

THE ETHICS OF WILLIAM PALEY

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To
My Mother,
My First Teacher in
Christian Ethics

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PREFACE

During the period when the eighteenth century was merging into the nineteenth, William Paley was regarded as the outstanding apologist of the Christian religion in England. So conclusive was his work considered to be that one reviewer could write the following:

We regard Dr. Paley's writings on the "Evidences of Christianity" as of so signally decisive a character that we could be content to let them stand as the essence, and the close of the great argument, on the part of its believers; and should feel no despondency or chagrin, if we could be prophetically certain that such an efficient Christian reasoner would never henceforward arise.¹

The above was written in the year 1809. Since then Paley has been largely forgotten. The average student knows about him only this: that he was called "Pigeon" Paley and that he used some sort of analogy about a watch. To the writer it appeared that a rediscovery of Paley might offer to the modern reader some values that were greatly admired in the eighteenth century.

¹ Eclectic Review. Vol. V, part 1, p. 1.

Even Paley's arch-foe, Professor Adam Sedgwick, admitted that "Paley did more for revealed truth than any writer of his country."¹

Paley is best known as an apologist of the Christian religion; however, he was also highly honored in his day as a moralist. The historian, W.E.H. Lecky, commenting on Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, writes:

It has been, I think, the fortune of this work to be of late years very unduly depreciated, partly because in consequence of the singular charm and lucidity of its style, it has been so widely read, studied, and criticized that all its weak-points have been fully disclosed and partly because the particular type of its utilitarian theory of ethics which it teaches has been generally abandoned. It is, however, both in form and substance one of the masterpieces of the eighteenth century.²

W. R. Sorley has observed that "probably no English writer has ever excelled Paley in the power of marshalling argument or in clearness of reasoning."³ Ueberweg refers to the almost undisputed sway which was held by Paley's Moral Philosophy for nearly fifty years.⁴ This work was for many years the text

¹ A Discourse on the Studies of the University of Cambridge, p. 56.

² A History of England in the Eighteenth Century, Vol. V, p. 171.

³ A History of English Philosophy, p. 201.

⁴ History of Philosophy, Vol. II, p. 391.

book at Cambridge University. Twenty-one editions were printed, and it was translated into German by Garve in 1787. At the University of Cambridge the public examination in the senate house for the B.A. degree was based on one of the four Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles in the original Greek, Paley's Evidences of Christianity, one of the Greek and one of the Latin Classics.¹

Leslie Stephen offers it as his opinion that Paley is unsurpassed as a writer of text books.² When Cardinal Manning was over seventy, he wrote concerning his youthful study of Paley's Evidences, "I took in the whole argument and I thank God nothing has ever shaken it."³

Several instances of Paley's repute as a moralist in his own generation appear on the pages of history. For example, when Lord Erskine was pleading before Lord Ellenborough and a special jury in the Court of Kings Bench, December the twenty-third, 1803, he stated:

¹ The Works of William Paley, D.D. (Edmund Paley, editor), Vol. I, p. CLXXI.

² Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XLIII, p. 105.

³ Strachey, Lytton, Emminent Victorians, p. 6.

That he should advise every one wishing to become wiser and better to read a work lately published by Dr. Paley, in which the elegant writer, and excellent man, made the whole creation raise one general ¹ chorus to the God of Heaven and earth.

While asserting the claims of the Roman Catholics of Ireland to a full and complete toleration, Mr. Fox referred several times to Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy and stated that Paley's authority:

Would have great weight, not only in the House, but with all thinking men in the country, whose opinions no man who valued genius, no man who valued learning, no man who valued moderation could hear without deference and respect.²

The works of Paley were important enough to attract the attention of King George III. A letter written to Paley from a friend describes the King's concern over having lost his copy of Paley and his determination to send for another immediately. The letter states that "he (the King) thinks it a very useful, valuable publication."³

¹ Meadley, G. W. Memoirs of William Paley, D.D., p. 208.

² Ibid., pp. 250, 251.

³ Paley, Edmund. The Life of Dr. Paley, pp. CCLVIII, CCLIX.

The period in which Paley wrote is more noted for its moral philosophy than for its religion. Paley's importance in this field is reflected in the fact that he was the leading exponent of the ethical theory known as Theological Utilitarianism. This theory sets forth much that was typical in eighteenth century English ethics. Not only did this theory make a strong contribution to the moral and religious philosophy of the eighteenth century but the writer believes that it is still at work in a vast segment of American Christianity today. It is the purpose of this thesis first to discover the source of Paley's ethics. An attempt will then be made to isolate Paley's philosophy from the general stream of eighteenth century thought in order that his own unique contribution might be determined. Following this an exposition of Paley's ethical system will be given and the final chapter will be devoted to a critical evaluation of his ethics.

In the biographical section of the thesis a brief sketch of Paley's life along with those incidents in his life that are germane to his ethics will be offered.

It will be observed also that in spite of the fact that ethics and political philosophy were often combined in Paley's day, it does not lie within the scope of this thesis to treat his views on politics except as they affect his ethics.

In common with his generation, Paley shared an aversion to metaphysics. He views ethics primarily as an actual working force in life. Little attention, therefore, will be given to metaphysics in this thesis.

It is generally acknowledged that eighteenth century English thought was very largely free from continental influences. Sidgwick reminds us that: "for the century and a half that intervenes between Hobbes and Bentham the development of English ethics proceeds without receiving any material influence from foreign sources."¹ This result in English thought appears only in the field of ethics. Descartes had been much studied in England by students of physics and psychology. His metaphysical system was the most important antecedent of Locke's. However, Descartes hardly touched ethics proper. It should be remembered also that Clarke's controversy with Spinoza and Leibnitz was purely in the realm of metaphysics and will not be mentioned here.

American spelling is used throughout the work except when an author's own words are quoted.

¹ Sidgwick, Henry. Outlines of the History of Ethics for English Readers, p. XXIII.

Words of warmest appreciation are due and gratefully given to Professor W. S. Tindal of the Department of Ethics in New College and Professor John Macmurray of the Department of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh for their invaluable assistance to the writer; to President E. D. Head and to my colleagues of the Faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, who have cooperated in granting me a leave of absence from my teaching responsibilities that I might pursue this study.

CHAPTER I
BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM PALEY

William Paley was born at Peterborough in Yorkshire, England, in July of 1743. He was the descendent of a long line of sturdy North country yeomen. His father, William Paley, was believed to be one of the oldest incumbents on one and the same vicarage in the diocese and perhaps in England, having served for fifty-six years as vicar of Helpstone. He was chiefly known, however, as a school-master, teaching until he was eighty-three years of age, and was considered a very good classical scholar. The senior Paley was appointed Headmaster of Giggleswick School to which he moved his family in 1745.

As young Paley grew up, he was educated under his father's care. He manifested something of his ambition as well as his quickness of wit in his childhood when on being scolded by his mother, who finished with "God give thee grace," he replied, "Ay, mother, Grace o' God and Grace o' Canterbury will do for me."¹

¹ Paley, Edmund. Life of Dr. Paley, p. XXVI.

In November, 1758, Paley was admitted as a sizar of Christ's College at Cambridge. In 1759, at the age of sixteen years, he became a resident member of Christ's College. On the evening after taking leave of his son, the elder Paley remarked to a pupil, "My son is now gone to college, —he'll turn out a great man—very great indeed, —I'm certain of it, for he has by far the clearest head I ever met with in my life."¹

Because of his vast knowledge of mathematics, young Paley was excused from attending the lectures of the tutor in mathematics. At Christ's College he attended Mr. Backhouse's lectures in logic, metaphysics and moral philosophy, in which the doctrines of Locke, Clarke and Hutcheson were principally discussed.

While conversing with a friend at Cambridge on the early part of his academical life, Paley related the following:

I spent the first two years of my undergraduateship happily, but unprofitably. I was constantly in society, where we were not immoral, but idle and rather expensive

¹ Meadley, George W. Memoirs of William Paley,
p. 9

At the commencement of my third year, however, after having left the usual party at rather a late hour in the evening, I was awakened at five in the morning by one of my companions, who stood at my bedside and said, 'Paley, I have been thinking what a d_____d fool you are. I could do nothing probably were I to try, and can afford the life I lead: you could do everything, and cannot afford it. I have had no sleep during the entire night on account of these reflections, and am now come solemnly to inform you that if you persist in your indolence, I must renounce your society.' I was so struck, Dr. Paley continued, with the visit and the visitor, that I lay in bed a great part of the day and formed my plan. I ordered my bed-maker to prepare my fire every evening, in order that it might be lighted by myself. I arose at five; read during the whole of the day, except during such hours as Chapel and hall required, allotting to each portion of time its peculiar branch of study; and just before the closing of the gates (nine o'clock) I went to a neighbouring coffee-house, where I constantly regaled upon a mutton chop and a dose of milk punch. And thus on taking my bachelor's degree I became a senior wrangler.¹

Paley became senior wrangler in the year 1763. In preparing him for this honor his course of reading was sketched out for him by Mr. Thorp, fellow of Peterhouse, the senior wrangler in 1758; Mr. Wilson, a bachelor of the same College; and Dr.

¹ Paley, William. The Works of William Paley, D.D.
p. XXIII.

Waring, fellow of Magdalen College and Lucasian professor of mathematics. Besides metaphysics, morals, the four branches of natural philosophy and Newton's Principia, the course extended to the most abstruse parts of algebra and fluxions.

Paley's mind was so formed that in his reading he could rapidly select the kernel and throw away the husk. "In the estimation of Dr. Waring and Mr. Thorp, he was superior, not only to every man of his year, but even to several of his examiners."¹

On June 24th, 1766, Mr. Paley was elected a fellow on the foundation of Christ's College, and at the ensuing commencement completed his degree of Master of Arts.

In the University Mr. Paley was held in high esteem as a lecturer. His method was to open the period by questioning some of his pupils on every point of the preceding lecture. After such preliminaries he would proceed to discuss some subject in Locke or Clarke, or in moral philosophy, revealing by his manner his sincere delight in such employment.

¹
Ibid.

At the beginning of the students' first year Paley gave his lectures on Locke which included a brief sketch of logic and the rules to be observed in disputation using Locke's Essay on Human Understanding as a text book.

This would be followed by discussions of Clarke On the Being and Attributes of God. Paley's method was first to present Clarke's argument, then to correct his errors and finally to enforce his argument by more conclusive reasoning of his own. These lectures anticipated much of what afterwards was advanced in his Natural Theology on the wisdom, power and goodness of the Deity and were concluded with a summary of all the arguments that can be urged on the probability of a future state from the light of nature alone.

For the students' third year Paley offered his moral lectures which were later expanded into his Moral and Political Philosophy.

He lectured to all the undergraduates on the Greek New Testament. His method was to explain Scripture by Scripture. His model seems to have been Locke On the Reasonableness of Christianity and On the Epistles.

The chief points insisted upon by Mr. Paley to his pupils were that they should listen to God, and not to man; that they should free themselves, as much as possible, from all prejudices of birth, education and country; and that they should not call any one their master in religion, but Christ.¹

His Greek New Testament from which he lectured, was filled with critical and explanatory notes. These explanations apparently came from Bowyer's Conjectures on the New Testament. The notes are consistent with the design which appears on the first page of his lecture book which is as follows:

"Points to be explained—Heb. phraseology—ways of reasoning—accommodation of prophecies—proverbs—explanation of customs."

To his pupils who had taken their first degree, Paley offered a course of lectures in divinity which contained the substance of what he afterwards gave to the world in his Evidences on Christianity, and the germ of the still greater argument on the same subject, developed in his Horae Paulinae.

For supplementary reading in this course he suggested Collyer's Sacred Interpreter, especially the former part of the second volume; Harwood's Introduction, volume I; the Dissertations

¹ Universal Magazine, Nov., 1805, N.S. Vol. IV, p. 416.

prefixed to Macknight's Harmony; Godwin's Jewish Antiquities, or rather Jennings's Lectures upon the work; and Law's Reflections on the Life and Character of Christ.

For commentaries he suggested that students supply themselves with Hammond by Le Clerc; Lightfoot's Works upon the Respective Gospels, especially his Horae Hebraicae; Bowyer's Conjectures on the New Testament; Jebb's, or any other Harmony; Wetstein's edition of the Greek Testament, 12 mo., 1711; Parkhurst's Lexicon and Clarke's Paraphrase. Benson's History of the Christian Religion, Schmidius' Concordance for the New Testament and Trommius' for the Septuagint, the folio edition of Wetstein for quotation from profane authors, the English Concordance of Cruden, Conant's Sermons, Limbarch's De Religione Christiana, Enfield's Preachers' Directory, Rutherford's Institutes of Natural Law, Doddridge's Family Expositor and Search's Light of Nature Pursued.

Paley possessed very little physical vigor. On being told of the death of a school fellow, he said he did not much wonder, for he was the only boy in the school he ever did or ever could thrash.

Yet for all his lack of physical stamina, Paley was possessed of a strong personality which made him a delightful member of many circles:

He was the incarnation of strong common sense, full of genial good humour, and always disposed to take life pleasantly. As a Lawyer, the profession for which he thought himself suited, he would probably have rivalled the younger Law, who became Lord Ellenborough. He had no romance, poetic sensibility or enthusiasm but was thoroughly genial and manly. He was a very affectionate father and husband and fond, like Sydney Smith, of gaining knowledge from every one who would talk to him. The phrases about his conscience—he said on one occasion that he couldn't afford to keep a conscience¹—and others, often quoted to prove his cynicism, seem rather to show the humorists' tendency to claim motives lower than the true ones.²

He was utterly frank and free from deceit. When asked on one occasion why he quit his position at Dalston, he answered:

Why, Sir, I had two or three reasons for taking Stanwix in exchange; first, it saved me double housekeeping, as Stanwix was within a twenty minutes walk of my house in Carlisle;

¹ Universal Magazine, December, 1805, N.S. vol. iv, p. 511.

² Stephen, Leslie. Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XLIII, p. 105.

secondly, it was fifty pounds a year more in value; and thirdly, I began to find my stock of sermons coming over again too fast.¹

Remarks like the above may have been responsible for the charges that were brought against Paley's character. One writer contrasts Paley's character with such Puritan divines as Baxter, Howe, and Philip Henry, observing that he fails to find in Paley their deep devotion to Christ, their zeal for the promotion of Christianity, and their indifference to emoluments.² Paley's love for the theater and games was well known. His critics held that it was not becoming to a Christian pastor to be pushing into theaters and whist parties, insisting that it was an unpardonable inconsistency to be so convinced of the truth of Christianity and yet to share so little of the spirit of its Founder.

It is true that if a man looks for something of the characteristics of the Apostles in Paley, he will be disappointed and must be content to find a good respectable man of the world. Yet it should not be forgotten that he was enough of a crusader to sacrifice his chance of an ecclesiastical promotion by crusading

¹ The Works of William Paley, D.D., p. XVIII.

² Clarkson, Thomas. History of the Abolition, Vol. I, p. 465.

for religious liberty¹, and that he was a strong leader against slavery.² It is also true that one of Paley's greatest sermons was written as an appeal to clergymen to care for their reputation, to strengthen their character and deepen their own devotional lives. This sermon was preached before the University of Cambridge in completion of his exercises for his Doctor's Degree.

The charge that Paley was too much interested in material emoluments is diminished in the face of the fact that when he was provided with one of the best parsonage houses in the kingdom, he granted his parishioners a lease of the titles that were rightfully his for his life. In his Moral Philosophy he had represented titles as injurious to cultivation and improvement; and he now acted, as far as circumstances would permit, in conformity to his opinions.³ As the produce of the land was considerably augmented in price soon after this period,

¹ Paley, William. Sermons on Public Occasions,
p. 603.

² Paley, William. The Works of William Paley, D.D.
p. XIX.

³ Ibid. p. 12.

and the value of the landed property in general was tremendously advanced, Dr. Paley's tenants became very prosperous. Their prosperity was a source of abiding satisfaction to Dr. Paley, nor did he give evidence of disappointment over the opportunities of gain which he had given away.

In one of his jovial moods Paley once said that "a man who is not sometimes a fool, is always one."¹ This sentiment was probably taken from Locke who was of the opinion that in order to employ one part of life in serious and important occupations, it is necessary to spend another in mere amusements. Paley's very careless manner of dress gave rise to a proverbial remark, long traditional in the College, "You may be a sloven, but don't think you are a Paley."

Paley did not pursue either mathematical or metaphysical learning any farther than suited his office of tutor for he viewed these subjects as being of value only insofar as they opened and prepared the mind for more useful studies.

¹ Meadley, G. W. Memoirs of William Paley, D.D.,
p. 12.

His love for disputation caused him on several occasions to choose a less favored side that he might make it appear more favorable. He often succeeded in showing his love for an independent way of thinking.

In 1765, Paley received the Bachelor's prize, which was given annually at Cambridge for the best essay in Latin prose. His essay was on the subject, "Utrum civitati perniciosior sit Epicuri an Zenonis philosophia" in which he championed the cause of the Epicureans against the Stoics. Desiring in this essay to expose what he considered as hypocrisy in Stoicism he called them "those Pharisees in Philosophy." He accounted for the popularity of Zeno by contending that he was a politician who preached the all-sufficiency of virtue to complete human happiness which, according to Paley, had always been a note that ministered to the pride of men. He speaks against Zeno's condemnation of public worship, condemns his cynical language, and his promiscuous concubinage.

He contends that Epicurus gave sanction to no vicious indulgence, while the disciples of Zeno, though affecting an elevation of virtue inconsistent with human nature, too often, in their practice, descended to the most flagrant of crimes.

His independence of thought is seen as he argues against Zeno's lofty ideals and contends that:

There is not perhaps a more effectual way of injuring the cause of virtue than by straining its duties too high. The bulk of mankind will easily persuade themselves that virtue, this ideal virtue, was never designed for ordinary practice, but to be confined to a few more elevated natures and sublimer views.¹

Paley devoted much more of his essay to exposing the errors of Stoicism than he did to expounding the virtues of Epicurus. It cannot, therefore, as some have contended, be conclusively argued that Paley was greatly influenced by the ethics of Epicurus. At the end of his essay Paley added a note declaring:

The intent of this inquiry is not so much to defend the principles of either sect, as to prove the insufficiency of both. For neither the welfare of the public is promoted, nor the happiness of the individual secured by either. Their apprehensions of the nature of God, and of the ends of virtue, are both erroneous, and their errors are both attended with pernicious consequences. Zeno fell into the most fantastic superstitions, which whilst Epicurus corrected he well nigh endangered religion. The virtue of the one was visionary and ideal, that of the other sordid and selfish. It was reserved for one greater than Zeno to exalt

¹ Paley, Edmund. The Life of Dr. Paley, p. XLVIII.

the dignity of virtue with its utility, and by super-inducing a future state to support the paradox of the Stoic on Epicurean principles.¹

Concerning Paley's mind it is said, "He never forgot the use of his understanding, nor was solicitous to show what he knew more than what he thought. He never reasoned from memory or spoke from quotation."²

In his moral philosophy he brings his argument to the level of common sense. He grasps his subject and turns it in every way, in order to bring it into more ordinary use and application. He does not examine any doubts, encounter any errors or discuss any obscurities, save those which he had himself found actually to exist. Among those doubts, errors and obscurities he labored until he was able to bring his subject into focus for the most ordinary reader.

