative.⁵⁴

Jewish and Roman legalism is operative here, says Huxley: "The orthodox doctrine of the Atonement attributes to God characteristics that would be discreditable even to a human potentate, and its model of the universe is not the product of spiritual insight rationalized by philosophic reflection but rather the projection of a lawyer's phantasy."⁵⁵

But the deep gulf fixed between the Perennial Philosophy and Christianity is made most evident in Huxley's specific diatribe against the concept of justification by faith. Besides the danger that faith in the doctrine of justification by faith "may serve as an excuse for and even an invitation to sin," which argument makes clear that Huxley has not understood the dynamic conception of Christian faith, the author of the Perennial Philosophy adds the danger that this faith may have as its object propositions which are not "merely unverifiable, but repugnant to reason and the moral sense, and

54. Ibid., p. 54.

55. Ibid., p. 232.

entirely at variance with the findings of those who have fulfilled the conditions of spiritual insight into the Nature of Things." In this final assertion Huxley makes clear⁵⁴ ultimate break between the empirical and Biblical methods in theology, the differences of their conclusions, and he declares his stand. Huxley's "revelation" is only the record of "the immediate experience of those who are pure enough in heart and poor enough in spirit to be able to see God"--a judgment based only on the claim of selected sages and seers whose products are useful to Huxley and who, significantly enough, have acquired for themselves this ability to read into ultimate divine Reality. This "revelation" says nothing at all of the "hideous doctrines" of justification and faith, and here Huxley quotes from Luther's De Servo Arbitrio, and hence they are the product, not of the insight of saints, but of "the busy phantasy of jurists" operating in terms of the Roman and Jewish law.⁵⁶

Huxley could not say more to make his complete opposition to orthodox evangelical Christianity more evident. It is significant that he makes clear his own personal scandal at the thought of the cross as well as the fact of the inability of his "revelation" to come up with any doctrine remotely resembling it. It is the typical unregenerate reaction to the doctrine of the cross. Huxley's is only another form of natu-

56. Cf. ibid., pp. 235-36. Huxley goes after Luther in typical Inge-like fashion, even quoting the gloomy dean, p. 249. A similar passage occurs in Grey Eminence.

ral theology and consequently a system of "work-righteousness." Huxley believes in a deliverance which is achieved by man rather than in a redemption that is divine. The traffic is all one way: the wrong way for the Christian, probably also for the mystic. It is Man seeking, ascending, denying, purifying himself, making himself eternal in a "man-conceived eternity."⁵⁷ It is a system of human self-realization achieved by a human skill whose primal assumption is that God or "Ground" is as automatic as a chemical process which in turn is the only possible sort of product derivable from a man-made "revelation." Huxley's mysticism is one directed entirely from the human point of view: man most heroically aspires to God but God does nothing to assume Man because He (or It) does not want to, nor, being impersonal, can want anything. There is no need for grace or an Atonement in a world in which men by following Buddha's Eightfold Path⁵⁸ or by employing other means within their own power can achieve their final end and be "saved." As a reviewer in the Cresset has put it, in the name of the Perennial Philosophy, Huxley "rejects the soul and essence of Christianity."

Jesus would need to be regarded as an Avatar, on a level with the Buddhas, Krishna, and others, and the doctrine of His vicarious atonement for the sins of the world be given up. . . . "It is something different not merely in degree, but in kind" [Quoting Huxley himself on the difference between orthodox and his sort of faith in the saving power of Amida or Jesus]. . . . But enough

57. Cf. TLS, loc. cit.

58. Cf. The Perennial Philosophy, pp. 202-203.

of this, though much more might be said. No more is needed to make clear that the Perennial Philosophy is more than "seeming" blasphemy against Him who said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Any pretended enlightenment without Him is gross darkness.⁵⁹

It is not difficult to see how from this radical departure from Christian dogma Huxley would proceed to misconceive associated teachings regarding miracle, ritual, sacraments, prayer, and others. Concerning the sacraments Huxley teaches that they have been greatly abused, that the religious experience in receiving them is "not always or necessarily an experience of God or the Godhead," that it "may be and perhaps in most cases it acutally is, an experience of the field of force generated by the minds of past and present worshippers and projected onto the sacramental object where it sticks . . . waiting to be perceived by minds suitably attuned to it."⁶⁰ It is obvious that Huxley has reduced the sacrament to experiential value and has re-interpreted it entirely from point of view of his system. Where there is no concept of Grace there can be little use for means of Grace.

Petitionary prayer to God becomes useless and almost sinful for Aldous Huxley.

Petitionary and intercessory prayer may be used--and used, what is more, with what would ordinarily be regarded as success--without any but the most perfunctory and superficial reference to God in any of his aspects. To acquire the knack of getting his petitions answered, a man does

59. Cresset, IX (January 1946), p. 46. A species of belief is still necessary according to Huxley but it does not yield the "total deliverance" described by the mystics.

60. Cf. The Perennial Philosophy, pp. 60, 259ff., 270.

not have to know or love God, or even to know or love the image of God in his mind. All that he requires is a burning sense of the importance of his own ego and its desires, coupled with a firm conviction that there exists, out there in the universe, something not himself which can be wheedled or dragooned into satisfying those desires. If I repeat "My will be done," with the necessary degree of faith and persistency, the chances are that, sooner or later and somehow or other, I shall get what I want.⁶¹

Huxley's misconception of the nature of Christian prayer and his complete distortion of the object of prayer, of God the Father, and His commands and promises regarding prayer, together with his own wishful conception of an ultimate impersonality lead to his almost fanatical attack on the Christian notion of prayer in more than one of his books. Prayer as adoration, as contemplation, he will allow for they are man-Godward; but where dependence of man on God-who-cares is concerned Huxley's aversion to the Christian conception of God becomes apparent immediately.

And though prayer is the last doctrine to be considered here it furnishes a model case of how every doctrine dependent upon the central Christian truth of the Cross must fall before Huxley's systematic scorn wherever he is faithful to his empirical method. And though the Christian reader may have read Huxley hopefully to this point, here he must say a firm and incisive, if tearful and affectionate, farewell.

61. Ibid., pp. 219-20. See also Grey Eminence, pp. 199, 237-40; Ends and Means, pp. 271-72, 76-85, 328-29; Eyeless in Gaza, p. 431.

Unchristian Elements in Huxley's Ethic

The motivating factors in Huxley's private and social ethic proceed from principles which are not identical with the Christian ethical dynamic though in many cases the materials of his ethic are or could be very similar to Christian codes. The most significant Christian criticism then will be the impracticability of Huxley's design for private morality and social reform in which human beings are presumed to be radically changed for good apart from the fact of the Atonement which remains the dynamic in Christian ethics. Again there will be an astonishingly penetrating analysis of individual and social ethical ills but the cure will be found to be presumptive and impracticable and to carry with it a suspicion that it has been selected for its emptiness of things which scandalize Aldous Huxley. The sanctions in Huxley's ethic are religious yet its premises are far from redemptive in the Christian sense.

The ethic of the Perennial Philosophy Huxley defines as that which "places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being."⁶² In Ends and Means Huxley posited the assumption that "every cosmology has its correlated ethic" and on this principle proceeded to build his mystic ethic⁶³ and in succeeding volumes punched hard again and again in behalf of this ethical doctrine.⁶⁴

62. The Perennial Philosophy, p. vii.

63. Cf. Ends and Means, pp. 348ff.

64. Cf. Eyeless in Gaza, pp. 466-73; After Many a Summer,

In Time Must Have a Stop Huxley summarizes the evolution of his ethic from the mystical cosmology as follows:

That there is a Godhead or Ground, which is the unmanifested principle of all manifestation.

That the Ground is transcendent and immanent.

That it is possible for human beings to love, know, and, from virtually, to become actually identified with the ground.

That to achieve this unitive knowledge, to realize this supreme identity, is the final end and purpose of human existence.

--And Huxley proceeds at this point to list the specific moralities implied in this formal ethical principle.⁶⁵ The Perennial Philosophy makes clear repeatedly that "it is desirable and indeed necessary to know the spiritual Ground of things, not only within the soul, but also outside in the world and, beyond the world and soul, in its transcendent otherness--'in heaven';" that "man's final end, the purpose of his existence is to love, know, and be united with the immanent and transcendent Godhead;" that all men are free to choose or reject the mystic way.⁶⁶

Regarding the specific content of the morality involved in his ethic Huxley has much to say. There are first of all specific conditions to be fulfilled if men are to achieve their final end and an absolute standard of good and evil

pp. 109, 134-36; Grey Eminence, pp. 59ff. (biographical treatment of the ethic in a social setting); many other passages.

65. Time Must Have a Stop, p. 294.

66. The Perennial Philosophy, pp. 2, 38, 40-44. "The universal immanence of the transcendent spiritual Ground of all existence" as the basis of an ethic, pp. 7, 21ff.

devolves from this truth.