He was not a deep classical scholar yet his love for the classics is revealed in the fact that in a time when he could have had no other purpose for such books save his own amusement, Horace, Virgil and Cicero were even to the latest of his life his table books.

¹ Ibid., p. XLVII.

² Edinburgh Review, No. 70, P. CXXXI.

In 1771, Mr. Paley was appointed one of the Whitehall preachers. In the register of the Royal Chapel there his name appears first April 21, 1771. In his preaching Paley was all solemnity and earnestness. He carried all his powers of intellect and all his heart into the pulpit. He entered immediately into the very heart of his subject with such facility, and such powers of enlarging upon it that "he made his hearers acquainted with more in a short time than might have been given to them on ordinary occasions by a hundred sermons."¹

His hearers soon forgot his awkwardness as they became absorbed in the matter of his sermon. He was capable of carrying the attention of the hearer from himself to his message. He was a friend of short sermons and once said to a friend, "Let one impression be but made, and send it home with your congregation, and you do more for them than giving them twenty comments."²

¹ Paley, Edmund. The Life of Dr. Paley, p. LXXXIX.

² Ibid.

He rarely appealed to the emotions of his congregation for he felt that whatever merely moved the emotions was as perishable as the emotions. On the other hand, he felt that whatever made an impression on the understanding, or wrought conviction by the force of reason, would be more enduring. He observed "that it is one thing to edify (the common people) in Christian knowledge, and another to gratify their taste for vehement, impassioned oratory."¹

He observes that to deal too strongly with the emotions is to place Christianity on wrong foundations, citing the fact that Quakers and Moravians refer you for the proof of Christianity to the motion and witness of the Spirit in your own breast. He contends that a man who hears this, and can feel no such motion, has no alternative save to turn infidel.

Counseling preachers on avoiding party transactions and political disputes, he asserts that "The Christian preacher has no other province than that of religion and morality."²

¹ Paley, Edmund. The Life of Dr. Paley, p. LXXXIX.

² Meadley, G. W. Memoirs of William Paley, D.D.
p. 157.

In his care to avoid the moving of man's feelings it has been observed that his sermons are more like moral essays. However true this charge may be, it was not according to his desire, for in 1790, not long after the publication of his Moral Philosophy, he preached a sermon on the importance of preaching the necessity of faith. In this sermon he deplored the fact that:

We are setting up a kind of philosophical morality, detached from religion, and independent of its influence, which may be cultivated, it is said, as well without Christianity as with it, and which, if cultivated, renders religion and religious institutions superfluous. A mode of thought so contrary to truth, and so derogatory from the value of revelation, cannot escape the vigilance of the Christian ministry. We are entitled to ask upon what foundation this morality rests. If it refers to the divine will, (and without that, where will it find its sanctions, or how support its authority?) there cannot be a conduct of the understanding more irrational than to appeal to those intimations of the Deity's character, which the light and order of nature afford as to the rule and measure of our duty, yet to disregard and affect to overlook the declarations of His pleasure which Christianity communicates. It is impossible to distinguish between the authority of natural and revealed religion. We are bound to receive the precepts of revelation for the same reason that we comply with the dictates of nature. He who despises a command which proceeds from His Maker, no matter by what means or through what medium, instead of advancing, as he pretends to do, the dominion of reason, and the authority of natural religion disobeys the final injunction of both.¹

¹ Paley's Sermons, Vol. VI, Charge vii, pp. 50-51.

In his homiletical method, rather than preparing a sermon for a text, he frequently chose his text after he had completed his sermon for it was his habit to consider primarily, in his sermons, the needs of his congregation rather than the exegesis of a passage of Scripture. In the making of sermons Paley's models were Sherlock, Clarke and Hoadley. He follows these men not only in the rationality of their style and sentiment and their freedom from any improper display of learning or feeling, but also in the choice and treatment of many of their subjects.

In the autumn of 1775, Paley met Miss Jane Hewitt. In the following spring they were married in the Church of St. Mary's in Carlisle, where his friend, Mr. Law, performed the ceremony. Mrs. Paley was of a quiet, retiring disposition. Being inactive from ill health she readily joined in Mr. Paley's desire to become a country clergyman. After a long illness Mrs. Paley died in May, 1791. Their family, consisting of four sons and four daughters, were cared for during this period, with tenderness by Mr. Paley.

On December 2, 1776, Paley was inducted into the vicarage of Dalston in Cumberland. On June 17, 1780, he accepted the fourth prebendal stall in the cathedral church of Carlisle, thus becoming the coadjutor of a very warm personal friend, Mr. Law. When Mr. Law was promoted to an Irish Bishopric, Mr. Paley received an appointment as archdeacon of Carlisle in which he was installed on August 5, 1782.

When Dr. Beadon was promoted to the see of Gloucester, the mastership of Jesus College, Cambridge was offered by Dr. Yorke, the Bishop of Ely, to Mr. Paley. Fixed as he then was in a certain line of engagements and unwilling at the time to enter into a different society, he declined the offer. In his View of the Evidences of Christianity, Paley offers in his dedication to the Bishop of Ely his genuine gratitude for the kind and disinterested offer of the mastership of Jesus College.

On August 5, 1782, he was installed as Archdeacon of Carlisle. When in 1792, Mr. Paley was being considered for promotion to the vacant deanery of Carlisle, several things stood in the way of such promotion: namely, his attack on the economic

system which deprives the many for the sake of the few,¹ his liberal construction of the oath of allegiance to the King,² his assertion that government may be too secure,³ his judicious limitation of the duty of civil obedience,⁴ his argument that the obligation of subjects and sovereigns is reciprocal,⁵ his enlightened views of religious establishments and toleration, and his just and striking remark, that the divine right of Kings is like the divine right of Constables:

The divine right of Kings is, like the divine right of Constables,—the law of the land, or even actual and quiet possession of their office;—a right ratified, we humbly presume, by the divine approbation, so long as obedience to their authority appears to be necessary or conducive to the common welfare.⁶

These views were much too bold to be honored by the predominant party of his day.

¹ Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. III, Ch. 1, pp. 68, 69.

² Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. 18, p. 129.

³ Ibid., Bk. VI, Ch. 11, p. 315.

⁴ Ibid., Bk. III, Part 1, Ch. 3, p. 316.

⁵ Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. III., Ch. 3, p. 323.

⁶ Ibid., Bk. VI, Ch. 4, p. 337.

On January 24, 1795, Mr. Paley was installed as sub-dean in the Cathedral Church of Lincoln. From here he proceeded to Cambridge to take his degree of Doctor of Divinity. Inasmuch as he had received his Master of Arts degree twelve years earlier, he was permitted to forego the Bachelor of Divinity degree and the only exercise required of him by the laws of the University, were a *Concio ad Clerum* and an English sermon. In February, he preached his *Clerum* and before leaving Cambridge a letter from Dr. Barrington, Bishop of Durham, arrived, offering him the rectory of Bishop—Wearmouth, a position valued at one thousand, two hundred pounds a year, where he was inducted by Mr. Farrer, the rector of Sunderland, on March 13. Paley was highly pleased with his new position for among other advantages it afforded one of the best parsonages in the kingdom.

In June, Paley returned to Cambridge and completed his Doctors degree. Returning to Bishop—Wearmouth, he resided there until his death in 1805.

Paley's work as a moralist was not confined to the writing of books for the University. In periods of economic

and political crisis while alarmists were circulating declamatory nonsense, Paley often came forth with calm and reasonable expostulations which served as oil on troubled waters.

In the period of political ferment, which led to the interference of Great Britain in the war of the French Revolution, he published a short tract entitled, Reasons for Contentment, addressed to the laboring classes. He also published, as a separate Essay, the chapter on the British Constitution from his Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy.

His Reasons for Contentment, which was a copy of a sermon, the original of which is marked as having been preached at Dalston in 1790, and on which Paley wrote with his own hand "the best thing I ever wrote", was designed to remind the lower classes in Britain of the advantages which were theirs and to indicate the impossibility of any change conducive to their real happiness which might arise from political convulsions:

The change and the only change, he observes, to be desired is that gradual and progressive improvement in our circumstances, which is the natural result of successful industry, when each year is something better than the last. This may be looked forward to, and is practicable by

great numbers, and in a state of public order and quiet; it is absolutely impossible in any other.¹

In his prefatory advertisement to his Essay on the British Constitution, Paley lists the motives which prompted his republishing of this work. He calls attention to the unrest among the people as they were re-examining the constitution of their government brought about by the recent revolution in France and by the fact that some recent writers had attempted to excite the passions of the people. He reminds his readers that the body of the British people were satisfied with their condition, intent upon their various employments, and tasting the sweets of industry and order, in the increased and increasing gains of almost every occupation; a state of the country, which he deemed a strong security for its internal peace.

The view which he championed was unpopular among those who were stirred for the first time in their lives to give thought to politics, but among those who had long pondered the problem it was well received.

¹ The Works of William Paley, D.D., p. 571.

Paley not only urged the contentment of the masses but he reminded those in more elevated stations of their responsibilities. In a sermon dedicated to the Bishop of Durham¹ he vehemently attacked the idea so familiar to the higher ranks from their infancy, that they are placed above work. He called it a pernicious maxim, the direct tendency of which is to produce idleness in one portion of Mankind, and envy in the other: asserting, on the contrary, that "every man has his work", he powerfully emphasizes the peculiar obligations which belong to wealth and station.

Paley is considered as one of the most important writers by whom the public interest has been aroused in the favor of the abolishment of slavery.² In 1788, he wrote a letter to the committee for effecting the abolition of their slave trade commending and offering his services to them.

¹ Paley, William. Sermons and Tracts, p. 127-151.

² Clarkson, Thomas. History of the Abolition, Vol. 1, p. 465.

Before this, he had exposed the cruelty and injustice of slavery and the futility of any attempt to justify it on the basis of the silence of the Christian Scriptures.¹ He pointed out that the slave trade served to increase hostilities among the Africans and to promote mutual wars among the tribes in order that the victor might sell his captives to the British. He held that slavery was incompatible with the natural rights of man and contrary to the principles of religion and morality. His utilitarianism stands out in his argument that inasmuch as Africa abounds in many valuable and rich productions such as cotton, indigo and sugar cane, that Britain and other nations could carry on a much more profitable trade with her in these items than in the trade of slaves.

He answered those who defended slavery on the grounds that slavery existed in Africa before the English or any other European nation visited that part of the world to purchase slaves by contending that it would be just as reasonable to argue that the practice of scalping should be continued in America since it was the practice among the Indians long before the British made settlements in America.

¹ Moral and Political Philosophy, Book III, Part 11, Ch. 3.

In the year 1792, the residents of Carlisle met for the purpose of petitioning Parliament for the abolition of the slave trade. Mr. Paley had been made acquainted with the cruelties involved in this pernicious traffic by a relation who had made a fortune in the West Indies as a planter. He now found that neither his humanitarian feelings nor his common sense of morality would allow him to remain silent on the subject.

In April, 1789, the newspapers carried a short treatise by Mr. Paley entitled "Arguments against the unjust pretensions of slave dealers and holders, to be indemnified by pecuniary allowances, at the public expense, in case the slave trade should be abolished," which had been sent to the committee on abolishing slavery. This was designed to reach them for use in the first great discussion in the House of Commons on the abolition of the slave trade.

The resolutions drawn up at Carlisle became the basis of the petition afterwards presented to the House of Commons, which presented a clear and comprehensive view of the leading arguments which eventually led to the abolition of slavery.

It is much to Mr. Paley's honor that he suggested a plan for promoting the civilization of Africa, and for making some restitution to that devastated continent, for the malicious injustice and oppression which it had so long suffered. His proposition was that from the United States of America several little colonies of free negroes should be exported and allowed to settle in different parts of Africa that they might serve as patterns of a more civilized life to the natives in these localities.

Mr. Paley was an ardent crusader against the intemperance of his day. Believing that habits of intemperance were encouraged by the unnecessary accumulation of taverns, public houses and dram-shops, he attempted to diminish the magnitude of the evil by advocating a greater discrimination in his own community in granting licenses. On one occasion while serving as a magistrate he addressed the Grand Jury on this subject. Failing to receive the support of the other justices, his efforts were ineffectual.

One of the chief works of Paley was The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy which appeared in 1785, and subsequently through twenty-one editions. Much of the material for this

work was borrowed from numerous sources. He acknowledges this in his preface. Especially does he own his indebtedness to Abraham Tucker for The Light of Nature Pursued. Concerning Tucker he writes:

I have found in this writer more original thinking and observation upon the subject that he has in hand, than in any other, not to say, than in all others put together.¹

In the Moral and Political Philosophy, Paley adopted the plan which he had used in his lectures at Cambridge and enlarged it to its present form. Inasmuch as this work is to furnish the primary source of this thesis, further discussion of it will be postponed until Chapter III.

In 1790, he published the most original of his works, Horae Paulinae. This is a treatment of the truth of the Scriptural History of St. Paul evinced by a comparison of the Epistles which bear his name with the Acts of the Apostles and with one another. A sixth edition of this work appeared in 1809. A German translation was published in 1797.

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, pp. XVI, XVII.

The most popular of his works was A View of the Evidences of Christianity, which appeared in 1794. A fifteenth edition of this work appeared in 1811. This work is a compendium of a whole library of argument produced by the orthodox opponents of the deists during the eighteenth century. This work was translated into German under the following title, W. Paley's Uebersicht und Prufung der Beweise und Zeugnisse fur das Christenthum, nach der dritten Englischen Aufgabe. 2 Bande, gr. 8 vo. Leipzig, 1797.

Meadley speaks of Paley's Natural Theology which was published in 1802, as "altogether the very best manual of Theism hitherto produced."¹ This work is an admirable account of the a posteriori argument for the existence of God. A twentieth edition appeared in 1820. An Italian translation appeared in 1808, and a Spanish in 1825.

In addition to the above, fifteen other items were published from Paley's pen to which references shall be made further on. Notes from his lectures are now in the British Museum.

¹ Memoirs of William Paley, D.D., p. 209.

CHAPTER II
THE THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL
ENVIRONMENT OF WILLIAM PALEY

William Paley belongs to the school of moral philosophy now designated as Theological Utilitarianism. The term, theological, denotes the fact that above all he was an apologist of the Christian religion and cannot be understood apart from a knowledge of the religious tradition in which he stood and of the religious conditions to which he addressed himself.

The religious life of eighteenth century England represented a reaction from the convulsion under the Puritans during the seventeenth century. "The immediate effect of the reign of the Puritans was to bring all religion for a season into contempt."¹ This frenzy was soon exhausted, but the evil continued in extreme reactions that were equally devastating.

The reaction against Puritanism issued in the result described by Bishop Butler in the preface to his Analogy in which he remarked that it had come to be taken for granted, in the England

¹ The Quarterly Review, "The Works and Character of William Paley," Volume XXXVIII. July and October, 1828, p. 305.

of his day, "that Christianity is not so much a subject for inquiry, but that it is now at length, discovered to be fictitious."¹ In 1751, Butler declared the deplorable distinction of the age to be "an avowed scorn of religion in some and a growing disregard of it in the generality."² This state of dormancy in the Christian religion was not merely the by-product of sheer religious exhaustion after the theological excitements of the seventeenth century, but was in a large measure due to the combined influence of rationalism, naturalism and scepticism. The Deists, notably John Toland, who in 1696, published Christianity Not Mysterious; Anthony Collins, who in 1712 published his Discourse of Freethinking; and Matthew Tindal, who came forth in 1730, with Christianity as Old as Creation, were seeking to rationalize Christianity and rid it of what they called its priestly accretions. These men sought to liberate the mind of man by destroying the shackles of superstition which had long held it in bondage. They contended that true religion is no more than the republication of the simple truths in the religion of nature, the

¹ Butler, Joseph. Analogy of Religion, Advertisement to First Edition, p. 169.

² Ibid.

principles of which had been set forth in Lord Herbert of Cherbury's De Veritate. Even Christianity was no more than the republication of the religion of nature. A later Deist, Thomas Morgan, went so far as to declare that Christ himself was no more than a prophet.

The rise of such independent theology had been made possible by the Reformation, however, it should not be forgotten that this rationalistic emphasis was as much a break with Protestantism as with Catholicism and involved the rejection of Protestant and Catholic principles alike.¹ In this period there were those who contended that all positive religion is a trick to deceive the credulous vulgar. Man's reason had been silenced for a time by a tempest of uncontrolled zeal led by the Puritans, and, as a reaction against this extravagance, reason was declared to be the sole goddess of this nether world. Thus a religion of nature

¹ McGiffert, A. C. Protestant Thought Before Kant, p. 187.

not wholly unlike the Stoicism of the Roman Empire came to the front.

In addition to this emphasis on reason there was the strong emphasis on natural theology. Francis Bacon had divided theology into two branches—the natural and the revealed,¹ but now natural theology was declared to be quite adequate for man's religious life. Bacon's insistence that natural theology was sufficient to convince atheism but not to inform religion was laid aside, for the eighteenth century found that nature's lantern gave sufficient light even on the things of God. Consequently, God was brought within easy grasp of all, and man was elevated to a position hitherto unthinkable. Doctrines of the depravity of human nature and the utter helplessness of man were vehemently denounced and it was now discovered that man had been mistaken in thinking himself depraved. Moreover, man now found that he had native powers that liberated him from a passive dependence on God's grace, for now his own prudence could serve as his deity.

¹ Bacon, Francis. The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon, "The Advancement of Learning" edited by John M. Robertson, p. 89.