. . . for the Perennial Philosophy, good is the separate self's conformity to, and finally annihilation in, the divine Ground which gives it being; evil, the intensification of separateness, the refusal to know that the Ground exists. This doctrine is, of course, perfectly compatible with the formulation of ethical principles as a series of negative and positive divine commandments, or even in terms of social utility. The crimes which are everywhere condemned as wrong proceed from states of mind which are everywhere forbidden; and these wrong states of mind are, as a matter of empirical fact, absolutely incompatible with that unitive knowledge of the divine Ground which, according to the Perennial Philosophy, is the supreme good.⁶⁷

We recall that the ultimate reality of the world, according to Huxley, is not moral; but this fact is not incompatible with the existence of a moral order on the human level. Resting on a cosmology which recognizes a physical and a spiritual unity underlying all independent existents, "the fundamental moral commandment is: You shall realize your unity with all being." from this basic commandment all other moral commandments derive: "Good is that which makes for unity; Evil is that which makes for separateness." Every form of separateness is attachment and sin for "without non-attachment, no individual can achieve unity either with God or, through God, with other individuals." Here Huxley proceeds to apply these principles to life on the physical, emotional and intellectual planes and, using chastity as a case in point, demonstrates how a very rigorous morality follows from his ethical premise.⁶⁸ As a matter of fact

67. Ibid., p. 134.

68. This entire discussion in Ends and Means, pp. 348ff. Cf. also Eyeless in Gaza, pp. 466-73; The Perennial Philosophy, p. 36.

the specific stipulations of Huxley's ethic are for the most part identical with traditional Christian standards; Huxley himself makes the claim that if anything they are more stringent with their insistence that every means as well as every end must be right, something to which the traditional moralities, in Huxley's judgment, have occasionally shut an eye.⁶⁹ The very first requirement in the mystical ethic is "annihilation of self" or the "dying of ego," something which he says the unregenerate, using the term in a special Huxleyan sense, are reluctant to undertake.⁷⁰ Time is essentially evil, yet it is the given condition under which men must do battle.⁷¹ All distractions are sin and must be dismissed from life.⁷² And just as goodness, acquired by strenuous moral activity, is a prerequisite for the mystic experience so also the detachment which follows involves the highest morality: temptation to evil in every form is resisted, there is no sinful attachment to "causes," and all the virtues are practiced.⁷³

69. Cf. Grey Eminence, pp. 295ff.; Ends and Means, pp. 28ff.; Science, Liberty and Peace, pp. 73ff.

70. Cf. Grey Eminence, p. 178; Time Must Have a Stop, p. 295; The Perennial Philosophy, pp. 35, 38, 96ff.

71. See note 51 above.

72. Cf. Grey Eminence, pp. 70-79.

73. Cf. After Many a Summer, pp. 184f., 197-200; Grey Eminence, p. 235; Ends and Means, pp. 3-6, 345f. Acknowledgement of duty is required (cf. Eyeless in Gaza, p. 470) and the supreme laws of love and charity which, where moral insight is applied, form the basis of all morality (cf. Perennial Philosophy, pp. 31-33, 92ff., 176; Ends and Means, p. 327f.).

Huxley does not specify an itemized standard of morality that is ultimate and absolute but insists that implicit in the ethic which requires adjustment with the Ground of being is a law behind all laws which is binding upon men.

Before proceeding to Huxley's social ethic it may be noted that there are many things to recommend the Huxley doctrine here. The mystical ethic appears much superior to many other philosophic systems of ethics and requires much more of the individual. It is to be distinguished from the Christian ethic not on the basis of variant laws or different commandments but on the basis of its formal principle. Huxley's principle of detachment is opposed to the Christian law of Love and there is this fundamental difference: the Christian system requires an inner dynamic of God's presence within the human life bringing about the self-naughting which the mystics speak so much about but are at a loss to effect so long as they operate apart from the fact of the Atonement in Christ. Christ Himself is unique in the Christian private ethic both as an interpreter of the law of God and as an example of its perfect fulfillment, but most of all as the power within the Christian enabling him to fulfil the requirement of God for a life of Love. "Yet not I live," Paul explains, "but Christ lives in me."⁷⁴ The mystic ethic to here is completely one of "self-righteousness." The Christian ethic is never conceived as being in effect where

74. Gal. 2:20.

justification, which scandalizes Aldous Huxley, has not occurred. The "conversion," "self-naughting" of the mystic is insufficient according to Scripture to inaugurate the new life. The Reu-Buehring text on Christian ethics makes this clear:

Such metanoia . . . is not, however, regeneration in the wider sense of the term. This includes justification and mystical union. God the Father for the sake of Jesus Christ declares the sinner justified, and they and the Holy Spirit, the entire Trinity, enter in and take possession of man's heart as the governing principle and power of the new life. . . . Justification consists in this that God the Father for the sake of Christ appropriated by faith no longer looks upon man's old sinful self, that by forgiveness He removes it from his sight, so that the same man now stands before Him new, just and holy, his beloved child in whom He is well pleased. And the immediate consequence of this justification is the indwelling of the Spirit, yes, of the entire Trinity in the justified man (John 14:23; 17:23; Gal. 2:20; cf. IICor. 13:5; Col. 1:27 and Hosea 2:19). A union thus results which is not merely an ethical union as we have it already at the moment of faith, nor a personal union such as exists between God and man in the person of Christ; the difference between creature and Creator is in no sense abrogated; yet it is a union as real and intimate as can possibly be conceived without abrogating this difference. . . . man has now indeed become a new creature . . . (IICor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).⁷⁵

Such is the nature and the dynamic of the Christian ethic. The differences between this and Huxley's non-redemptive ethic both in respect to their dynamic, the content of their presuppositions, and the types of union with God involved -- as well as the God Himself, -- become very apparent.

The social ethic of Aldous Huxley is both cosmic and sinuous and the reader begins with the suspicion that it is for this that Huxley has been at pains to develop his entire mys-

75. Johann Michael Reu and Paul H. Buehring, Christian Ethics (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), pp. 141-42. Italics are my own.

tic system for Western society. His vitriolic criticisms of contemporary political and social systems proceed on the basis of the mystic assumption of the nature of things. Contemporary ethical chaos, valueless society is traceable to a separation from ultimate Reality, to the failure of modern man to "seek first the Kingdom of God," as Huxley interprets that Kingdom, and to his seeking first all the rest -- "creditable virtues, social reform, instructive chats on the radio and the latest scientific gadgets,"⁷⁶ to his idolatry in worshiping "either past time, in the form of rigid tradition, or future time, in the form of Progress towards Utopia."⁷⁷ "The last fifty years," preaches Huxley, "we have witnessed a great retreat from monotheism towards idolatry. The worship of one God has been abandoned in favor of the worship of such local deities as the nation, the class, and even the deified individual."⁷⁸ The "mecanomorphi, cosmology" of modern science has made life pointless for moderns so that they eagerly embrace any such doctrine which offers to restore point and purpose to their disjointed lives.

We have thought of ourselves as members of supremely meaningful and valuable communities--deified nations, divine classes, and what not--existing within a meaningless

76. Cf. Time Must Have a Stop, pp. 279-80.

77. Ibid., pp. 297-98.

78. Ends and Means, pp. 8-9; also pp. 293ff. for the unreality of such abstractions as "nation," "society," etc.; also pp. 140-41, 311-12 for passages on this sort of idolatry. "In a hundred ways we mock God"--After Many a Summer, pp. 282-83.

universe. And because we have thought like this, re-
armament is in full swing, economic nationalism becomes
ever more intense, the battle of rival propagandas grows
ever fiercer, and general war becomes increasingly more
probable.⁷⁹

Permitting countless other considerations to take the place in
our lives which should be given to regarding the nature of Re-
ality, having neglected to adjust ourselves to that ultimate
Ground of being, to the eternity of which we are capable, which
would have led, in the thinking of Huxley, to a pacifistic
course, the nations will experience a war of ideologies in
which these "local deities" will meet and conflict that will
bear all the marks of a religious war of fanaticism. --This
from Huxley in 1937!

Regarding social reform Huxley is very explicit that it
will never come about by legislated, large scale programs. In
After Many a Summer Mr. Propter speaks with Pete about being
"too optimistic about social reforms:"

Imagining that good can be fabricated by mass pro-
duction methods. But, unfortunately, good doesn't happen
to be that sort of commodity. Good is a matter of moral
craftsmanship. And, of course, if individuals don't know
what good consists in, or don't wish to work for it, then
it won't be manifested, however perfect the social ma-
chinery.⁸⁰

Father Joseph's struggle to serve two masters, religion and
politics, calls forth some lucid comment on social reform in

79. Ends and Means, p. 318. Cf. also Eyeless in Gaza,
pp. 64, 399.

80. After Many a Summer, p. 279.

Grey Eminence. Political action is described as necessary but at the same time "incapable of satisfying the needs which called it into existence:"

. . . even when it is well-intentioned (which it very often is not) political action is always foredoomed to partial, sometimes even a complete, self-stultification. The intrinsic nature of the human instruments with which, and the human materials upon which, political action must be carried out, is a positive guarantee against the possibility that such action shall yield the results that were expected from it. This generalization could be illustrated by an indefinite number of instances drawn from history.⁸¹

Huxley proceeds to cite two reforms in which people have placed fond hopes: universal education, which has proved in some countries to be an instrument of nationalistic regimentation, and public ownership of the means of production, which has not eliminated oppression but only replaced capitalistic power by political and bureaucratic power and tyranny by the party. Religion and politics are seemingly incompatible, as the story of Father Joseph illustrates; it is consequently the highest function of politics to keep the world safe for religion which alone can effect reform as it changes individuals.⁸² In Ends and Means the doctrine is identical: large scale manipulation of the social order can do something under favorable conditions "to preserve individuals from temptations" which had been prevalent

81. Grey Eminence, p. 305.

82. Ibid., pp. 18-19, 118, 168f., 179f., 190, 221, 234ff., 282-87, 316, 336f., 305-308. Father Joseph's rationalization about God's will in politics and about the "God of Battles" who brings good out of evil is vehemently repudiated by Huxley. Cf. also After Many a Summer, pp. 167, 198.