With the exaltation of human nature, the nature and office of the Redeemer were brought low. The frantic voices of the Puritans that had sung hosannas for Christ's second and immediate coming to reign with his saints upon earth and to bind the great dragon were heard no more. It was decided that even Arius might not have been wrong in his less elevated views of the Messiah's person, and that those who had declared Him to be only a great and good man, who testified to the truth of his mission and the sincerity of his doctrine by the sacrifice of his life, were to be given an audience.

All emphasis on the supernatural in religion was suppressed. The miracles were regarded as such stumbling blocks to the wise that some were traced to purely natural causes, some were regarded as allegorical, and some were placed in the category with the spurious miracles which imposters had passed off on succeeding generations. Instead of stressing man's need of salvation, the language of the ethical Seneca was made to supersede that of the evangelical Paul and the emphasis was:

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."¹

¹ Quoted in Quarterly Review, Volume XXXVIII, July and October, 1828, p. 307.

Not only was there the naturalism of the Deists, but the scepticism of David Hume and Edward Gibbon had also contributed to the religious decline of Paley's day. These men stand at the dawning of historic criticism. Hume had attempted to destroy the foundation on which the deistic argument for monotheism and for the existence of a simple, primitive, rational religion of nature had rested by arguing that history shows that polytheism preceded monotheism in the evolution of religion.¹ He ruled out the cause and effect argument for the existence of God by contending that human perception can penetrate only far enough to conclude that certain experiences are associated and that we are not warranted to conclude that there is a causal relation between them. If, therefore, the cause-effect relation is not a valid idea, the argument for a God based thereon is unfounded.² By his denial of the reality of substance Hume left no real permanent being behind personal experience. Thus, he contended, that there is no philosophical basis for immortality.³

¹ The Natural History of Religion, Section I, p. 254.

² The Treatise of Human Nature, Bk. I, part iii, Section vi, p. 43.

³ Ibid, Bk. I, part iv, Sect. iv, p. 81ff.

The most devastating phase of Hume's work, so far as current Christianity was concerned, was his criticism of miracles, which in the eighteenth century were regarded as Christianity's main line of defense. His twofold argument was that experience is the source of all knowledge. In our experience we are more strongly impressed with the uniformity of nature than we are with the infallibility of human testimony. Thus, we may conclude that it was more likely that those who reported the miracles of the New Testament were deceived than that the uniform course of nature had been interrupted.¹ Hume further argued that even if we granted that testimony may prove that unusual events have occurred, we could not prove that these unusual events established anything unless we could further prove that these miracles were wrought by divine power for that special purpose.² Now, Paley's case for Christianity was dependent throughout on the evidential value of miracles. Hume's argument, however, influenced subsequent theology far more than Paley's. It is insisted today that the revelation which Christianity possesses is adequate to carry

¹ Cairns, D. S. The Faith that Rebels, p. 23.

² Hume, David. Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. Sect. X.

the accounts of miracles and has no need of miracle stories viewed as appendages for the support of the Gospel.¹ The kind of faith demanded by the Christian religion is now interpreted as one that supports the miracles of the Gospel rather than being supported by them.

At the hands of rationalism, naturalism and scepticism, eighteenth century Christianity lost the extravagant fanaticism of a former century and gave way to a host of reasoning unbelievers.

Paley described the efforts against Christianity in his day as follows:

Infidelity is served up in every shape that is likely to allure, surprise, or beguile the imagination; in a fable, a tale, a novel, a poem; in interspersed and broken hints; remote and oblique surmises; in books of travels, of philosophy, of natural history; in a word, in any form rather than the right one, that of a professed and regular disquisition. And because the coarse buffoonery, and broad laugh, of the old and rude adversaries of the Christian faith, would offend the taste, perhaps, rather than the virtue, of this cultivated age, a graver irony, a more skilful and delicate

¹ Cairns, D. S. The Faith that Rebels, p. 67.

banter, is substituted in their place. An eloquent historian besides his more direct and therefore, fairer, attacks upon the credibility of the Evangelic story, has contrived to weave into his narration one continued sneer upon the cause of Christianity, and upon the writings and characters of its ancient patrons. The knowledge which this author possesses of the frame and conduct of the human mind, must have led him to observe, that such attacks do their execution without inquiry. Who can refute a sneer? Who can compute the number, much less one by one, scrutinize the justice of those disparaging insinuations, which crowd the pages of this elaborate history? What reader suspends his curiosity, or calls off his attention from the principal narrative, to examine references, to search into the foundation, or to weigh the reason, propriety, and force of every transient sarcasm, and sly allusion, by which the Christian testimony is depreciated and traduced: and by which, nevertheless, he may find his faith afterwards unsettled and perplexed?

But the enemies of Christianity have pursued her with poisoned arrows. Obscenity itself is made the vehicle of infidelity. The awful doctrines, if we be not permitted to call them the sacred truths of our religion, together with all the adjuncts and appendages of its worship and external profession, have been sometimes impudently profaned by an unnatural conjunction with impure and lascivious images. The fondness for ridicule is almost universal. And ridicule to many minds is never so irresistible, as when seasoned with obscenity, and employed upon religion. But in proportion as these noxious principles take hold of the imagination; they infatuate the judgment; for trains of ludicrous and unchaste associations adhering to every sentiment and mention of religion, render the mind indisposed to receive either conviction from its.

evidence, or impressions from its authority. And this effect being exerted upon the sensitive part of our frame, is altogether independent of argument, proof, or reason; is as formidable to a true religion, as to a false one; to a well grounded faith, as to a chimerical mythology, or fabulous tradition.¹

These were the trends in the religion of eighteenth century England until William Law in 1732, wrote his reply to Matthew Tindal in The Case for Reason. Law argued that "Reason not merely does not find truth in religion, it is the cause of all the disorders of our passions, the corruptions of our hearts." God is above the power of man to comprehend. "His own will is wisdom, and wisdom is His will." More than any other writer, William Law was responsible for the religious awakening that took place in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Law aroused Dr. Johnson to "thinking in earnest on religion." He also exerted profound influence on John Wesley, who was to play so large a part in bringing England back to God.

II

The return to religious faith in England, however, was not achieved entirely by revivalists and religious enthusiasts. There were also devout men who worked behind the scenes, and with their pens provided food for the thoughtful people who demanded a reasonable apologetic for their Christian faith. Such a man was William Paley, who came forth to present the case for Christianity in the

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, p. 302.

language of the common man by rationalizing the orthodox Christianity of his day. His strategy was far different from Law's. He took his place in the stream of rationalism and proceeded to formulate his argument against Deism in his most popular work, The Evidences of Christianity. Philosophically he might be characterized by Pflleiderer's term as a 'rational supernaturalist.' By this is meant that he combined a faith in a revealed religion with the empirical philosophy of Locke.

Paley's religious philosophy is very close to the common tradition of his day. The three characteristic words of the eighteenth century were nature, reason and law. A very common phrase in the literature of that day was "a law of reason and Nature." Butler could even say that "Christianity is the promulgation of the Law of Nature."¹ This is very close to a statement of Cicero's in which he declared that "Zeno thinks natural law to be divine." The conception that the law of nature is a synonym for reality, then, goes back to Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, and from the days of Zeno the term law has been one of the most important concepts in philosophy. Before the nineteenth century, the term, law, was closely

related to reason and nature. Prior to the nineteenth century if a student were asked to give a law of nature, he might have given "Thou shalt not kill"¹ or "Be sure your sins will find you out."² Between Zeno's time and the eighteenth century the discovery that anything was orderly meant that it was controlled by reason. The fact of order was the proof that nature was controlled by reason. It is a very curious thing indeed that by the twentieth century, philosophers felt that the presence of order in the universe argued for the absence of reason. Nature had become, by then, a self-running machine.

Paley belonged to the period when the hand of God was seen manifestly at work in every part of the world. His doctrine of God reflects the strong influence of Samuel Clarke and John Locke upon him. He used Clarke's The Being and Attributes of God and Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity as textbooks at Cambridge. These works along with Derham's Physico-Theology, Tucker's Light of Nature Pursued, Lardner's

¹ Exodus 20:13.

² Numbers 32:23.



The Credibility of the Gospel History formed the basis for his two books on Natural Theology and the Evidences of Christianity.

Paley undertakes to prove the existence of God by the following analogy: From a watch, he reasons that we infer a maker.¹ Suppose, said he, that in crossing a heath I should stumble upon a stone and were asked how it came to be there; I might possibly answer that for anything I knew to the contrary, it had lain there forever. But suppose I should come upon a watch lying upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place; I should hardly be able to give the same answer which I had given before for this reason, namely, that, when I examine the watch, I perceive that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose and cannot avoid the inference that the watch must have had a maker. Paley then applies the analogy to our world and infers from it an almighty Creator.² Paley did not see what Kant later pointed out about the cosmological argument, namely, that while we may

¹ This analogy had previously been used by Abraham Tucker. For an interesting history of this analogy see The Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XLIII, p. 105; also Leslie Stephen's History of English Thought, Vol. I, p. 409.

² Natural Theology, p. 9.

infer from the world a Creator as great as the world, we are not justified in going beyond that to infer a Being who is greater than the world. In other words, Paley was justified in inferring from the presence of a watch the existence at some time of one capable of making a watch, but he could not infer from the presence of the watch alone the existence of one who is capable of making something greater than the watch.

J. S. Mill has this very meaningful evaluation of Paley's argument:

A very little consideration, however, suffices to show that though (the argument from design) has some force, its force is very generally overrated. Paley's illustration of a watch puts the case much too strongly. If I found a watch on an apparently desolate island, I should indeed infer that it had been left by a human being; but the inference would not be from marks of design, but because I already knew from direct experience that watches are made by men. I should draw the inference no less confidently from a footprint, or from any relic however insignificant which experience has taught me to attribute to man: as geologists infer the past existence of animals from coprolites, though no one sees marks of design in a coprolite.¹

¹ Three Essays on Religion (1874), p. 168.

Paley's type of reasoning in theology has very largely vanished, and it is not necessary to give a thorough examination of it here. Suffice it to say that Pascal long ago saw that the metaphysical proofs of God's existence are so involved that they make very little impression and offer too little striking force to be of use to most people. In fact for those capable of understanding them, they are of use only for the moment when the argument is taking place. After the argument, uncertainty returns, for one then begins to fear that he was mistaken about or deceived by it.¹

Paley continues his argument from design by saying that from the wonderful adaptation of the human body, the eye, the hand, the muscles, we infer an almighty Designer. He, like Locke, declared, "The works of Nature everywhere sufficiently evidence a Deity."² Following St. Thomas Aquinas, Paley took the statement of St. Paul to the effect that "ever since the creation of the world, His (God's) unseen attributes, his eternal power and divinity, have been plainly seen in the things he has made,"³ to be the argument

¹ Pensees, Paragraph 175.

² Locke, John. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Bk. I, Ch. IV, p. 38.

³ Romans 1:20.

from design. What St. Paul really said was not that the works of God's hands prove His existence but that they reveal the kind of God that He is.¹

It is interesting to remember that what Paley was saying in England about God, Holbach was saying in France about "Matter" or "Nature." The prime-mover for Holbach was not God but matter. Movement is a necessary attribute of matter, so why should we seek for a 'motor' outside Nature?² Paley was clinging to the Newtonian concept of the world while Holbach was insisting that to seek some supernatural first cause is the last infirmity of a noble mind. For him, even the immortal Newton was rather childish in his cosmology. Either Paley did not have the mental acumen to deal with such criticism or he was unaware of it. Neither did he take into account Berkeley's denial of the reality of matter which destroyed the whole concept of the world as a huge mechanism, a magnified watch. For Paley the world was not a constant divine spiritual activity impressing human minds only with itself. On the contrary, he believed that the world was real in itself. Therefore, for Paley the study of nature was the true 'preparative to Divinity.' In fact, his Natural Theology is more like a textbook in biology than a treatment of

¹ Baillie, John. Our Knowledge of God, p. 126.

² Systeme de la Nature, Vol. II, p. 185.

theology. Paley's profound love for nature led him in the direction of the emphasis found in Wordsworth. Mr. Aldous Huxley has said that "for the good Wordsworthian, a walk in the country is the equivalent of going to Church, a tour through Westmoreland is as good as a pilgrimage to Jerusalem."¹

All things in Paley's world were bright and beautiful. Even pain was not the product of contrivance. He reasoned that teeth were designed for chewing, not for aching, and that even their aching has a benevolent purpose.² Misery is seen as contributing to man's life upon the earth as God would have it, for:

A state totally incapable of misery, could not be a state of probation. . . .Nor would the purposes of trial be sufficiently provided for by a state in which happiness and misery regularly followed virtue and vice.³

Paley disagreed with Thomas Burnet who viewed the world as a mighty ruin.⁴ Burnet had gone even beyond Pascal, who had given a large place to the doctrine of the fall of man in his theology by contending that while being of itself incomprehensible,

¹ Essay on Wordsworth in the Tropics.

² Natural Theology, p. 384

³ Paley's Sermons, Vol. V, Sermon V, p. 32.

⁴ Sacred Theory of the Earth. (1684 ed.), p. 129.

the fall was the only starting point from which man's wretchedness could be made comprehensible.¹ To this Burnet added that the fall accounts for the chaotic conditions of the world of nature. He found that "disproportioned sin had jarred against Nature's chime." Therefore, for him the world may provide evidence of God's anger but not of His original intention.

Burnet was obsessed with the imperfections of the earth. If we are to describe the earth as it really is, said he, we would find that:

Though it be handsome and regular enough to the eye in certain parts of it, single tracts and regions; yet if we consider the whole surface of it, or the whole Exterior Region, 'tis as a broken and confused heap of bodies, plac'd in no order to one another, nor with any correspondency or regularity of parts: and such a body as the Moon appears to us, when 'tis looked upon with a good glass, rude and ragged. They are both in my judgment the image or picture of a great Ruine, and have the true aspect of a World lying in its rubbish.²

¹ Pensees, The Provincial Letters, translated by W. F. Trotter and Thomas McCrie, Section vii, Fragment 441, p. 147.

I believe these numbers correspond in every case with the numbers assigned in the definitive French edition of the Oeuvres, edited by Leon Brunschvicg.

² Sacred Theory of the Earth, (1684 ed.), p. 125.

Paley, on the other hand, naively overlooks the imperfections of earth and in a cheerful spirit beholds no cataclysm which has shattered the world-wide Eden. Others like Voltaire may send his hero about the world to spy out its morbid anatomy with a fiendish satisfaction but Paley was a man who could pour forth his blithe spirit in such language as this:

It is a happy world after all; the air, the earth, the water, teem with delighted existence. In a spring noon; or a summer's evening, on whichever side I turn my eyes, myriads of happy beings crowd upon my view. The insect youth are on the wing. Swarms of newborn flies are trying their pinions in the air. Their sportive motions, their wanton mazes, their gratuitous activity, their continual change of place without use or purpose testify their joy, and the exultation they feel in their lately discovered faculties.¹

For Paley even physical pain could contribute to man's blessedness. Moreover, it is well for us to remember that he was tortured with pain at the time of his writing yet he wrote of pain that it is seldom both violent and long continued. Even its pauses and intermissions become positive pleasures. "It has a power of shedding a satisfaction over intervals of ease, which I believe few enjoyments exceed." He examines the records of the

¹ Natural Theology, p. 376.

hospital in his community and finds 6,420 admitted but he does not sicken at that, for he finds the dead to be 234, the cured, 5,476. His eye settles on the last and he is content. Even a storm purifies the air, and it is better that a few should die therein than that all should perish.¹ Like Mandeville, Paley makes even evil play its role; however, he did not go so far as to say with him that the refinery needs the raw material of evil nor to say that public benefits exist not in spite of but because of the private vices of men. Mandeville had virtually thanked God for making sin so advantageous. Paley prefers to believe with John Ray, the founder of modern botany and zoology, and the most distinguished of the physico-theologians, that God has a purpose in these seeming imperfections. Ray believed that the lower ranks in the scale of being were made for the manifestation of God's Infinite Power and Wisdom.² Nature is to be regarded not as a lost paradise but as the finished and unimprovable product of divine wisdom, omnipotence, and benevolence.

Paley was also indebted for his cosmology to William Derham from whom he draws information about the adaptability of

¹ Natural Theology, p. 309.

² Wisdom of God in the Creation (1701 ed.) p. 48.

the human frame to life on earth.¹ He virtually accepts Derham's cosmology in toto. Derham reasons that the globe is "a work too grand for anything less than a God to make."²

Let us cast our eyes here and there, let us ransack all the Globe, let us with the greatest accuracy inspect every part thereof, search out the inmost secrets of any of the Creatures; let us examine them all with our guages, measure them with our nicest rules, pry into them with our microscopes, and most exquisite instruments, still we find them to bear testimony to their infinite Workman; and that they exceed all humane skill so far, as that the most exquisite copies and imitations of the best artists, are no other than rude bungling pieces to them.³

Derham, however, is somewhat aware of the imperfections of the earth, for he contends that even if the globe were such a "rude, confused, inconvenient mass as he (Burnet) pretends, yet it is well enough for a sinful world."⁴ He regards poisonous and noxious creatures as "Rods and scourges to chastise us" or as "means to excite wisdom, care and industry."⁵

¹ Natural Theology, p. 93.

² Physico-Theology, p. 38.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 48.

⁵ Ibid.

It remained for David Hume to bring the most damaging evidence against this cosmological argument for God's existence. This he did by his statement that it is the very point in question whether you can infer that because a certain effect follows a certain antecedent that such antecedent is the cause of such effect. All that we are warranted in believing is that there is a certain observable pattern which has prevailed according to our limited observation. If, then, we cannot be certain about this cause-effect relationship, how can our proof of God from such an argument be valid?

Yet Hume held that a refined and philosophical theism may be rationally arrived at but not through the cause-effect argument.¹ He aims this direct barrage at Paley's argument.

Even at this day, and in Europe, ask any of the vulgar why he believes in an omnipotent creator of the world; he will never mention the beauty of final causes, of which he is wholly ignorant: He will not hold out his hand, and bid you contemplate the suppleness and variety of joints in his fingers, their bending all one way, the counterpoise which they receive

¹ Hume Selections, Edited by Charles W. Hendel, Jr. "The Natural History of Religion", Introduction, pp. 253, 254.



from the thumb, the softness and fleshy parts of the inside of his hand, with all the other circumstances, which render that member fit for the use to which it was destined. To these he has been long accustomed; and he beholds them with listlessness and unconcern. He will tell you of the sudden and unexpected death of such a one; the fall and bruise of such another. The excessive draught of the season. The cold and rains of another. These he ascribes to the immediate operation of providence; and such events, as with good reasoners, are the chief difficulties in admitting a supreme intelligence, are with him the sole arguments for it.¹

Paley's answer to this was really not an answer, it was simply a rigid declaration of the principle in question. He writes:

There cannot be design without a designer; contrivance without a contriver; order without choice; arrangement without anything capable of arranging; subserviency and relation to a purpose, without that which could intend a purpose; means suitable to an end, and executing their office, in accomplishing that end, without the end ever having been contemplated or the means accomodated to it.²

¹ Ibid, Section VI, pp. 269, 270.

² Natural Theology, p. 57.

Now, it should be pointed out that Paley's argument differs greatly from the teleological argument of the Aristotelian type. Aristotle held that the natural order with which man is so integrally bound up, fulfills an end of absolute and intrinsic worth. On the other hand, Paley's argument is essentially anthropomorphic, resting upon an alleged analogy between natural existences and the artificial products of man's handicraft. He contended that man can gain a sufficient basis for the conception of God as an ordering intelligence in our knowledge of the self and of its relation to the products which it consciously designs. But, as Professor Norman Kemp Smith suggests:

Before this argument could be taken as establishing the existence of the God of religion, it had of course to be supplemented by other types of argument. These, however, are supplementary to the argument from design; and their introduction is a virtual admission of its limited scope.¹

In Paley's doctrine of man he places him in this 'best of all possible worlds' and gives him rights and capacities beyond

¹ Smith, Norman Kemp. Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, p. 29.

the wildest dreams of the reformers. To such reformers as Calvin and Zwingli, man was a creature utterly subjected to the sovereignty of God, possessing, because of the fall, no rights of his own.¹ But the Newtonian world of Paley seemed to work as perfectly as if there had been no fall. Even man is no longer vile but exactly as he should be. For Paley, man is a rational being who may demand consideration and fair treatment from God. God's only concern is man's happiness. In fact, all that is necessary to ascertain God's will is simply to ask the question, what will contribute the most pleasure to the most people?²

In common with his generation, Paley had endorsed Locke's conception that morality is the prime content of religion. The task of the preacher was no longer to foster a gloomy conviction of sin, nor even an enthusiastic yearning for salvation but simply to point his hearers to a sober understanding of the wisdom of God in creation, and to lead them to bask in the sunlight of God's wondrous benevolence.

¹ McGiffert, A. C. Protestant Thought Before Kant, p. 188.

² Paley, William. Moral and Political Philosophy, pp. 45-46.

In viewing his doctrine of revelation, we are to remember that Paley was a devout exponent of the authority of the written revelation of God in the Bible. He held, however, that this revelation is not adequate for man's moral life.¹ Therefore revelation must be joined with the law of expediency and in the final analysis they are found to be in perfect agreement.

Wherever the Bible clearly speaks, Paley held that its authority is absolutely binding. He did not, therefore, completely reduce revelation to the level of nature. Joseph Butler, in seeking to point out that the acceptance of the revelation of nature is fraught with the same difficulties as the acceptance of the revelation in the Scriptures, succeeded only in reducing the revelation of the Scriptures to the level of the revelation of nature. Butler takes his thesis from Origen, who contended that "he who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from Him who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it as are found in the Constitution of Nature."² The

¹ Paley, William. Moral and Political Philosophy, p. 4.

² Butler, Joseph. Analogy of Religion. Part II, Ch. VIII, p. 276.

distinctive feature in Butler's apologetic is that instead of following the manner of the physico-theologians by saying that all things are bright and beautiful and that the good God made them all, he chooses to show that nature is just as baffling and mysterious as the Scriptures. From this he infers that they both originated in the same mind. Since Nature is just as full of defects as the Scriptures, Butler sees no reason why the Deists who accept Nature as divine could not also accept the Scriptures as divine.¹ This, however, reduces the revelation of the Scriptures to such a level that one feels that in his effort to defend this revelation, Butler has virtually obliterated its meaning. In fact, if there is no more clarity or certainty in Revelation than in Nature, we might well conclude that Revelation is a part of Nature. It is to Paley's credit that so far as his theory is concerned he insisted upon the transcendent quality of the Scriptural revelation.

Paley followed Locke in holding that "faith is assent to revelation."² He also held with Abraham Tucker that belief without proof is superstition, and thus sought to establish a

¹ Butler, Joseph. Analogy of Religion, Part II, Ch. VIII, p. 276.

² Locke, John. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, p. 343.

rational basis for his faith. The Deists contended that the evidence for religion was clear without resorting to philosophical proofs. They were just as strongly opposed to philosophical speculation as they were to the idea of Revelation. Paley excludes the element of venture from faith and leaves it as the acceptance of a rational proposition, an interpretation which even put aside the wager argument advanced by Bishop Wilkins. The Bishop contended that we should live as though there were a God for even if it should later be discovered that we were deceived, the benefits of virtuous living would still be ours, while if God does exist, we shall have from his hand an everlasting reward. This argument goes back to Blaise Pascal, and, at this point, it is interesting to observe how radically different from Pascal is Paley's interpretation of Christian faith. For Pascal, faith is different from proving, for proving is human, and faith is the gift of God. The just man shall live by faith. It is this faith which God himself gives in the heart that makes us to say not "I know" but "I believe."¹ This is what Pascal calls "the knowledge of the heart." Faith for Pascal was not the committal of the intellect to a proposition but the surrender of the whole self, including

¹ Pensees, The Provincial Letters, translated by W.F. Trotter and Thomas M'Crie, Section IV, Fragment 248, p. 88.

the intellect, to God. For him, Christian faith included the response of love. "We love him because he first loved us."¹ As Locke later insisted, Pascal said that Christianity is not contrary to reason. The apologist's first task is to make people want Christianity to be true, then he must show them that it is true. The natural situation of man is one in which God is already dimly sensed. He makes God say to man, "Console thyself. Thou wouldst not be seeking me if thou hadst not found me."²

Pascal was reaching out to an understanding of a faith which is an outgoing of the whole man to God. For him there could not be a real and fundamental conflict between reason and faith. He speaks of the two excesses in theology as excluding reason and admitting only reason.³ Faith says indeed what the senses do not say but what it says is not contrary to the senses. It is beyond sense but not against sense.⁴ To show that religion is not at all contrary to reason, he abandoned the metaphysical proofs, which were commonly used, in favor of moral and

¹ I John 4:19.

² Pensees, The Provincial Letters, translated by W.F. Trotter and Thomas M'Crie, Section VII, Fragment 552, p. 177.

³ Ibid., Section IV, Fragment 253, p. 90.

⁴ Ibid., Section IV, Fragment 265, p. 93.

historical proofs. He begins with man's wretchedness and infers from his awareness of his wretchedness, his greatness. This wretchedness commingled with his greatness can only be accounted for by the fall of man from his original state of perfection. The fall itself is incomprehensible but without it, all things else about man, writes Pascal, are incomprehensible.

Out of this, Pascal reasons that man has need of a religion that can explain his condition and at the same time redeem him. This he finds in the historical religion of Jesus Christ.

Paley's approach, as already stated, was radically different from this. He held before man certain external proofs in the form of the miracles of the Bible and declared that the acceptance of the truth of the revelation in the Bible, by virtue of the fact that its truth is attested by miracles, is Christian faith.¹ He thus left out the idea of communion with and committal to a personal God revealed in Christ which is so prevalent in Pascal. Pascal held that a full knowledge of God is conditioned on the venture of faith and that God has so ordained that certainty and

¹ Sermons on Several Subjects, Sermon XV, p. 661.

assurance in spiritual matters must be reserved only for those who search for him with their whole heart. Pascal uses the term "heart" in the Biblical sense of the whole personality and was thus much closer to the Hebraic psychology than was Paley.

Tillotson, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1691, held that faith was not a special faculty and that there is no distinction between reason and faith. Above all else, Christianity must be reasonable. He believed in a supernatural revelation and yet it is to our reasons that this revelation must commend itself.¹ One of the tenets of the broad Church of Paley's day was that reason is the only faculty by which true religion is recognizable. Yet, in this tradition there stands the very curious contention that by miracles the reason is convinced of the authenticity of revelation. For Tillotson, reason was not an intuitive faculty but a discursive power. He meant by reason the act of reasoning.

It remained for Locke to work out the details of Tillotson's position. He held that our assent to revelation is

¹ Moffat, James. The Golden Book of Tillotson.

faith.¹ But how are we to be sure that this revelation comes from God, and how are we to be sure of its direct meaning? First, he answers, we must be sure we have understood it aright and then we must understand that there are three kinds of propositions. There are those propositions which are according to reason, for example, the existence of one God. This proposition is according to reason for it is capable, Locke thought, of being demonstrated. Then, there are propositions that are above reason, for example, the resurrection, for which there can be no proof. Only a miracle can persuade us of the truth of such a proposition. Finally, there are propositions that are contrary to reason, for example, the existence of more than one God. Such a proposition could never be credited for I could never have a reason for crediting it. Chillingworth, Clarke and Wollaston all stood in this tradition. They would all agree with Locke that "Reason is natural revelation whereby the eternal Father of light and fountain of knowledge communicates a knowledge of himself."²

¹ Locke, John. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, p. 343.

² Ibid., Bk. IV, Ch. XIX, 4, p. 360.

For Locke the purpose of miracles is purely to give attestation to revelation. Yet he held that not even a miracle can give attestation to anything contrary to reason to be revelation. A casual examination of Locke demonstrates the truth that theological liberalism of the nineteenth century was in reality rooted in the seventeenth century. This may be observed by noticing how much Locke and Harnack resemble one another. It is interesting to remember, however, that rationalism later threw the miracles out of court.

In his insistence on the evidential value of miracles Paley was again very true to the traditional Christianity of his day. However, he goes a bit farther than his predecessors, for to him the distinctive Christian revelation is so supernatural that he holds that it could only be given through miracles.¹ "These miracles form, no doubt, our assurance that He (Christ) was sent from God."² The glories of the world above toward which we journey are for Paley so unspeakable that they stand in a category which only a miracle could properly describe.

¹ Evidences of Christianity, p. 3

² Paley's Sermons, Vol. V, Sermon ii, p. 151.

Paley's argument concerning the miracles gathers around the objections advanced by Hume. He takes issue with Hume's argument of probabilities in which it is contended that since we are more impressed with the orderliness of the universe than we are with the trustworthiness of human testimony, it is more probable that those reporting the miracles were mistaken than that the natural order should have been violated.¹

The curious point in the total picture of Hume's philosophy is that the very man who contended that for all we can prove, anything may be the cause of anything, was also the man who argued against the possibility of miracles because they violate the unchangeable laws of nature.

History, Hume argues, teems with accounts of miracles. Says he, the argument against miracles hinges upon the question of belief in the truth of testimony. Like all our beliefs, this one rests upon experience. Our experience is that men have memories which on the whole are trustworthy. But testimonies may conflict, or

¹ Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Sect. X.

their authority may be rendered doubtful by the manner of their delivery. When the event being related is a miracle (and by a miracle Hume means a violation of the laws of nature), since the law of nature itself has been established by a long period of observing an unalterable pattern, the mind is thus presented with one body of testimony set over against the other. The stronger testimony belongs to the changeless pattern of the law of nature. Hume writes:

There is not to be found in all history, any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned good sense, education, and learning as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood; and at the same time attesting facts, performed in such a public manner, and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection thereof unavoidable: all which circumstances are requisite to give us a full assurance in the testimony of men.¹

¹ Hume, David. Works, vol. ii, pp. 94-95.

Paley undertook to answer Hume by contending that the Christian revelation affords an adequate testimony, that the apostles were a 'sufficient number of men' and that they possessed the proper credentials to validate their testimony.

He reasons as follows:

If twelve men whose probity and good sense I had long known should seriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impossible that they should be deceived; if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of this account, should call these men into his presence, and offer them a short proposal either to confess the imposture or submit to be tied up to a gibbet if they should refuse with one voice to acknowledge that there existed any falsehood or imposture in the case; if this threat were communicated to them separately, yet with no different effect; if it was at last executed; if I myself saw them, one after another, consenting to be racked, burnt, or strangled rather than give up the truth of their account, —still, if Mr. Hume's rules be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now, I undertake to say that there exists not a sceptic in the world who would not believe them or who would defend such incredulity.¹

Paley goes on to show that the spurious miracles of history do not belong in the category with those associated with

¹ Paley, William. Evidences of Christianity, pp. 8, 9.

the Christian faith. However, Hume regarded the Apostles as being uneducated members of the lower orders of mankind and Palestine as an isolated corner of the Roman world which was not to be compared with Athens or Rome. Therefore, miracles reported by these men from this area could not be accepted in the enlightened world.

Hume's emphasis followed something of the same pattern established by Shaftesbury who had viciously assailed the characters and stories of the Bible and warned the poet to steer clear of them:

The wit of the best poet is not sufficient to reconcile us to the campaign of a Joshua, or the Retreat of a Moses, by the assistance of an Egyptian Loan. Nor will it be possible, by the Muses Art, to make that Royal Hero appear amiable in human eyes, who found such favour in the eye of Heaven.¹

Since Paley's day the course of Christian apologetics has changed rather radically. Professor D. S. Cairns reminds us today that the miracles of the New Testament do not stand as sign posts to a deeper reality but that they belong to the very fabric of the Christian Gospel.² The pattern of current thought

¹ Shaftesbury, Works. Vol. i, p. 358.

² The Faith that Rebels. p. 25.

is that the Gospel represents the unique intervention of God into the affairs of men and is of such inherent worth that it carries the miracles with it. It is not that because the miracles are so startling we must believe the stories in which they are set, but rather that the redeeming act of God in Christ is so startling that we should expect it to be accompanied with supernatural events. This change in thinking concerning the miracles goes back to the work of Thomas Wollestone who held that the resurrection is of the very essence of the Gospel and not a seal to prove something greater than itself in the Gospel.¹

The importance of Paley's treatment of the miracles is that to a greater degree than any other writer he related them to that doctrine, which permeates all of his theology, namely, the doctrine of rewards and punishments after death. Paley took his departure from a belief in a benevolent Creator whose purpose was not only to enable men to share an earthly existence but by endowing him with the capacity for moral obedience made it possible for him through his obedience to enter a second state of

¹ A Discourse on the Miracles of the Savior.

existence infinitely more glorious than the first. Now, Paley reasons, if this be the purpose of the Creator, would it not be reasonable to suppose that He would communicate a knowledge of such a plan to His Creation? If this be one's belief concerning the plan of God for man, then Paley concludes that it is not unreasonable to believe that so glorious a purpose would have been revealed through miracles. Thus Paley relates his doctrine of miracles to his doctrine of revelation and also to his eschatology.

In the forefront of all his writing and all his preaching, Paley sets the doctrine of rewards and punishments after death.¹ Most of the seventeenth and eighteenth century moralists could not see how the moral law would hold together without a final judgment where rewards and punishments would be meted out. Herbert of Cherbury went so far as to name this among his five common notions.² Even Voltaire believed that the doctrines of an awarding and avenging God are necessary to the maintenance of the moral order. He wrote, "If God did not exist we would have

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy,
Bk. I, Ch. vii, p. 32.

² De Veritate.

to create Him but all Nature cries out that He does exist."¹

Sir Thomas Browne wrote, "Ipsa sui pretium virtus sibi, that virtue is her own reward is but a cold principle and not able to maintain our variable resolutions in a constant and settled way of goodness."² He further declared that we cannot hope "to be honest without thought of Heaven or Hell."³

Of course, there were those who were at work trying to divorce ethics from the doctrine of rewards and punishments. Shaftesbury declared that to be honest without thought of heaven and hell is the distinguishing mark of a true lover of virtue. For him, true Christianity produced a spontaneous goodness of the heart that was not dependent on rewards or punishments. This position was further advanced by Holbach, who thinks of the doctrine of the future life as a mirage which blinds men to the real and remediable evils of the present life.

¹ Voltaire (See Ueberweg)

² Religio Medici, p. 69.

³ Ibid.

He asserts that:

Religion has become the art of intoxicating men with enthusiasm, so as to divert their attention from the evils with which their rulers load them here on earth.... They are made to hope that if they agree to being unhappy in this world, they will be happier in the next.¹

When we deal with Paley's moral philosophy we shall undertake to show that the glaring weakness of his system lies in the fact that the rewards of eternity were in terms of quantitative considerations rather than in terms of qualitative moral and spiritual values. Schleiermacher later pointed out that true immortality is qualitative harmony with God¹ and thus liberated the conception from the grossly materialistic point of view so prevalent in the previous century.

Perhaps the greatest service that Paley performed for Christian theology was his refutation of the denial of the historicity of the Christian religion. How widespread this denial had come to be in the eighteenth century England may be seen in the previously quoted statement of Butler in which it is declared that many were taking it for granted that Christianity was fictitious.² It should be observed that Paley's

¹ Christianisme De' voile', quoted by Wickwar, Baron d'Holbach, (1935), p. 129.

² The Christian Faith, p. 542.

problem was a practical one which was forced upon him by the tide of unbelief, and was not comparable to the undertaking of what Professor D. M. Baillie has chosen to call the "Jesus of History Movement" of the nineteenth century.¹ This school was concerned with the recovery of the Jesus of History in an attempt to show that the starting point of Christian theology can never be in ready-made metaphysical dogmas about Christ, but rather in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth with whom we are confronted in the Gospel story. Paley, on the other hand, was concerned to show that the metaphysical dogmas of the Church were historically authentic. In fact, the eighteenth century has been characterized as a time of freezing dogma into static forms.

It is much to Paley's credit that even before the work of Ritschl, Harnack and Herrman, he was impressed with the necessity of getting back to the historical setting of the Gospel. For his Evidences of Christianity he drew heavily from the research of Nathaniel Lardner.² His treatment of the historicity of Paul, however, is quite original.

¹ God was in Christ, p. 48.

² Credibility of Miracles (1755 ed.), Vol. I, p. 23.

This growing feeling for history was one of the most important parts of the legacy of the eighteenth century. There is a feeling as one reads Paley that his interest in the historical setting of the Gospel led him to embrace the Socinian view of the person of Christ. His admiration for Nathaniel Lardner's work is much in evidence and it is known that while reading Lardner's Letter on the Logos, Joseph Priestley became a Socinian, holding that God is the only proper object of worship and thus rejecting the Trinitarian doctrine of Christ's divinity and the Arian doctrine of his pre-existence, Priestley, who was a non-conformist, could demonstrate more completely than one related to the Church as was Paley, the ultimate development of the natural theology of the century.