and irresistible heretofore, but such reform may actually only substitute one evil for another.⁸³ Wherever violence is employed reform is criminally rash.⁸⁴ And the "National Person" is certain to stultify every effort toward reform on an international scale or to block every program of united action.⁸⁵ Attacking the familiar literature for peace Huxley ridicules both economic and political panaceas: "One can propose political and economic remedies--trade agreements, international arbitration, collective security. Sensible prescriptions following sound diagnosis. But has the diagnosis gone far enough, and will the patient follow the treatment prescribed?" The patient will not because there is no patient. "States and Nations don't exist as such. There are only people. Sets of people living in certain areas, having certain allegiances. Nations won't change their national policies unless and until people change their private policies."⁸⁶

Reform, if it is to come at all, social integration and understanding if it is ever to be realized, must be the result of a change of heart in the individuals who compose society as each member of society performs the intensely private and

83. Ends and Means, p. 20

84. Ibid., pp. 31f.

85. Ibid., pp. 45f.

86. Eyeless in Gaza, p. 171. Polemics against such "meaningless abstractions" as "nation," "government" are frequent in Huxley's writings. It is this which has justified "nations" committing immoral acts which the individual would never do and which leads the world back again and again into "organized lovelessness," into an "obedience and docility" to injustice perpetrated not from generation to generation but from millenium to millenium.

strenuous moral obligation to conform himself to the Ground of all being.⁸⁷ There is no easy road to social reform, no giant mechanism to be imposed on society to restore to it meaning and unity; the group, the state, the nation, are further abstractions from reality than the individual, who himself must become one with the total One, and consequently less moral. Only where a few members of society, aware of the mystic cosmology, follow the prescribed path of detachment from self and ego and experience self-annihilation and oneness with the Ground of being, has progress been made toward the cure of human ills.⁸⁸ And hereupon Huxley's design for social reform is in progress. These individuals, whose lives are a witness to the peace they know, working either alone or in association with like-minded individuals, perform the tasks of intellectual clarification and dissemination of the truth concerning reform by non-violent methods.⁸⁹ In this way shall be applied the timeless ethic of mysticism to the modern industrial state.

This then is Huxley's social ethic. He insists on almost total de-centralization of power, the government performing the single function of keeping the world safe for contemplatives.⁹⁰

87. Cf. Ends and Means, pp. 1-2, 17ff., 26f., 64ff.; After Many a Summer, pp. 189, 278-81, 312; Grey Eminence, pp. 303, 311ff.; Time Must Have a Stop, p. 308.

88. Cf. Grey Eminence, p. 68. A favorite Huxley quotation: "Many are called but few are chosen."

89. The chapter on "Individual Work for Reform" in Ends and Means, pp. 144-84, is important here.

90. Ibid., pp. 33, 65f., 99, 275.

Huxley's elect do not enter politics for political activity is detrimental to the mystic way.⁹¹ But altogether the most astonishing thing in Huxley's social doctrine is his earnest, almost desperate espousal of pacifism also in the Western world. In every book since Eyeless in Gaza Huxley hit hard for this doctrine and this insistence culminates, perhaps, in the little catechism of pacifism published in 1946 and titled "Science Liberty and Peace." This little book begins with a tirade against the myth of human progress implicit in the religion of science, exploding the concept not only on the ground that progress is not demonstrable but more violently on the ground that belief in this myth has justified an end-justifies-the-means policy which has brought untold suffering to people in history. Where the popular belief in progress is held, acts become possible in its name which individual consciences would never permit otherwise; most distressing of all education and the churches have helped to perpetuate this fraud. Applied science has made great strides in the production of gadgets, in the "multiplication of possessable objects," in armaments, but all of this only makes actual human values realizable only in liberation from personality more inaccessible.⁹² Only by

91. Cf. Grey Eminence, pp. 10, 83-85, 298-303, 317-19; Perennial Philosophy, pp. 47, 62, 159; Time Must Have a Stop, pp. 292, 250-52, 304f.; --all indications of how political activity impedes the mystic way.

92. Science, Liberty and Peace, pp. 30ff., 40f., are a clear discussion of Huxley's view of progress. Further discussions of "Jesuitism" in the name of progress in Time Must Have a Stop, p. 131; Eyeless in Gaza, p. 246. Ends and Means, p. 7, making "charity" a criterion of progress indicates a retrogression in the present age. Cf. also After Many a Summer, pp. 125f.

detachment from all scientific "gadgets" and from elements in civilization which abstract men away from the ultimate unity they must strive to achieve with the Ground of all being, which in Huxley's opinion involves a complete pacifism also in the Western world, will mankind avoid the progressive centralization of power as promoted by applied science and a progressive loss of liberty in direct proportion to it and begin to realize itself in accordance with the true nature of the cosmos and remain faithful to the given nature of its own inner self.