From Paley's notes from his lectures which are now in the British Museum one writer proves to his own satisfaction that Paley accepted the Unitarian view.¹ However, in Paley's published works he does not attempt formally to explain his ideas of the person of Christ. Perhaps our best source for

¹ The Christian Life and Unitarian Herald, July 11, August 2, August 22, 1891.

this information would be his sermons. As clear a passage on the subject as the writer could find is the following:

That a person of a nature different from all other men; nay superior, for so he is distinctly described to be, to all created beings, whether men or angels; united with the Deity as no other person is united; that such a person should come down from heaven, and suffer upon earth the pains of an excruciating death and that these his submissions and sufferings should avail and produce a great effect in the procurement of the future salvation of mankind, cannot but excite wonder.¹

Although in some passages Paley appears to identify the works of the Holy Spirit with the inner musings of man,² he also speaks of the third Person of the Trinity as a "real, efficient, powerful, active Being whose cooperation is essential to the conviction, conversion, and moral welfare of man."³

Such statements as these led one writer to declare:

On the whole, then, we think that he (Paley) was, nothing like a modern Socinian; that he was, at least something more than an ancient Arian; but that the precise shade of his creed cannot be determined by us and perhaps had not been determined by himself.⁴

¹ Sermons on Several Subjects, Sermon XVIII, p. 666.

² Ibid, Sermon XXIV, p. 683.

³ Ibid. Sermon XXVII, p. 692.

⁴ Quarterly Review, Vol. XXVIII, July and October, 1828, pp. 328, 329.

Still another writer declares that it would be easier to say what Paley's opinions on this subject were not, than to say precisely what they were.¹ His ideas of the person of Christ are nowhere formally explained, and are but very slightly unfolded even by passing intimations. The following is as distinct a passage as may be found in his sermons:

In the mean time, from the whole of these declarations of this discussion, we collect that Jesus Christ, ascended into the heavens, is at this day, a great efficient Being in the universe; invested by his Father with a high authority, which he exercises, and will continue to exercise, to the end of the world.²

To this may be added one other quotation:

That a great and happy Being should voluntarily enter the world in a mean and low condition and humble himself to a death upon the Cross, that is, to be executed as a malefactor, in order, by whatever means it was done, to promote the attainment of salvation to mankind, was the theme they (the Apostles) dwelt upon with warmest thankfulness.³

It appears to the present writer that Paley's emphasis is not that of the Socinian and that while he was certainly

¹ Eclectic Review, Vol. V, January to June, 1809,
p. 9.

² Paley's Sermons, p. 348.

³ Ibid, p. 290.

impressed with the genuine humanity of Jesus¹ he did not relinquish his hold on the divine Lord who is our Saviour and Redeemer.² Paley's emphasis on the divinity of Christ is seen in his treatment of the atoning death of the Redeemer. He divides the meaning of the atonement into two categories, namely, the spiritual and the moral. The spiritual consists in the benefit it procured us in the attainability of final salvation. The moral ends of the death of Christ consist in the additional motives which it furnishes to a life of virtue and religion, as it is a pattern, example, encouragement and incitement to virtue. He reasons further that the death of Christ teaches us to practice humility and patience and to crucify the flesh and the lusts of life.³ To receive the benefits of Christ's atonement man must repent of the sins for which Christ died. Paley defines repentance as "a change of the heart from an evil to a good disposition". . . It is "an actual amendment of life... It is that disposition of mind by which 'he who stole steals no

¹ Sermons on Several Subjects, Sermon XXII, p. 677.

² Ibid. Sermon XVIII, p. 666.

³ Paley's Sermons, Vol. V, Sermon iv, pp. 169, 170, 171.

more,' by which 'the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness and doeth that which is lawful and right'. . . 'where restitution is practical, repentance cannot be sincere and effectual without it.'¹ Paley makes good works a condition of salvation, for he thinks that those who say that good works are necessary to salvation but are not willing that they should be called conditions of salvation are making a distinction too refined for common man to apprehend.² There appears to be a curious inconsistency at this point for in the same sermon Paley argues that the cause of salvation is not in anything we do or can do but in the good will and pleasure of God.

It is to Paley's credit that in his study of history he did not lose the divinity of Christ in the maze of history. That is to say, in contending that Christ, the Revealer of God, is indeed in history, he did not make the mistake of Ritschl who held that Christ was also of history.³ Nor did he, with

¹ Paley's Sermons, Vol. V, Sermon iii, p. 158, 162.

² The Eclectic Review, Vol. V, Part 1, from January to June, 1809, p. 9.

³ Mackintosh, H. R. Types of Modern Theology, p. 157.

Harnack, believe that the metaphysical implications of the Christian creed have their source in the infiltration of Greek philosophy.¹ He believed that the Christ of the Creed was One with the Christ of Galilee.

Although we are being told today by Professor Rudolf Bultmann,² Dr. Edwin Bevan,³ and Professor R.H. Lightfoot,⁴ that the quest for the historical Jesus is in vain, and are being frequently reminded of Father Tyrrell's incisive criticism against the "Liberal Protestant" reconstruction of the figure of Jesus when he wrote, "The Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well,"⁵ still one feels that the creed must be anchored in historical fact and that Paley did well in holding them together.

¹ Harnack, A. What is Christianity?, p. 224.

² Jesus and the World, English Translation by Louise Rettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress, p. 28.

³ Christianity, p. 31.

⁴ History and Interpretation of the Gospels, pp. xiii, xiv.

⁵ Christianity at the Cross-Roads, p. 44.

III

We have seen how Paley has acquired a certain symbolic significance as an apologist of the Christian religion by defending the reasonableness and historicity of the claims of the Church against the challenge of Deism. We turn now to show how he dealt with Deism as it challenged the moral worthiness of the Christian claims. Contrary to the popular opinion Deism was not primarily a theological belief in an absentee God, who is utterly transcendent, nor was it an attempt to establish a rationalistic philosophy.¹ In reality, Deism was primarily a moral movement attempting to separate the ethical from the non-ethical and ultimately the ethical from the religious in man's thinking. C. C. J. Webb correctly says that "the accepted meaning of Deism is belief in a God known from the light of nature apart from

¹ The writer is not unmindful of the fact that no less a writer than W. R. Sorley held that Deism is primarily the belief in an absentee God, and the author of the article on Deism in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics held that Deism stands for a philosophical rather than a religious view. On the other hand, Dr. Hayfeldbower, in The Relation of John Locke to English Deism, points out that with the exception of Herbert of Cherbury, the Deists scarcely touched philosophy and McGiffert in his chapter on Rationalism in his Protestant Thought Before Kant states that the Deists were interested in religion primarily as a means to virtue.

revelation."¹ The light of nature resided, as the forerunner of Deism, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, had said, in the five common notions, the third of which is that "virtue conjoined with piety is the principle part of divine worship."² Man, therefore, has no need of a special revelation of the divine will. In fact, the Deists were interested in the development of ethics as a science utterly divorced from a special revelation.

Prior to examining Paley's reaction to the moral philosophy of the Deists, let us look at the general trends of moral philosophy in England before Paley began his work. The dominant trend of Paley's day was in the direction of natural morality. Beginning with Thomas Hobbes there was a growing tendency in England to divorce ethics from a revealed religion. In fact, the strongest endeavor in seventeenth and eighteenth century thought, beginning with the work of Francis Bacon, was the attempt to separate natural from revealed theology.³ Out of this endeavor there grew the

¹ Studies in The History of Natural Theology, p. 344.

² De Veritate.

³ The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon, Edited by John M. Robertson, (1905), p. 89.

breach between natural and revealed morality.

After the break down of the rigid ecclesiasticism accomplished by the reformers, a new freedom arose. The mind of man was liberated so that he might think for himself, and free philosophical endeavor became a possibility. The reformers had been practical men who were not interested in philosophy. Luther, in fact, had said that of itself philosophy could not rise to any knowledge of God. It is apparent that while Bacon accepted Luther's contention and himself made a plea for separation between philosophy and religion, he was not so much concerned for the claims of faith as he was that reason should be given the right to function unshackled by dogmatic chains. Bacon disposed of the claims of religion by saying, "As we are obliged to obey the divine law though our wills murmur against it, so we are obliged to believe the word of God though our reason is shocked by it."¹ He held that man's knowledge is like water. Some comes from above, some from beneath. The light of nature coming from below empirically and revelation coming from above provide us with the totality of our knowledge. Bacon's famous sentence is that "Natural theology sufficeth to convince atheism

¹ Ibid.

but not to inform religion."¹ Bacon contends that while plain philosophy can silence the atheist, it cannot give us sufficient Christian knowledge. On the other hand, he insists that the Bible is designed to teach religion, and to endeavor to build natural philosophy out of the first Chapter of Genesis would be utterly futile.

This new quest for freedom of thought was united with a widespread campaign for toleration in which the citizens of England demanded liberty to profess any religion they should choose and to write books that deviated from the views of the Church and State.

Thus liberated by Bacon's philosophy, Thomas Hobbes, who had served as Bacon's secretary, brought his contribution to the movement by contending that all morality and religion are subservient to politics. Hobbes identified the moral with the positive law. What the State allows is good, and what it disallows is evil. Laws of nature are immutable and eternal, but they do not become binding until the community has been established. Thus moral standards vary. Apart from

¹ Ibid.

the State, good and evil have no binding force. While Hobbes speaks constantly of revelation, he gives it a political significance. His blatant scepticism is revealed by the manner in which he attacks the theory of revelation. "To say God hath spoken to man in a dream, is no more than to say man dreamed that God hath spoken to him."¹ "To say one hath seen a vision, or heard a voice, is to say he hath dreamed between sleeping and waking."² Yet Hobbes was absolutely convinced that the dogmas of the Church were necessary to hold the community together. Morality thus became the product of arbitrary civil and ecclesiastical legislation.

The immediate effect of Hobbes' work was to call forth the enmity of both moralists and theologians. Theologians thereby came to be joined with moralists until the whole of the theology of the eighteenth century took on a strong moral tone.³ The common task of theology and moral philosophy was to refute the arguments of Hobbes.

¹ Green, J. R. A Short History of the English People, p. 615.

² Ibid.

³ Stephen, Leslie. English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, Vol. ii, p. 2.

One of the strongest opponents of Hobbes was Cudworth, the most distinguished of the Cambridge Platonists. He believed that the "essential and eternal distinctions of good and evil" are independent of mere arbitrary will whether human or divine.¹ He thinks of ethical truth as related to the universal essence of things, which is inseparable from the Eternal mind and just as immutable as the Eternal mind. He exalted the natural moral sense of man. To act aright, he maintained, we need only consult the natural law written on the heart.

A more satisfactory refutation of Hobbism came from Bishop Richard Cumberland. Hobbes believed that in a state of nature, by which he meant man outside the control of civil government, it would be irrational for a man to obey the laws of nature, for he could never be assured that others would obey such laws. Therefore, by his obedience he would be defeating the true end which the laws had in mind which for him was self-preservation.² From such reasoning he concludes that

¹ Eternal and Immutable Morality, pp. 16, 17.

² Hobbes, Thomas. De Corpore Politico, Vol. IV., p. 225.

the laws of nature are not laws at all but mere conclusions. To change the many conflicting wills of individual agents into one will, an absolute government must be established to which the individual must yield his undivided allegiance. Over against this, Cumberland insists that the laws of nature are real and valid.¹ He takes issue with Hobbes' view of man in which man is compared with "wolves", "bears" and "serpents"² by maintaining that if this were true, "It would evidently be impossible to reduce such beasts of prey, always thirsting after the blood of their fellows, into a civil state."³ Furthermore he maintained that sympathy was as much a part of human nature as desire for self-preservation, for if this were not so, society could not exist. For Cumberland "Universal benevolence is the spring and source of every act of innocence and fidelity, of humanity and gratitude, and indeed of all the virtues by which property and commerce are maintained."⁴

¹ De legibus naturae, p. 14.

² Hobbes, Thomas. De homine. Vol. II (Latin works, Molesworth's ed.), p. 91.

³ De legibus naturae, p. 295.

⁴ Ibid., p. 114, 115.

The point of Cumberland's originality lay in his attempt to discover an underlying principle from which all the moral laws could be deduced. This he finds in the general law of benevolence. He thus became the first exponent of a theory that long dominated English ethics and which set man to thinking of the high and lofty possibilities of human nature.

Thenceforth the completely anti-social man whom Hobbes had depicted as morose, malignant and thoroughly miserable began to vanish and in his place there arose a new man capable of boundless good. Cumberland was joined by Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who, bright, hopeful, and optimistic, saw man as universally possessing by nature certain common notions which constitute the revelation of God in man and thus needing no further revelation from God. Lord Herbert's man stands adequately equipped to deliver his own soul.

Locke also places man on an heretofore unparalleled pedestal. He exalts man not by storing his mind with innate ideas as had Lord Herbert of Cherbury but follows Tillotson in holding that reason is not an intuitive faculty but a discursive ability or capacity. Nothing is in the mind that was not first of

all in the senses. Man is great not by virtue of the ideas he possesses but by virtue of his unlimited ability to apprehend the truth, nor can he want for a clear knowledge of God if he uses the faculties with which God has provided him. "Reason is natural Revelation, whereby the Father of Light, and fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of the truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties."¹ Locke insisted that Christianity, properly understood, by which he meant the original, simple teaching of Jesus and the Apostles minus the priestly accretions of the centuries, was not inconsistent with reason. By the light of reason, God had revealed to all men that God is good and merciful. The same spark of reason that makes one a man shows him the law he is to obey and the way of atoning for his sins when he disobeys.²

Mankind's need of a Savior came when the use of reason was forgotten and men allowed Priests to fill their heads with vice and superstition. It was necessary for Christ to come to simplify and purify the natural religion which had become so

¹ Ibid., Book IV, Ch. 19, Sect. 4, p. 360.

² The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures., pp. 8, ff.

overlaid with superstition. For Locke, Christ came to re-establish natural religion and natural morality. The Deists continually spoke of Christianity as the re-establishment of religion. For Locke it was enough to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and to practice the moral virtues which he proclaimed and which are in fundamental accord with the dictates of a reason which is hardly distinguishable from enlightened common sense.

In the same year that Locke published his Reasonableness of Christianity, 1693, Charles Blount came forth with his Oracles of Reason. The main burden of this work was to show that God enjoins no positive duties on man in addition to natural duties. Man was now found to be capable of more than merely obeying laws. He could even be like God. For, Blount declared, our duty is to be like God, not to obey a series of laws. To act according to natural law was thus coming to be interpreted as meaning to be like God.

As the concept of Nature expanded, a chair for a professor of the Law of Nature and Nations was established at Heidelberg in 1662, and Samuel Pufendorf was the first to occupy that

chair.¹ Thus the cry "follow nature"² which had been raised in antiquity by Cynics, Stoics and Epicureans and which later came to link together the starry heavens above and the moral law within was once more surging to the front of man's thinking. The law that preserved the stars from wrong, was once more becoming the rule of duty.

To be sure the age was not without its adherents to the older views, Samuel Clarke, the most distinguished scholar in England for a quarter of a century after Locke, although

¹ It is noteworthy that Paley takes Pufendorf's work into consideration in the preface of The Moral and Political Philosophy.

² One of the characteristics of Paley's age was that of speaking of morality under the metaphor of a law. From the time of Chrysippus the expression, "law of nature," was in constant use. By law of nature the Stoic meant that which is κατὰ φύσιν, according to the nature of things. To draw a distinction between laws rooted in the nature of things and those that were not, the Stoic fell back on a word which the Sophists had often used interchangeably with νόμος, namely, θεσις, the verbal substantive of τίθημι, meaning "I place," "I put." θεσις meant for them "A thing laid down." The Stoics used these words to distinguish between a νόμος θετικός, a law laid down by man, and a νόμος φυσικός, a law of nature. It is the distinction maintained in Latin between the lex positivus, positive law, and the lex naturalis, natural law. The term, positive law became general in later thought. This distinction between positive law and natural law is one of the most important distinctions throughout the history of Western thought, for it distinguishes that which belongs to reality from that which does not.

following the main outlines of the philosophy of Tillotson and Locke, still maintained that man was basically corrupt. For Clarke, the need of a revelation from God was seen not so much in the truth that the facts of religion have been perverted but rather in the fact that the original light of reason in man has been corrupted. He speaks of the corruptness of reason far more than Locke.

Although Clarke was not strictly one of the Cambridge Platonists, he adopted some of their ethical principles. He accepted Cudworth's contention that the moral law is rooted in the nature of things, and that the fundamental precepts of the moral law are self-evident and unalterable thus embracing what came to be known as rational intuitionism. Clarke's fatal blunder came in his attempt to demonstrate what the self-evident moral intuitions are. He listed them as follows: reverence, equity, benevolence and self-preservation. An examination of these terms would show that they may conflict with one another unless they are rationally defined.

Deism proper differed from the earlier writers like Clarke, Tillotson and Locke in that it represented the utter repudiation of revelation as a means of arriving at a knowledge of

God and a man's moral duty. Earlier writers like Richard Hooper had strongly emphasized the law of nature but were also keenly aware of its inadequacy. When we come to Tilotson and Locke, the emphasis upon natural religion is stronger until there is a gradual fading out of revelation.

Behind the endeavour of the Deists was the desire to work out a system of ethics for the common man by showing him that God demanded nothing of him but the performance of moral duties which are revealed to him by the law of nature.¹

John Toland, who published his Christianity not Mysterious in 1696, represents a half-way house between Locke and full-fledged Deism. He held that revelation is a means of revealing matters of fact we should not otherwise have known and is to be accepted on divine authority rather than because we have discovered the truth of it. Yet he insisted that there was nothing in Christianity that was contrary to reason or above reason. "Nothing inconceivable can be contained in the Gospel of the Word of God."²

¹ McGiffert, A. D. Protestant Thought Before Kant, pp. 211, 212.

² Christianity Not Mysterious, p. 22.

At this point, perhaps we should be reminded that Deism proper distinguished between reason and rationalism. The Deists never interpreted religion in a speculative way. They scarcely appealed to philosophical proofs. In fact, they were the declared enemies of philosophy just as they were the declared enemies of anything belonging to man's inventions. They believed that the evidence of religion was clear without resorting to philosophical proof. They speak of reason but they do not mean reasoning. That is to say, they follow the Stoic line as against the Aristotelian.

Deism went further and denied that there was such a thing as revelation apart from the light of nature. In 1730, Matthew Tindal published Christianity as Old as the Creation, a book which later came to be known as the Deists' Bible. His major thesis was that we must not demand in the name of religion anything that is against morality. True religion is doing good. The only difference between morality and religion is that morality is doing right because it is right. When right comes to be regarded as the will of God, it is religion. One is regarded as superstitious if he thinks that God requires of him anything more

than to do justice, love mercy and serve the public good. While insisting that he is a Christian Deist, Tindal maintained that to be a Christian is neither to accept the Bible or the tradition of the Church but simply to act according to the law of reason. All that is in the Bible must be judged by reason or by the nature of things. For him, the supreme mission of Jesus was to purify the religion of nature.

As the authority of nature grew in the minds of men, its grand concomitant, the dignity of human personality, was also enlarged. For as men got back to the pure religion of nature revealed afresh in Jesus of Nazareth, they became more and more impressed with an item that had been long overlooked, namely, his essential humanity. Thomas Chubb in his True Gospel, published in 1738, raised the question of the historicity of Jesus and concluded with an unusual emphasis upon his humanity. In both these items he antedated the efforts of the nineteenth century writers. The true Gospel for Chubb may be summed up in three points. First, we must conform our lives to the eternal and unalterable law of reason; then, if we have violated that rule, we must repent and reform to be forgiven; and, finally, there will be a last judgment before which all men must appear and

receive the rewards and punishments for their deeds.¹

Coming to the middle of the eighteenth century and to the work of Thomas Morgan, we find that by this time the emphasis upon Christianity as the most noteworthy revival of the religion of nature had deprived the Christ of all his supernatural attributes and had made of him only a prophet.²

The brightest exponent of the greatness of natural man in this period was Lord Shaftesbury. While actually not a Deist, Shaftesbury shares their version of man. He brings a devastating attack against Hobbes' view of man by declaring that "Hobbes in reckoning up the passions and affections which produce society, forgot to mention kindness, friendship, sociableness, love of company, natural affection, or anything of this kind."³ Shaftesbury is the typical English moralist of the enlightenment. He stands in opposition to all low and gloomy evaluations of man as the champion of unassisted human nature. So certain was he that man possessed the ability to direct his

¹ The True Gospel of Jesus Christ Vindicated.

² The Moral Philosopher, Vol. I, p. 98.

³ Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times.

own life in the ways of righteousness that he became impatient with all who pictured God as one who provided a dynamic for right living by holding out rewards and punishments before man. For Shaftesbury, to be honest without thought of heaven or hell is the true mark of a real lover of virtue.

There is a curious inconsistency in Shaftesbury's view of rewards and punishments. As long as they come in this life they may be the proper motive for moral living and are viewed as a part of the beautiful order of things but the moment they are removed from this life and made a part of the life to come he vehemently denounces them.

Shaftesbury based right and wrong on the fundamental constitution of human nature itself, not on the will of God. He could thus maintain that even if one rejected the divine existence, which he did not do, he was nevertheless bound to maintain moral conduct. He had drawn from Whichcote the belief that human nature is not so perverse, but that it retains a 'secret sympathy with virtue and honesty.' Virtue itself is the foundation of happiness and sin brings its own misery.

The praise of nature is reflected in all of Shaftesbury's writings. He even insists on the divine perfection of nature, by which he means the whole order of Creation.¹

Professor Willey says:

The divinity of Nature (like the 'good nature' of man) is affirmed by Shaftesbury both against the Atheists who think the universe a distracted chaos of atoms, and against the orthodox, who hold that we live in a world which has been permanently ruined by the fall of Adam.²

Shaftesbury's obsession with the glories of nature is splendidly portrayed in the following paragraph:

O Glorious Nature! Supremely fair, and sovereignly good! All-loving and all-lovely, all-divine! Whose every single work affords an ampler scene, and is a nobler spectacle than all which ever art presented! O mighty Nature! Wise substitute of Providence! impower'd Creator! Thee I invoke, and thee alone adore. To thee this solitude, this place, these rural meditations are sacred; whilst thus inspir'd with Harmony of Thought, tho unconfin'd by Words, and in loose numbers, I sing of Nature's order in created beings, and celebrate the beautys which resolve in thee, the source and principle of all beauty and perfection.³

¹ Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times.

² The Eighteenth Century Background, p. 62.

³ Shaftesbury's Works, Vol. ii (1727 ed.), pp. 344, 345.

For Shaftesbury, true religion should be based upon nature, not upon revelation. He speaks of those who think they are extolling religion by exposing the "Corruption of Man's Heart" and succeed only in setting "moral virtue" as a "rival to religion."¹ Human nature he regards as a microcosm of the greater perfection of the universe. Human virtue, thus is found in following nature, for he thought it natural to be moral.

One cannot but admire the efforts of the Deists for they took seriously the task that befell the early decades of the eighteenth century to re-establish a reasonable balance in the moral life of England. These men were neither puritan enthusiasts nor libertines, but sober minded and accomplished men of the world. They felt that uncontrolled enthusiasm in religion and unbridled vice were equally offensive to good taste and good sense. Along with Addison and Steele they sought to make vice ridiculous and to bring to the cause of decency and virtue the powerful allies of wit and good breeding.

Thus for the eighteenth century the final court of appeal in matters of belief and conduct came to be reason and its practical

¹ The Moralists, pt. ii, sect. 2, Works, vol. ii, p. 256.

corollary, good sense. The philosophical rationalism of Descartes, the empiricism of Hobbes and Locke, the newly awakened interest in the natural sciences of which Sir Isaac Newton is typical, the reaction against seventeenth century preoccupation with questions of religion, all conspired to turn men's minds away from the mysteries of life and to focus their attention on the real and actual. Most of the literature of the day was given to moralizing, but its morality was that of enlightened worldliness. In religion and ethics the deeper springs of life had gone dry. The moral code was the product of the divinizing of nature. The maxim of the age became "What is, is right."

Until Wesley and his Methodists began their work in 1740, with a strong appeal to the hearts of the people, the Christian religion in the eighteenth century pulpits had become so coldly rational that the orthodox churchman could hardly be distinguished from the "free-thinking" Deist with his reasoned "religion of nature."

One historian writes:

Never had religion seemed at a lower ebb. The progress of free inquiry, the aversion from theological strife which had been left by the Civil Wars, the new political and material channels opened to human energy, had

produced a general indifference to all questions of religious speculation or religious life. The Church, predominant as its influence seemed at the close of the Revolution, had sunk into political insignificance... a large number of prelates were Whig partizans with no higher aim than that of promotion... a Welsh bishop avowed that he had seen his diocese but once, and habitually resided at the lakes of Westmoreland... A shrewd if prejudiced observer brands the English clergy of the day as the most lifeless in Europe, the most remiss of their labours in private and the least severe in their lives... "In the higher circles of society 'everyone laughs,'" said Montesquieu on his visit to England, "if one talks of religion."... Drunkenness and foul talk were thought no discredit to Walpole... Purity and fidelity to the marriage vow were sneered out of fashion; and Lord Chesterfield in his letters to his son, instructs him in the art of seduction as part of a polite education.¹

Among the masses, rank ignorance prevailed. The rural peasantry had been reduced to pauperism by the poor laws and had no moral or religious training whatsoever. Hannah More said, "We saw but one Bible in the parish of Cheddar and that was used to prop a flower-pot."

¹ Green, John Richard. A Short History of the English People, pp. 735, 736.

The introduction of gin increased the drunkenness of the day until gin shops in London invited every passer-by to get drunk for a penny, or dead drunk for two pence.¹

It is altogether possible that these conditions have been somewhat exaggerated by historians, for as W. R. Matthews has said, "Nothing is easier than to draw an indictment against a century."² We may, however, know for a certainty that there was a characteristic grossness among the masses and a depreciation of idealism among the educated.

In spite of her moral degeneration, England remained religious at heart and under the zealous leadership of men like Whitefield and the Wesleys and the equally earnest yet quiet and sane ministry of men like William Paley she was destined to regain her moral self-respect.

¹ Green, John Richard. A Short History of the English People, pp. 1735, 1736.

² Butler, Joseph. Fifteen Sermons and a Dissertation on the nature of Virtue, Editor's Introduction, p. XI.

CHAPTER III
AN EXPOSITION OF THE PRINCIPLES
OF PALEY'S ETHICS

Having examined the theological and philosophical trends of the eighteenth century, we come now to ask what was Paley's contribution to the stream of eighteenth century ethical thought? Wherein did his system differ from that of his predecessors? Was his treatment merely an eclectic system or did he differ from those writers like John Gay and Abraham Tucker from whom he drew so heavily? What was the unifying principle of his ethic? Did he give a satisfactory answer to the question, How may a man know his moral duty? What positive and enduring contribution did he make to the field of ethics?

In answering these questions it is necessary to remind ourselves that Paley was not striving primarily for originality, although he does lay claim to being something more than a mere compiler.¹ His writing was based largely upon the notes

¹ Paley, William. The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, p. XVI.

used in his lectures on Moral Philosophy at Cambridge. We should remember, therefore, that it is addressed principally to a class of students. In his presentation Paley expressly avoided the style of writing which prevailed among eighteenth century English moralists. He contended that their style was too ornamental, too full of adornment with no underlying meaning, and too full of superficial embellishments in the form of meaningless quotations from classical writers.¹ This, perhaps, was a carry-over from John Milton's strong emphasis upon the necessity of a re-examination of classical writers, which had resulted in a superficial fad of quoting from them whether or not the quotation made a positive contribution to the discussion. Paley was also averse to the fashion of his time of stringing detailed propositions together, a good illustration of which may be found in Dr. Ferguson's Institutes of Moral Philosophy. In contrast to this Paley offers a wealth of relevant discussion and illustrations to vivify his ethical propositions.

The simplicity of Paley's style may be traced partly to his aversion to metaphysics and partly to his effort to avoid

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, p. XVI.

dwelling upon verbal and elementary distinctions which he did not believe to be vitally linked to the problems of practical morality. A good example of what he was reacting against may be found in Dr. Rutherford's Institutes of Natural Law. It is quite apparent that even the Deists with whom Paley took issue were averse to metaphysics. They were more interested in what nature teaches all men, king and peasant alike, than they were in that knowledge at which one may arrive at the end of a syllogistic process. For them reason was primarily intuitive, not discursive.

It was to Paley's credit that he, like his fellow utilitarians, was more interested in the practical application than in the theory of ethics.¹ The practical nature of his work is manifested in his description of ethics which he defines as "that science which teaches men their duty and the reason for it."² Standing as he did in the midst of men who were endeavoring to arrive at a final principle which would clearly teach all men their duty and thus give to the realm of morals an order resembling that which Newton by his

¹ Mackenzie, John S. A Manual of Ethics, pp. 276, 279.

² The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I., Ch. V, p. 11.

principle of gravitation had given to the world of nature, Paley sought to accomplish this by uniting the law of nature with the precepts of revelation, for he believed it a very regrettable tendency in moral philosophy that these two should be severed. Paley insisted that ethics was not a complete science in itself. He argued with Dr. Johnson that:

When the obligations of morality are taught let the sanctions of Christianity be never forgotten: by which it will be shown that they give strength and luster to each other: religion will appear to be the voice of reason, and morality the will of God.¹

As we move into the heart of Paley's ethics, let us bear in mind that the purpose of this chapter is to discover the underlying principles of his ethical system and to determine the method by which he arrived at them. One of the major debates among the writers of eighteenth century England centered around the problem of moral knowledge. How is man to know his moral duty? In fact, John Gay declared that this was the only problem on which moralists of his day were not agreed.²

¹ The Preceptor, Preface.

² King, William. An Essay on the Origin of Evil, Preliminary Dissertation Concerning Virtue or Merit by John Gay, (1732 ed.), p. XXVIII.

Before examining Paley's answer to this question, perhaps it will be well to survey some of the typical answers in vogue in his day. First of all, there were those who still contended that Revelation must give the answer to this question. On the other side were men like Shaftesbury who believed that the defenders of traditional morality, which was based on the revelation of the Bible, had deliberately suppressed independent discussion of morals. He wrote:

So much is the religious part of mankind alarmed by the freedom of some late pens, and so great a jealousy is raised everywhere on this account, that whatsoever an author may suggest in favour of religion, he will gain little credit in the cause if he allows the least advantage to any other principle.¹

There was also in vogue in this period a fashionable cynicism which held that moral codes were either pernicious restraints upon human energies or artful impositions by statesmen upon the common herd.² A good example of this is found in the Maxims of Rochefoucauld and Mandeville's Fable of the Bees. The real father of such philosophy, however, is Thomas Hobbes.

¹ Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times, (1727 ed.), p. XXVIII.

² Matthews, W. R. Butler's Fifteen Sermons, Introduction, p. XII.

He was a thoroughgoing materialist believing that all that exists is matter in motion. The soul as an immaterial entity is non-existent. Even material phenomena are the "internal" motions of material particles. In his attempt to show how the laws of human nature and society may be deduced from the laws of motion he maintained a consistent devotion to his materialistic philosophy. This theory led him to undertake an analysis of the mind in which he dealt primarily with desire and will. For Hobbes, man is a bundle of desires, the satisfaction of which is provided by external things. These desires are strictly analogous to physical forces, and there is no real freedom of choice, for the will becomes identified with the strongest desire. The objects of man's desires in the state of nature are either pleasure or self-preservation. In man's more advanced stage as he develops his reason he begins to desire a third object, namely, power. This desire is awakened as man projects himself into the future and realizes his need for security. At this point Hobbes' illustrious doctrine of the natural egoism of man emerges. By nature man is not a social being but is governed by three basic desires, namely, for pleasure, for preservation, and for power. Hobbes felt that to be consistent with his position he must demonstrate that the so-called

social affections are no more than egoism in disguise. On pity he writes the following:

Pity is the imagination or fiction of future calamity to ourselves, proceeding from the sense of another man's calamity. But when it lighteth on such as we think have not deserved the same the compassion is greater, because then there appeareth more probability that the same may happen to us: for the evil that happeneth to an innocent man may happen to every man.¹

On Charity Hobbes writes in a similar vein:

There is yet another passion sometimes called love but more properly good will or charity. There can be no greater argument to a man of his own power than to find himself able not only to accomplish his own desires but also to assist other men in theirs: and this is that conception wherein consisteth charity. In which, first is contained that natural affection of parents to their children...as also that affection wherewith men seek to assist those that adhere unto them. But the affection wherewith men many times bestow their benefits on strangers is not to be called charity, but either contract, whereby they seek to purchase friendship, or fear, which maketh them to purchase peace.²

By attempting to show that all affections have their source in self-interested love of power or pleasure, Hobbes

¹ Human Nature, IX., p. 10.

² Ibid., IX. 17.

believes he has thus proved that genuinely disinterested affections are impossible.

The consequence of such ethical theory is that it makes it impossible to speak of a common good which transcends and includes the true good of every man. Instead of a universal good there are as many goods as there are individuals. This is the strong emphasis which Hobbes continually makes:

Every man for his own part, calleth that which pleaseth him and is delightful to himself, good and that evil which displeaseth him: insomuch that while every man differeth from another in constitution, they differ from one another concerning the common distinction between good and evil. Nor is there any such thing as absolute goodness, considered without relation: for even the goodness which we apprehended in God Almighty is His goodness to us!¹

On the nature of man Hobbes wrote that man stands in need of society, but because of his fundamental egoism he is unfit for society.² Man's natural condition is a state of 'a war of all against all.' This state is one of "continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."³

¹ Human Nature, VII, 3.

² De Homine. (Latin Works, Molesworth's edition), Vol. II, p. 91.

³ Leviathan, p. xiii.

To remedy this Hobbes proposes a "social contract" in which the individual surrenders to the state. An absolute government must be established to which the individual agent would yield his individual allegiance giving up everything save the right of defending himself from personal violence. The civil power would change the many conflicting wills into one will. It would define that which is just and that which is unjust and would even serve as the judge of all theological doctrines:

It is as if every man should say to every man, I authorize and give up my right of governing myself to this man or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him and authorize all his actions in like manner. This done, the multitude so united in one person is called a commonwealth. . . . This is the generation of that great Leviathan, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that mortal God to which we owe, under the immortal God, our peace and defence.¹

For Hobbes a man's moral duty is what the state says it is, for morality consists in those general rules, which Hobbes called "natural laws", which are necessary for the maintenance of society.

W. R. Matthews calls attention to a point that has often been overlooked by the critics of Hobbes, namely, that

¹ Leviathan, p. xvii.

morality is rational and universal, for the general rules of society must be based upon reason and are always the necessary supports of that social order which is prerequisite to the welfare of the individual.¹ This does not, however, alter the fact that, for the individual, the source of moral obligation is not reason itself but the commands of the State:

In the state of nature where every man is his own judge, and differeth from others concerning the names and appellations of things, and from those differences arise quarrels and breach of peace, it was necessary there should be a common measure of all things that might fall in controversy. As, for example, of what is to be called right, what good, what virtue... This common measure some say is right reason, with whom I should consent if there were any such thing in rerum natura. But commonly they that call for right reason to decide any controversy do mean their own. But this is certain, seeing right reason is not existent, the reason of some man or men must supply the place thereof and that man or men is he or they that have the sovereign power, and consequently the civil laws are to all subjects the measures of their actions, whereby to determine whether they be right or wrong, profitable or unprofitable, virtuous or vicious.²

¹ Butler, Joseph. Fifteen Sermons and a Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue, Introduction, p. xvi.

² De Corpore Politico, ii. 10.8.

Hobbes' cynical view of man's inability to answer for himself the question of his moral duty was the center of much controversy among later moralists. Generally speaking there arose in opposition to his contentions two schools of thought known respectively as rational intuitionism and aesthetic intuitionism.