It would require profound political as well as theological acumen to evaluate the Huxley social and political doctrine briefly stated above. Moreover, comparatively little has been done in a creative way regarding these problems within branches of the Christian church,--and where men have taken stands on church policy regarding social and political action opinions have widely diverged. Once more this study retreats to its avowed purpose only to indicate non-Christian elements and implications in Huxley's doctrine.

Huxley's doctrine of social reform bears within itself many commendable features. It has been repeatedly asserted that society will only improve as individual members of society are improved. But nowhere in Scripture is a specific form of government stipulated nor whether the governmental agency should be centralized or decentralized. Moreover, the Scriptures nowhere decry government and nation and state as meaningless abstractions but teach clearly that such

powers are ordained by God for the rewarding of civil righteousness and the punishment of evildoers.⁹³ Huxley's infrequent tirades against a God who is "the Lord God of Battles" and against the idea that God could be working His will through nations are unchristian and contrary to the Christian revelation. It is not always possible to follow Huxley's historical logic which often bears marks of his peculiar prejudice. Malcolm Cowley in one of his reviews sees a chronological fallacy in Huxley's contention that the iron dictatorship of the Jacobins destroyed the French republic by leading to foreign war and reaction at home and an unwarranted assumption in blaming Danton and Robespierre for most of the ills of the 20th Century.⁹⁴ It is possible that other factors concurred with Father Joseph's own peculiar struggle to prolong the Thirty Years War. The only helps in the interpretation of history afforded by the Christian revelation occur in passages of Christ's sayings regarding the discernment of the signs of the times and in his description of the Gospel of the Kingdom coming to all nations before the end shall come.⁹⁵ In general the Christian attitude toward government is one of allegiance and respect for its function of restraining the tides of evil in the world so that the progress of the Gospel shall be unimpeded.

93. Romans 11 is applicable here. Christ's statement regarding duties to God and Caesar, Matthew 22, is usually cited in this connection.

94. Cf. "Mr. Huxley's New Jerusalem," The New Republic, XCIII (1938), 315-16.

95. Matthew 16: 1-4; 24:14.

Huxley's conviction that political activity itself is inimical to religious life is hardly compatible with a Christian ethic which is primarily one of service. Luther, whose authority in this matter Huxley would not accept, called again and again on Christian rulers to do their job and do it well. The classic distinction between church and state does not exclude Christians from holding public office. The Reu-Buehring text on Christian ethics is one of many writings which make this clear:

The question to what extent a Christian should take a part in party politics will depend very largely upon his political understanding and ability, as well as upon the duties and limitations of the calling. Certainly the fact that politics are notoriously "rotten," that graft and corruption is so frequently found in political offices high and low, is all the more reason why honest, conscientious Christian citizens should take a more active part in politics, even at the cost of personal discomfort and self-sacrifice. Here is an opportunity, and therefore also an obligation, for Christians who are the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Matt. 5: 13, 14) to make the seasoning, preserving and illuminating influence of their Christian religion felt in no uncertain way.⁹⁶

Here is a dangerous element in Huxley's social ethic.

Regarding pacifism it is difficult to state what must be the Christian attitude in the modern state. Warfare is very different from the piping days of the sixteenth century when theologians could still speak of "just wars" and the manner of warfare is very different. There is a need for a restudy of this problem within the Christian church. Existent statements differ widely.⁹⁷ It is doubtful, however, whether this is

96. Reu-Buehring, op. cit., p. 354.

97. Cf. Sir Norman Angell, "The Pacifist's Way Out," Christen-

a completely theological problem. The problem of political expediency and the practicability of a pacifistic policy remain, however much Huxley may seek to minimize them. It is doubtful, however, whether there are many analyses of contemporary trends toward war and the influence of science in the hands of centralized nationalistic groups so acute and challenging as Huxley's.

But the most obvious charge to bring against Huxley's panacea for social ills is that of its dubious practicability. That one by one members of contemporary society will take the vows of non-attachment and divide their time henceforward between meditation and business enterprise conducted along scientific lines until all the world is converted into an integrated industrial democracy in which wars are fought by non-violent methods appears an eventuality altogether too remote to be taken seriously as a means for averting the next war. The controversy over the validity of the mystic experience itself is as old as the one between Plato and Aristotle and it is doubtful whether great numbers of Western people possess the moral stamina to try the experiment of pacifism. Even on the surface of it, it is perhaps difficult to accept Huxley's cosmology or, accepting it, to apply the analogy of essential unity and conditioned separateness to the field of human behavior, or to believe very confidently that an ethical

dom, I (January, 1936), pp. 253-63; Henry Wise Hobson, Did Christ Teach Pacifism? (Hartford Papers, 1932), pp. 67-97; Umphrey Lee, The Historic Church and Modern Pacifism (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, 1943).

standard deriving from this cosmology will bring with it the insistence required to compel the conformity of large masses of men. The reader may retain the conviction that Huxley's solution for the problems of men and society is altogether too removed or visionary or wishful.⁹⁸