Rational intuitionism was the product of the Cambridge Platonists who reacted against the tendency in Hobbes' philosophy to make morality an arbitrary matter of convention. They insisted that moral ideas are as universal and unalterable as the ideas of the intellect and that morality is rooted in the nature of the universe. Ralph Cudworth is the leading exponent of this position. Not only does Cudworth reject the idea that morality depends on the arbitrary law or convention of the state, but he also denounces the view of Calvin that morality depends on the arbitrary will of God. He contends that all knowledge is concerned with nothing else but universal ideas which are forever the same. He writes:

There is no such thing as arbitrary Essence, Mode or Relation that may be made indifferently anything at pleasure for an arbitrary essence is a being without nature a contradiction and therefore a nonentity. Wherefore the natures of Justice and Injustice cannot be arbitrary things that may

be applicable by will indifferently to any actions or dispositions whatsoever. For the modes of all subsistent beings and the relations of things to one another, are immutably and necessarily what they are, and not arbitrary, being not by will but by nature.¹

Another refutation of the philosophy of Hobbes in vogue in the eighteenth century was that of Antony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury. He is the author of what came to be known as the "Moral Sense Theory" or "Aesthetic Intuitionism." Shaftesbury's supreme emphasis was on his interpretation of the nature of conscience. He believed in a special moral faculty in man, which he called the "moral sense", and which he defined as "a real affection or love towards equity and right, for its own sake, and on the account of its own natural beauty and worth."² This faculty enables men to distinguish between individual actions and thoughts as to their rightness and wrongness as they occur and is closely analogous to aesthetic appreciation or the sense of beauty. Man's moral sense enables him to distinguish between the base and ignoble just as his sense of beauty enables him to

¹ Eternal and Immutable Morality, First Edition, pp. 16, 17.

² Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit (1699), p. 31.

discriminate between the unsightly and the beautiful.

For Shaftesbury this moral sense or conscience was not based upon principles of morality. It was not a rational function by which man might apply the laws of morality to his conduct. On the contrary, it was man's instinctive ability to sense immediately the rightness of a virtuous action and the wrongness of a vicious one. It should be remembered, however, that Shaftesbury did not draw from the above that the good is primarily a matter of independent judgment. On the contrary, for him moral distinctions have independent reality, that is to say, a good act is good whether we apprehend its moral quality or not. Objectively a thing is good if it is in harmonious relations with the system of which it forms a part, and human goodness consists in being in harmony with the species to which the individual belongs. The ultimate criterion is the general good, hence benevolence is the sum of goodness. Since goodness is harmonious living, the virtuous man is one who maintains a balance between the social and altruistic impulses. Furthermore, Shaftesbury contends that even in the present world self-interest and virtue always coincide:

To be well affected towards the Public Interest and one's own is not only consistent but inseparable; moral rectitude or virtue must be the

advantage and vice the injury and disadvantage of every creature.¹

Both Shaftesbury and his disciple, Hutcheson, had no conception of a rational or organic union between individual sentiment and social well being except the traditional one of exhibiting the personal advantages of benevolent conduct, and the disadvantages that accompany selfishness. Butler was not free from this. He thinks that Shaftesbury "has shown beyond all contradiction that virtue is naturally the interest or happiness and vice the misery of such a creature as man."²

For Butler the approval of conscience is thus made the criterion of morality. But a difficulty arises as to the way in which we are to regard the authority which conscience is said to carry along with it. Butler's utterances here commonly imply a teleological reference to an end implanted in human nature, and to be discovered by observing that nature—the realization of the end being obligatory, because it is shown to be the purpose which the author of nature had in view in making man as he is.³ The authority of conscience is derived from the purpose which it displays and

¹ Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times, (1711), Vol. II, p. 81; cf. pt. II., sects. 1 and 2.

² Sermons, p. 103.

³ Ibid., p. 104.

carries within itself a claim to obedience; however, the justification of this claim depends on a theological basis. Hence, the question of the nature and origin of conscience is at once raised in order to determine the legitimacy of its claim to be rather than any other part of our constitution, a divinely-implanted guide.

When Bishop Butler thus undertook to give an answer to the question of how man knows his moral duty, he appropriated the method used previously by Hobbes of inquiring into man's constitution, and undertaking an analysis thereof. His method, however, is not that of pure observation, for in the very outset he assumes the existence of final causes.¹ He likewise assumes the principle that if the nature of a creature is adapted to certain purposes, it was intended for those purposes², and then proceeds to examine the nature of man to determine for what purpose it is adapted, believing that man will reach his highest goal by conforming to that purpose which is according to his nature. He warns against those erroneous views of what it means to follow nature, and concludes that the true meaning of following nature is to act in conformity with human nature taken as a whole, which involves the recognition of the supremacy of Conscience.³

¹ Butler, Joseph. Fifteen Sermons and a Dissertation upon the Nature of Virtue, p. 47.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., pp. 50-53.

Professor C. D. Broad points out that which Butler fully recognizes but does not endeavour to remedy, namely, that in one sense nobody can act against his nature. Broad writes:

I think it would be better to say that virtue consists in acting in accordance with the ideal nature of man, and that vice consists in acting against it. No man's actual nature is the ideal nature of man. But this raises no special difficulty. We can form the conception of a perfect watch although no real watches are perfect.¹

By employing the idea of a system used previously by Shaftesbury, Butler insisted that the essential thing about man as a moral being is that he is a complex whole of various propensities arranged in a hierarchy. These propensities must be kept in the proper relation of subordination to one another. That is to say, human nature is not what Hobbes said it was, namely, a mass of faculties and impulses. On the contrary it is capable of a systematic unity characterized by harmonious proportion. Furthermore, that harmony does not consist in a "mere balance" between self-regarding and benevolent tendencies, as Shaftesbury had taught. It is to be found in the subordination of the lower elements to those

¹ Broad, C. D. Five Types of Ethical Theory, p. 57.

which are in their nature, more authoritative.¹ The superior principles in the nature of man are reasonable self-love and conscience.²

Sidgwick calls attention to a very common error with regard to these two principles, namely, that self-love is naturally subordinate to conscience.³ These, in reality, are co-ordinate in their authority. Butler writes:

Reasonable self-love and conscience are the chief or superior principles in the nature of man: because an action may be suitable to this nature, though all other principles be violated, but becomes unsuitable, if either of those are.⁴

There are, however, passages in Butler's writing which have three possible interpretations. Namely, that Conscience is supreme,⁵ that Self-love is supreme⁶ and that the two have equal authority.⁷ Perhaps we can see in these passages

¹ Butler, Joseph. Fifteen Sermons and A Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue, p. 68.

² Ibid., p. 57.

³ Ibid., p. 182.

⁴ Ibid., p. 68.

⁵ Broad, C. D. Five Types of Ethical Theory, p. 57.

⁶ Butler, Joseph. Fifteen Sermons and A Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue, Introduction by W. R. Matthews, p. XXII.

⁷ Ibid., p. 68.

the inconsistency in Butler's theory.

On the nature of Conscience, Butler occupies a half-way house between rational and aesthetic intuitionism. Apparently he agrees with Shaftesbury that there is a special moral faculty, but he makes it more than feeling or instinct. He calls it a "principle of reflection."¹ Hence, it partakes of the nature of reason. Yet he did not identify it with reason as did the theoretical and the rational intuitionists.

Butler makes duty coincident with our private interest. This is true for the most part in this world and entirely true in the next world. He, however, was not guilty of drawing a line of cleavage between this life and that which is to come. He simply views them as parts of the whole picture of man's existence. He also was recognizing the superficiality in Shaftesbury's view that virtue and self-interest are in perfect agreement in this life. Because this is manifestly untrue, Butler clings to his belief in a moral Governor of the universe who will in the future life be able to correct any discrepancies in the present.

¹ Butler, Joseph. Fifteen Sermons and a Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue, p. 68.

It should also be observed that in contrast with Hobbes, Butler contends that the social order is not artificial but natural. "It is as manifest that we were made for society, and to promote the happiness of it; as that we were intended to take care of our own life, and health, and private good."¹ He was thus transcending the exaggerated individualism of Calvinism and making an appeal for a proper regard for the wholeness of life. In fact, he concluded that the rightness or wrongness of an action, or even of an intention, can be judged only by viewing it in relation to the whole system in which it is a factor.² We might state his answer to how a man may know the good, in W. R. Matthews summary of his position: "Anything is good which is in harmonious relations with the system of which it forms a part."³

Butler's teleological view of human nature is seen in his insistence that the dictates of conscience are the voice of God and not the pronouncement of a merely subjective tribunal. He contended that man is to act conformably to the economy of his nature by

¹ Ibid., p. 40.

² Broad, C. D. Five Types of Ethical Theory, p. 57.

³ Matthews, W. R. Introduction to Butler's Fifteen Sermons and a Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue, p. 55.

allowing reasonable self-love to govern.¹

The above arguments were in vogue when Paley took up his pen and sought to answer the question of how man knows his moral duty. He began by denying the theory of Shaftesbury and the intuitionists and by contending that all the supposed phenomena of the "moral sense" can be explained on the basis of expediency and that expediency is the objective principle by which all moral conduct must be judged. To enforce his belief that some new objective principle for the judging of moral conduct was necessary Paley pointed out the inadequacy of the methods by which morality was judged in his day. Instead of joining issue with the great basic systems of morality, he chose to deal with the common devices by which morality was measured in his day. The various devices for judging moral conduct with which Paley was familiar were: the law of honor, the law of the land, the Scriptures, and the moral sense. It is apparent that in distinguishing these different kinds of law, Paley was following Locke rather closely.²

¹ Matthews, W. R. Introduction to Butler's Fifteen Sermons and a Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue, p. 55.

² An Essay concerning Human Understanding. Bk. II, Ch. XXVIII, p. 201.

By the law of honor, Paley meant what Locke calls the law of opinion or reputation¹ or what came later to represent the etiquette of particular trades and particular classes of society.²

In one of his sermons Paley writes the following:

I should call the law of honor a system of rules well contrived by persons in the higher stations of life, to facilitate³ their intercourse with each other.

Paley contended that this law could not tell a man all of his moral duty because it only prescribes and regulates the duties between equals and thus omits those that relate to the Supreme Being, as well as those which we owe to our inferiors.⁴ He saw that while some impulses of a man's heart may be checked by certain generally understood conventions and while the approval of society affords a strong sanction for obeying her customs, even so, there are times when eccentricity has its place in the moral life, and a man may be more truly moral by breaking the customs of his community than by keeping them.

¹ An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Bk. II, Ch. XXVIII, p. 202.

² Mackenzie, John S. A Manual of Ethics, p. 342.

³ The Sermons of William Paley, Vol. V., Sermon XLVIII, p. 431.

⁴ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. ii, p. 2

For example, if he should live in a community where infanticide is practiced, he would be more truly moral and would be obeying a higher law if he should repudiate this custom. The varying customs among different groups also reveal their inadequacy as an ideal for man's conduct. For example, a Chinese is very little ashamed of being detected as a cheat, but he would be manifestly disgraced if he did not treat his parents with proper respect or if he did not keep the tombs of his ancestors in good repair.

Perhaps the chief weakness in Paley's argument at this point is due to his meager definition of the law of honor. This law is not confined to the rules of fashionable life. Rather, it is rooted in human nature and is felt by all levels of life from the savage to the monarch. The desire of the approval of one's fellows is to be found everywhere. At the same time, it must be allowed that a writer has the right to define his own terms, and it must be admitted that as Paley defines the law of honor his argument against its adequacy is very convincing.

Paley also refused to accept Hobbes' position that the law of the land must tell a man what is right and what is

wrong.¹ Paley found the law of the land or the civil law to be inadequate for settling moral questions because it labors under two difficulties; first, because the law commands only where it is able to compel, consequently those duties, which by their nature must be voluntary, lie beyond the reach of its power;² secondly, because the distinction between right and wrong is often too subtle to be stated in a law.³ Paley saw that civil laws are neither constant nor universal and while they bind a large segment of society, they break down as a power for moral rectitude when the circumstances which made these laws necessary change and when man's character changes. The civil law also recognizes that there are many duties which are not fit objects for compulsion. On the other hand, it permits many crimes which are incapable of definition, for no general rules can ever exactly fit a particular case.

Paley thus points out the defects in the system that would regard human laws as a worthy rule of life. It is possible that a man might keep the written law entirely and still have the

¹ De Corpore Politico, ii. 10.8

² The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. ii, p. 2.

³ Ibid.

wrong motive. Goodness of motive is essential to virtuous conduct. For instance, if a man simply pays his debts to avoid imprisonment, this would not of itself make him an honest man.

In a charge to Clergymen, Paley cautions them against those members of their congregations who hold that the law of the land is an adequate monitor for the moral life:

Amongst the rules which contend with religion for the government of life, the law of the land also has not a few who think it very sufficient to act up to its direction, and to keep within the limits which it prescribes, and this sort of character is common in our congregations. We are not to omit, therefore, to apprise those who propose to themselves a measure of conduct totally inadequate to the purpose. The boundaries which nature has assigned to human authority, the partial ends to which every legislator is obliged to confine his views, prevent human laws, even were they, what they never are, as perfect as they might be made from becoming competent rules of life to anyone who advances his hopes to the attainment of God Almighty's favour. In contradistinction, then, to these several systems which divide a great portion of mankind amongst them, we preach "faith which worketh by love," that principle of action and restraint which is found in a Christian alone."¹

A common misunderstanding of Paley is that he insisted

¹ Paley's Sermons.

that the Scriptures alone are sufficient to define man's moral duty. Even W. R. Sorley made this mistake in his interpretation of Paley.¹ What Paley actually says is that the Scriptures are final where they speak but are inadequate as a system of morals because they do not attempt to give a detailed statement of man's duty but prefer rather to lay down such general rules as "worshipping God in spirit and in truth; doing as we would be done by; loving our neighbors as ourselves; forgiving others, as we expect forgiveness from God."²

This might appear to be a unique statement for so orthodox an apologist as Paley. In reality, Paley was going back to an emphasis that had appeared often in the preaching of Archbishop Tillotson almost a century before.³ The writers of Scripture, according to Paley, assume that the persons addressed already possess a knowledge of the principles of natural justice. Therefore, they design their teaching not to present new rules of morality but to enforce the practice of morality by new sanctions and a greater

¹ Sorley, W. R. A History of English Philosophy, p. 201.

² The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. iv., p. 5.

³ Moffatt, James. The Golden Book of Tillotson, pp. 166, 169.

certainty. Paley is here stating what is most certainly true about the Scriptures but it is exceedingly difficult to see how he can contend for this and in subsequent parts of his treatise contend that man is destitute of a moral sense. Perhaps again Paley has been misinterpreted. A number of critics take him to task most severely at this point.¹ Their mistake, as I shall later point out, was in interpreting Paley's denial of the innateness of the moral sense to mean that man was destitute of a conscience.

Paley's critics, who have insisted on taking him literally and reading into his statements what he never intended, have said that he placed expediency above the authority of the Scriptures.² It was Paley's intention, however, to apply this principle only where Scripture is silent, or where it is not specific or where it is doubtful. For instance, Scripture declares itself against covenant-breakers. We bow to the decision—but what is a covenant? and what is it to break one?—this Scripture does not define. Here, therefore, we want a principle to guide us before we can apply Scripture. What is the principle? Expediency, says Paley. To

¹ Whately, Richard. Paley's Moral Philosophy with Annotations, p. 23.

² Gisborne, Thomas. The Principles of Moral Philosophy Investigated and Applied to the Constitution of Civil Society, Bk. II, Ch. vi., p. 46.

take another instance: Scripture declares itself against a lie; we allow the authority; "but what is truth?" may be asked with Pilate and surely without any irreverence. What principle is to decide us in determining the offence against which Scripture has fixed its canon? —Expediency, again, says Paley. "Resist not evil" is a positive injunction of Scripture, yet from other passages it is certain that occasions there may be where resistance is lawful. By what principle are we to draw the line? By the principle of expediency once more says Paley. We may thus conclude that while it is true that some strong statements such as "the utility of any moral rule alone it is which constitutes the obligation of it"¹ would imply that Paley would exclude every other principle of judging moral conduct, in reality, this is just an inadvertent expression of a man enamoured by his system and not an adequate explanation of his total doctrine.

Paley combines the authority of reason and Scripture in the following passage from one of his sermons: "To take for our guidance the rule of reason and the rule of Scripture is the perfection of moral excellence."²

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. II, Ch. vi, p. 46.

² Paley's Sermons, Sermon XLVIII, p. 426.

Paley continues his discussion of the inadequacy of the Scriptures by insisting that to deliver moral disquisitions was no part of the Savior's design:

To teach morality at all was only a subordinate part of it, his great business being to supply what was more wanting than lessons of morality, namely, stronger moral sanctions and clearer assurances of a future judgment.¹

The Gospel stands in marked contrast with religious books that attempt to regulate human conduct by minute directions for every case and occurrence that may arise. For example, the Hindoo and Musselman religions attempt this, and to demonstrate the futility of such efforts, it has been observed that in the Musselman Code not less than seventy-five thousand precepts have been promulgated.

Over against this Paley sets the fact that "the Christian religion has not ascertained the precise quantity of virtue necessary to salvation."² Indeed human language is not an adequate vehicle for conveying such knowledge, nor is it possible to constitute a standard of moral attainments accomodated to the almost

¹ Evidences of Christianity, p. 256.

² The Works of William Paley, Vol. V, p. 168, Sermon

infinite diversity which subsists in the capacities and opportunities of different men.

Paley might have been closer to the New Testament if he had suggested as did St. Paul, in his doctrine of justification by faith, that God does not measure a man by the distance a man has travelled on the journey toward perfection but by the direction of his life. He asks not whether a man has arrived, but does he have his face or his back towards the goal?

Not only did Paley find the law of honor, the law of the land and the law of Scripture incapable of defining man's moral duty, but he also took violent issue with the moral sense philosophers, because they had threatened to make religion superfluous by an unrealistic exaltation of man. It has been objected that Paley also painted an unrealistic picture of man's ability by assigning to him, by his utilitarian theory, the power to predict even the infinite consequences of his action.¹ It is true that he claims that "Whatever is expedient is right."²

¹ Dymond, Jonathan, Essays on the Private and Political Rights and Obligations of Mankind, p. 5.

² The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. 2, c. 6, p. 46.

However, Paley recognizes the limitations of this principle as he declares that "it is impossible to ascertain every duty by an immediate reference to public utility."¹ To compensate for such a limitation, said he, it is necessary to have certain established rules, which are absolutely obligatory, by which conduct may be gauged.

The belief in conscience appears very early in English philosophy. Even Lord Bacon could write the following: "The light of nature not only shines upon the human mind through the medium of a rational faculty, but by an internal instinct according to the law of conscience, which is a sparkle of the purity of man's first estate." The denial of an innate moral sense, however, placed Paley in a tradition that was by no means new. John Gay and Abraham Tucker had given much attention to it. It was substantially the position advanced by Hobbes in the Leviathan and goes back at least as far as Aristotle's time when there were those who maintained that the diversities that appear in men's moral

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy,
Bk. 6, c. 12, p. 499.

notions militate against the idea that the distinctions of moral right and wrong have any foundation in nature.¹

It should be noted that Paley does not attempt to give a thorough treatment of the nature and origin of the moral sense. He leaves this for those who were more inquisitive than he was concerned to be about the natural history and constitution of the human species.² For a proper evaluation of his position, however, it is necessary to inquire into the meaning of the moral sense in Paley's day. The ambiguity of the term makes it necessary to say a word about its meaning. In the first place, it should be noted that Butler, who gives the idea such prominence in his system, used the terms conscience, moral reason, moral sense or divine reason interchangeably.³ Butler defines these terms simply as the "moral approving and disapproving faculty."⁴ He writes:

¹ Nicomachean Ethics, Bk. V., pp. 126, 128.