In its place the Christian has an ethic to offer which for once even appears more practicable on the surface than than the ethic suggested by Huxley and which has already demonstrated itself in the lives of large numbers of people in the world's history. It has served to provide point and purpose in individual human lives and it has provided unity and integration on the social levels for groups and nations of people. It is an ethic which furnishes not only a standard for living singly and in groups but also a power to change lives and conform them to the standard of love required. Moreover, the Christian social ethic is more practicable in its realistic confronting of the fact that in human government there is evil and in society there are wrongs and cruelties which must be struggled against for the sake of the love of God and the love of fellowmen whom God loved but that the civic checks and authorities have been instituted by God to remain operative on the civic level until the end. Meanwhile the Christian will exert all of his energies toward proving himself a salt and a leaven and a light in the world.

98. Cf. Helen Wattsestrich, "Jesting Pilate Tells the Answer," Sewanee Review, XLVII (1939), 63-81.

It is true finally that there is a fresh need in Christian circles to develop an adequate moral theology which will assist in an informational way the Christian lives which move in society.

But in the last analysis the chief criticism of Huxley's doctrine from the Christian viewpoint is that it proceeds from a pagan source, from a belief in an impersonal God and an ultimately amoral reality, in a mankind whose destiny it is to lose itself and its personality in this ultimate Ground of all reality and in whose power it is to fulfil the highest requirement of finding God and losing itself in God without benefit of any supernatural grace. It is an ethic based on a God who does not care, who does not command, who does not love, who does not punish, and on an anthropology essentially different from the one revealed in Scripture of virtual death until restoration occurs by the power and grace of God. Again it is entirely a man-Godward arrangement, it is a deliverance achieved by man rather than a redemption achieved by God. Above all Huxley's ethic lacks the motivation which lies at the very heart of the Christian ethic, the fact of the Atonement, for the sake of which God comes to live in men and work His will in them. So long as Huxley repudiates as he does the justification which is of God the sanctification he speaks of will sound rather hollow to the Christian ear. Huxley's ethic, like Huxley's mysticism, remains an empirical construct. It lacks the Christian heart.

A final moralizing reflection: men like Huxley are casting about desperately in our time to find some valid source of values for human life and society, some standard which will provide a basis for unity and understanding in the modern world disintegrated by conflicting ideologies and mutually exclusive "local deities" only because in their opinion it is evident that the Christian system has failed. Modern man has run far ahead materially, tapping the secret places of the universe for giant new sources of power, but has left the moral forces which are desperately needed to restrain and control this physical might largely untapped because everyone stands these days on his own little island of right-or-wrong and good-or-bad and everyone suggests a different location where the needed deposit of morality may lie. It is becoming tedious to read and write these things, but in a sense it is traceable to the failure of the Christian people in society who have perhaps not been as active a salt as they might have been in preserving the world from self-destruction and the destruction which shall one day come at the hand of God.

It is improbable that men and society will return to traditional Christian standards of unity and integration unless Christian people are as effective in "witnessing" to the truth and vitality of their religion as Huxley claims his mystics will be. This requires an active putting to work of the Christian ethic in private and social life. It requires the development of a moral theology worthy of the truth which

God has left His people in the Record and the power which He has placed within their breasts.

Then the day will return when the Christian prophet can cry with the best of the literary and philosophic prophets of his time for a return to a standard of right-or-wrong and good-or-bad beyond the gain or loss of profit, satisfaction or repression of instinct, fulfillment or frustration of desire, for a return to a good-or-bad and a right-or-wrong simply because the great God said of somethings "It is very good" and of others "Thou shalt not!" Here is a source of values for the modern world both on the human and the supra-human levels. Here is a basis for understanding and trust both among individuals and on the more abstracted levels of states and nations. Here is a "Perennial Philosophy" that finds its place also in time which, because God made it, is also very good.

That "philosophy" will be "perennial" because it has not been devised by men but by God. Its metaphysic will be unimportant but significant in that it will not diverge from revealed truth. Its psychology will speak exclusively of sin and grace. And its ethic will be both empowered by God and directed toward Him, finding its expression in love and service both on the private and social levels of the men and women whom God redeemed.

IV. CONCLUSION

There are many things in the writings of Aldous Huxley which fall agreeably upon the Christian ear. There are crisp, apothegmatic sentences and paragraphs regarding the materialistic, selfish unreligion of contemporary society which would look very much in place in the modern Christian preacher's commonplace book. The Cresset review of The Perennial Philosophy quotes a column of such inimitable observations by Huxley "that Christians will applaud and may well take to heart."⁹⁹

But the Christian debt to Aldous Huxley is deeper than that. His almost prophetic insights into the frustrations of 20th Century "valueless" society, into its separateness from God and its attachment to "gadgets", into its headlong rush toward standardization and loss of liberty, and into the doom which it daily accumulates over its own head for its animalism and scientism and denial of spiritual obligations, are to be duplicated only in rare and occasional spots of contemporary Christian literature. Huxley remains a model of lawpreaching for modern preachers and is regarded by many to be the outstanding moral prophet in the literary world. Certain it is that in the thousands who have read his books

99. Cresset, IX (January, 1946), pp. 45-46.

Huxley has aroused an awareness of need for an abiding source of value and meaning on a supernatural plane. To people of the present age living on the "strictly human level of time and craving" comes this highly intellectual, somewhat Alexandrian, polished and uprooted Aldous Huxley, waging a one man war on cruelty, stupidity, and insignificance, dismissing the contemporary idolatries of science and social reform, denying that "progress" for mankind is implicit in either of these, and insisting that men make their peace with spiritual reality.

But Huxley's gospel is far from Christian. However stridently Huxley may have taken his age to task for its valuelessness and idolatry he has no real salvation to offer it apart from a highly eclectic, fabricated mysticism chosen more for its convenience than for its redemptive powers. Huxley is still very much a son of his own generation in his choice of an empirical method of approach and invalidation in his theology. For revelation he substitutes a selection of writings by men who can lay claim to mystical insight and experience, who "know what they are talking about." And thenceforward he proceeds either by overt statement or by implication to deny every fundamental doctrine of the orthodox Christian faith. Huxley becomes most shrill and vehement in the exception he takes to the doctrine of the Atonement and, having taken the citadel, the ramparts of the Christian doctrine begin to crumble

away. The doctrine of a personal God revealed in the Christian Scriptures and in Christ is watered down into the impersonal, philosophic construction of a "Ground of all being." The doctrine of the Incarnation is dispossessed of its meaning in history and of its objectivity for all men. The Holy Spirit, intensely meaningful in Christian life, is left indifferent and automatic as an adding machine. The doctrines of the creation, of the redemption, of sanctification are found in turn to be emptied of meaning and content. The sacraments are rendered useless and petitionary prayer becomes sinful in its egoism and ignorance of the impersonal nature of God. Throughout Huxley exhibits himself as another "natural man" trying hard to satisfy a need which he has come to recognize; but scandalized by the doctrine of the Cross he has fabricated another system of work-righteousness. Man is able to find God by following a system of self-naughting, of humility, of charity. Man does not stand in need of grace. Indeed there is not a God who sees and cares for him to offer it, much less to work faith and a new life in him. But by his own efforts man can realize his destiny, fulfil the spark of divinity within himself by losing it in the Ground of all existence. Finally the ethic deriving from the unsupported premise of the mystical cosmology, while enveloping a number of commendable features, lacks the motivation and power to change men as Huxley himself admits they must be changed. Huxley's pacifism is supported by a fallacious interpreta-

tion of history and of God's part in it, and to be serviceable the arguments produced in favor of pacifism would have to be recast from the Christian premises. The Christian reader, bringing the Christian point of reference to bear on Huxley's writings, would come away with the conviction that Mr. Huxley has preached the law with an astonishing degree of severity but that he has left us without a salvation.

As far back as 1934, in the heyday of Huxley's earlier writing, P. H. Houston writing in the American Review prophesied three possible "salvations" which Huxley might adopt once he came around to his constructive side of writing. He spoke of orthodox Christianity, mysticism, or humanism as the three alternatives.¹⁰⁰ Huxley has already proposed the first two. The Christian admirer of Huxley is left to hope that possibly he is taking Mr. Houston's suggestions in reverse order. An affinity for Christianity is possibly suggested by a recent book by the Roman Catholic Gerald Vann entitled On Being Human: St. Thomas and Mr. Aldous Huxley; and Theodore Maynard, writing in the Catholic World submits that the Huxley doctrine, though professedly opposed to the Christian ideal, nevertheless affords a clue to the understanding of the Thomist position and bears an affinity toward Christianity and the Catholic doctor.¹⁰¹ Ross Parmenter of the New York Times, however, interviewing Huxley

100. "The Salvation of Aldous Huxley," The American Review, IV (1934), 209-32.

101. "Aldous Huxley, Moralist," Catholic World, CXLIV (1936), 12-22.

on the occasion of his forty-third birthday, found him still wagging his head over the fate of his friend T. S. Eliot and ready to assert quite confidently that he had "no intentions of leaping into the arms of Mother Rome."¹⁰²

All of which leaves the Christian reader who feels a kinship of spirit with Aldous Huxley both thankful for his writings and saddened by the spectacle of a highminded young writer very disappointed with earth but also very far from heaven. And this is all the more disheartening because Huxley would have been excellent company there.

The Lord Jesus had an experience very much like this one in the Gospels with the young man who called forth the genuinely solicitous but in the end heartbreakingly tragic comment that this man was "not far from the Kingdom of God."

102. "Huxley at Forty-Three," Saturday Review of Literature, XVII (1938), 10-11.

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