² The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. II. C. V, p. 14.

³ Butler, Joseph. Fifteen Sermons and a Dissertation Upon the Nature of Virtue. Introduction and Notes by W. R. Matthews, p. 247.

⁴ Ibid.

This way of speaking is taken from Epictetus, and is made use of as seeming the most full, and least liable to cavil. And the moral faculty may be understood to have these two epithets σοκλιμαστικη and αποσοκλιμαστικη, upon a double account, because, upon a survey of actions, whether before or after they are done, it determines them to be good or evil; and also because it determines itself to be the guide of action and of life, in contradistinction from all other faculties, or natural principles of action, in the very same manner as speculative reason directly and naturally judges of speculative truth and falsehood; and at the same time is attended with a consciousness upon reflection, that the natural right to judge of them belongs to it.¹

Butler differed radically with Shaftesbury in his view of the moral sense. For Shaftesbury, the moral sense was a cultivated good taste which in a well-developed character passes into a kind of instinct which guarantees the choice of right and the avoidance of wrong.² Both Shaftesbury and his disciple, Hutcheson, believed that what a cultivated moral sense approves is that which is beneficial to society as a whole. They urged, however, that it was not necessary to reflect upon this principle,

¹ Ibid.

² Characteristicks, "An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour." Part III, Sect. Iv.

because it is embodied naturally in a cultivated taste. Butler stood against this view by making conscience the principle of reflection upon the law of rightness to which all the other impulses in human nature must be subordinate.¹

The term conscience, is derived from the Latin *conscire*, to be conscious (of wrong). The Greek συνείδησις, the German Gewissen, and the old English Inwit, are similar in meaning. *Conscientia* used to be employed almost indifferently for conscience and for consciousness in general. The French writer, Malebranche, to whom Hume was so deeply indebted, used the term, conscience, more particularly in the sense of self-consciousness. Milton used the term to signify consciousness when in referring to the loss of his eyes he wrote:

What supports me dost thou ask?
The conscience, Friend, to have lost them overlaid
In liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.

This passage, however, carries with it also the implication of a moral consciousness. The term took on a definitely moral connotation with the writings of Butler. Mackenzie calls attention to the fact that:

¹ Matthews, W.R. Fifteen Sermons and a Dissertation Upon the Nature of Virtue by Joseph Butler, 1949, Sermon II, pp. 56, 57.

Even in the moral sense of the term there is some ambiguity. It sometimes means a feeling of pleasure or pain, and especially a feeling of pain, accompanying the violation of a recognized principle of duty. At other times it means the principle of judgment by which we pronounce one action or one kind of action to be right and another wrong. In the latter sense, again, it may refer to this principle of judgment as it appears in a particular individual or in a body of men. Such phrases as "the Non-conformist Conscience," "the Conscience of Europe" and the like, illustrate this use of the term.¹

Paley's debate with the moral sense philosophers raged around the fact that they refused to go behind the mere facts of moral experience. His thought on the subject was the legitimate result of a thoroughgoing empiricism derived from Locke. He held that instead of being born with an adequate supply of moral maxims, we, in reality, obtain our first notions of moral good and evil by observing the conduct of others. He followed Locke and Tucker in thinking of man as a receptive waxen tablet rather than a bundle of tendencies and predispositions.

As previously stated Paley had no debate with the fact that man was in possession of a conscience. On the contrary, his sermons abound in such passages as follow:

¹ Mackenzie, J.S. A Manual of Ethics, fourth edition, 1900, p. 146.

A serious man hardly ever passes a day, never a week, without meeting some warning to his conscience.¹

The quickening or stirring of conscience within us is sometimes the first sign of a renewed and regenerated soul. There have been disputes concerning this principle of conscience, its origin, nature, extent, but all sides agree on one thing, namely, that it may be dead for a time in the human breast without any energy or activity whatsoever. The causes of this torpor and deadness, or rather the circumstances under which it is found have been often assigned. In many cases, I am afraid, it takes place so early in life that the person can hardly be said to have ever known what the remonstrances and admonitions of conscience were—This state of complete depravity in the effect of a totally neglected education, and of being thrown, when very young, amongst profligate examples.²

Paley's insistence that the moral sense is not innate but a product of education is seen further when he declares that:

When a mind, perfectly ignorant, uninstructed and uneducated, falls at first into debauched and profligate society, then it is possible that conscience may never spring up—its influence³ over the heart may never have a commencement.

p. 23

¹The Works of William Paley, Vol. V, Sermon 4,

²The Sermons of William Paley, p. 115.

³Ibid., p. 116.

Hutcheson, who had developed the system of Shaftesbury, had contended from the fact that the majority of men approve of virtue immediately and apparently without regard to their own interest that only the presence of an innate moral sense could account for this. He held that the moral sense is "a determination of our minds to receive amiable or disagreeable ideas of actions."¹ It should be said that Hutcheson later relinquished the view of the moral sense as a feeling of pleasure or pain and thought of it as a regulator of all our powers.

John Gay, whose influence on Paley came indirectly through the works of Abraham Tucker, held that instead of untying the knot, Hutcheson simply cut it. That is to say, he felt that Hutcheson had not in reality explained disinterested action when he naively referred to the operation of an innate moral sense. Gay undertook to account for man's approval of good by a theory which later flowered into the associational psychology.

He admitted that men approve virtue immediately and yet affirmed that such approval was the result of their having in

¹ Inquiry Into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, p. 94.

the past associated pleasure with that which is approved. The love of money is used by Gay to illustrate the above. He states that men were not born with the love for money but rather perceived at first the many advantages money would bring. From thence they perceive the pleasure of possessing money, thence they desire and endeavor to obtain it. Then an actual pleasure is experienced in obtaining it. Thenceforth they desire to preserve the possession of it. Gay continues:

Hence by dropping the intermediate steps between money and happiness, they join money and happiness immediately together and content themselves with the fantastical pleasure of having it, and make that which was at first pursued only as a means, to be to them a real end, and what their real happiness, or misery consists in.¹

This principle of association, which was later to become prominent in the work of David Hartley, Gay believed to be sufficient to explain the disinterested practice of virtue. Concluding his answer to Hutcheson's doctrine, Gay writes:

It is necessary in order to solve the principle actions of human life to suppose a moral sense (or what is signified by that name) and also public affections: but I deny that this moral sense,

¹ An Essay on the Origin of Evil, p. LLV.

or these public affections are innate or implanted in us; they are acquired either from our own observation or the imitation of others.¹

A closer examination of Paley's argument will reveal how similar his approach was to that of Gay. He introduces his argument with a story that apparently was very familiar to the moralists of his day:

The father of Caius Toranius had been proscribed by the triumvirate. Caius Toranius, coming over to the interests of that party, discovered to the officers who were in pursuit of his father's life, the place where he concealed himself, and gave them withal a description, by which they might distinguish his person when they found him. The old man, more anxious for the safety and fortunes of his son than about the little that might remain of his own life, began immediately to inquire of the officers who seized him, whether his son was well, whether he had done his duty to the satisfaction of his generals? "That son," replied one of the officers, "so dear to thy affections, betrayed thee to us; by his information thou art apprehended and diest." The officer with this struck a poniard to his heart, and the unhappy parent fell, not so much affected by his fate, as by the means to which he owed it.²

The question is then raised, if this story were related to a savage without experience, and without instruction, cut off

¹ Ibid., p. LXII.

² Paley, William, The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. v, pp. 6, 7.

in his infancy from all intercourse with his species, and, consequently, under no possible influence of example, authority, education, sympathy or habit, whether such a one upon hearing this story would feel any degree of disapprobation of Toranius's conduct? Those who believe in the existence of the moral sense say that he would.

It should be noted here that Paley is using an impossible analogy. If such a person should be found, it would hardly be proper to use him as a case in point from which to deduce that which is native to a normal man, for the obvious reason, that man upon coming into the world comes into a society, and that which is developed in such a society is a part of his normal equipment. Apart from such society it is doubtful if he could learn to reason, and the analogy could, in this instance, be used just as well to argue that the ability to reason is not the gift of nature to man.

Those who believe in an innate moral sense do so on the grounds that examples of generosity, gratitude and fidelity are immediately approved while their opposites are immediately condemned without deliberation and without having any personal interest in them. They contend that many times we are unable to state a reason for our approbation. Furthermore, it is affirmed

that this approbation is uniform and universal and therefore indicates the operation of the moral sense. Replying to these arguments Paley follows Locke's pattern of disproving innate ideas by asking if there are innate moral maxims, how many are there and what are they?

Paley first of all denies the uniformity of moral approbations, contending that, "there is scarce a single vice which in some age or country of the world has not been countenanced by public opinion."¹ He cites as an example the fact that in some lands it is considered man's chief responsibility to care for his aged parents while in other lands it is considered an obligation to dispatch them out of the way. What Paley overlooks is the fact that even in the lands where the aged parents are destroyed the motive behind it is to save them from a wretched old age and is, therefore, a benevolent motive. From this it might be argued that man is universally prompted to do good whether or not there is agreement on what the good is.

Secondly, he contends that the general approbation of some actions can be accounted for without the assistance of the

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. V, p. 8.

moral sense. Here Paley goes back to Gay who had shown that approbations are not innate or implanted in us by way of instinct but are all deduced from the fact that rational creatures are dependent upon one another for their happiness.¹ Rather than an innate moral sense man has only the ability to determine what is best for himself and others. Paley accounted for the general approbation of certain actions by saying that these actions had proved beneficial in past experience and that after such approbation has arisen in our minds, the sentiment continues to accompany our idea of the same conduct although the benefit which incited it no longer exists.

Taking its rise in this manner the continuity of the custom of approving certain actions may be accounted for by the principle of authority, by the principle of imitation and by the habit of approving certain actions inculcated in early youth.² As men grow up there arise fresh accessions of moral strength and vigor from censure and encouragement, from the reading of books and the hearing of conversations. Thus moral approval and disapproval of

¹ An Essay on the Origin of Evil, p. XXXVI.

² The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. V, p. 10.

certain acts is communicated to all members of society. For Paley the distinctive faculty in man that separates him from the brute is not an innate moral sense but the ability to judge what is best for him and his ability to be trained along moral lines. His conscience then is the product of the impact made upon him by his society.

Paley draws upon Hume for the reinforcement of his argument. Hume writes the following:

From instances of popular tumults, seditions, factions, panics, and of all passions which are shared with a multitude, we may learn the influence of society in exciting and supporting any emotion; while the most ungovernable disorders are raised, we find, by that means, from the slightest and most frivolous occasions. He must be more or less than man who kindles not in the common blaze. What wonder, then, that moral sentiments are found of such influence in life, though springing from principles which may appear, at first sight, somewhat small and delicate.¹

Paley sees the principle of imitation as a vital factor in the determination of moral conduct. In his discussion of imitation in children, Paley goes further than either Gay or Tucker, with whom he was in agreement on the principles of association

¹ Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 326.

mentioned above. He states that "if there be anything in them (children) which deserves the name of instinct it is their propensity to imitation."¹ Children imitate nothing more readily than expressions of affection and aversion, of approbation, hatred, resentment and the like; and when these passions and expressions are once connected, which they soon will be by the same association which unite words with their ideas, the passion will follow the expression and attach upon the object to which the child has been accustomed to apply the epithet. "In a word, when almost everything else is learned by imitation, can we wonder to find the same cause concerned in the generation of our moral sentiments?"²

Paley anticipated Mills' conclusion that the morality of action is perceived by the same senses by which other qualities of action are perceived;³ however, it appears that the fallacy in his argument is that he failed to distinguish between the idea of conscience, which defines it as the ability to draw a distinction between right and wrong, and the idea, which says that conscience

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Chapter V, p. 11.

² Ibid.

³ Mill, J. S. Dissertations and Discussions Political, Philosophical and Historical, Second Edition, Vol. I, p. 139.

is the totality of our moral ideas. Professor Adam Sedgwick wrote, "No one now speaks of an innate knowledge of morality, an innate moral sense or faculty, defining and determining the quality of all our moral judgments is all for which we contend."¹ If man does not possess as a part of his native equipment the ability to make a distinction between right and wrong, it is difficult to see how he could ever be adequately trained into a moral being no matter how wide and varied his experiences. On the other hand, it is very apparent that what a man calls right and what he calls wrong is the result of his training. Perhaps Paley would agree that man has by nature the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, but this ability he would not call the moral sense. He would surely understand that without this ability man could not be morally responsible.

Paley apparently considers it the same thing to disprove the existence of moral maxims and to disprove an innate moral faculty, but one would not say that because a man is not born with certain innate tunes that he has no ear for music. Paley might as

¹ Sedgwick, Adam. A Discourse on the Studies of the University of Cambridge, p. 57.

well have used his story of the wild boy to disprove the existence of human reason on the grounds that the unprejudiced savage could not have been made to understand immediately that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are demonstrably equal to each other.

In discussing what he considers to be the pernicious tendencies which he sees in the doctrine of the moral sense, Paley contends that moral judgments based on innate maxims are always arbitrary, for there are no maxims that are absolutely and universally true. Even veracity, which would appear above all others to be a natural duty, must bend to circumstances, for it is often justifiably violated in cases in which an enemy, a thief, or a madman is involved.¹

The further objection to the moral instinct is raised by Paley on the ground that in order to make the instinct intelligible there must have been implanted together with the instinct a clear and precise idea of the object upon which it was to attach. The instinct and the idea of the object are inseparable even in the

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. V, p. 11.

imagination, and, as is true of all correlative ideas, must necessarily accompany each other.¹ In other words, if we be prompted by nature to the approbation of particular actions, we must have received also from nature a distinct conception of the action we are thus prompted to approve. This, Paley contends, we certainly have not received.² From this he concludes that either no such instincts as compose what is commonly called the moral sense exist, or that they are not different from prejudices and habits and are, therefore, untrustworthy in moral reasoning. Says he:

I mean that it is not a safe way of arguing, to assume certain principles as so many dictates, impulses, and instincts of nature, and then to draw conclusions from these principles, as to the rectitude or wrongness of actions, independent of the tendency of such actions, or of any other consideration whatever.³

In reply to Paley's insistence that ideas and instincts must be conjoined it might be suggested that the existence of an instinct does not presuppose in the animal notions of those objects on which the instinct is to be exerted. For example, a duck in his

¹ Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. V, p. 12.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

shell has no notion of water. But perhaps this analogy would not apply in the realm of rational beings. Furthermore, to Paley's objection based on the lack of uniformity in the notions of good and evil, it might be said that the perversion of the moral sense does not argue against its reality. Moreover, it is not the presence of correct moral judgments but rather the presence of any kind of moral judgment that argues in favor of the moral sense. The power of discerning the presence of a moral quality in action is evidence that man is a moral being. Paley's argument would, therefore, prove the existence in many areas of a defective moral sense but not the non-existence of a moral sense. Even wrong actions may be justified on the basis of a good intention. One, for example, who has been trained to believe that the world is a place of misery and that the infant is better off not to encounter its troubles, might be said to have a good motive even in practicing infanticide. To find such practice would thus not prove that there are in certain areas parents who do not love their children. Rousseau argues for the universality of good intentions in the following passage:

Cast your eyes over all the nations of the world and all the histories of nations amid so many inhuman and absurd superstitions, amid that prodigious diversity of manners and characters,

you will find everywhere the same principles and distinctives of moral good and evil. The paganism of the ancient world produced indeed, abominable gods, who, on earth, would have been shunned or punished as monsters; and who offered, as a picture of supreme happiness, only crimes to commit, or passions to satiate. But vice, armed with this sacred authority, descended in vain from the eternal abode. She found in the heart of man, a moral instinct to repel her. The continence of Zenocrates was admired by those who celebrated the debaucheries of Jupiter. The chaste Lucretia adored the unchaste Venus. The most intrepid Roman sacrificed to fear. He invoked the god who dethroned his father and died without a murmur by the hand of his own. The most contemptible divinities were served by the greatest men. The holy voice of nature, stronger than that of the gods, made itself heard, and respected, and obeyed on earth, and seemed to banish to the confines of heaven guilt and the guilty.¹

The pernicious tendency residing in conduct based on self-evident maxims Paley illustrates by suggesting that Aristotle, who believed in an innate moral sense, contended that it was a fundamental and self-evident maxim that nature intended barbarians to be slaves.² This view Paley felt would militate against moral progress,

¹ Quoted by Francis Wayland, The Elements of Moral Science (1847), p. 52.

² Paley was mistaken Aristotle at this point. What Aristotle actually says in the Politics is that the only person who can be regarded as (δούλος φύσει) a 'slave by nature', is one who though capable of acting under another's direction is incapable of acting rationally by himself, and that he has a natural right to freedom as soon as he becomes capable of being his own master. He may, however, be retained by force in a state of slavery.

for such philosophy merely attempts to discover reasons and excuses for opinions and practices that are already in vogue. Paley was revolting against the divinizing of the status-quo by men like Burke and Hume, for he felt that such a movement contains no dynamic for the eradication of existing evils.

Paley concludes his argument against the moral instincts by contending that a moral philosophy built upon such instincts would be inadequate to move a man toward moral behavior. Even if moral instincts do exist, if a man has only to reckon with the pangs of his own conscience over the violation of such instincts, then he would often be found willing to endure the pangs of conscience for what he considered the greater pleasure of sin. Paley thus recognized that the moral sense philosophers were asking for a kind of reverence toward that which is within man which man will hardly grant toward anything save that which is outside and above himself, namely, God.

It should be remembered that Paley did not consider the conscience of less importance because it had been acquired. He did not make the mistake of some moralists who felt that to explain the origin of the conscience was at the same time to explain it away. Having thus discussed the inadequacy of the law of honor, the law of

the land, the Scriptures and the moral sense in the formulation of moral philosophy, Paley affirms his belief in the necessity of a more adequate objective standard in ethics by which actions may be judged. He then proceeds to lay the foundation upon which such an objective standard may be built.

Paley's more remote heritage in Richard Cumberland and his more immediate heritage in John Gay¹, Abraham Tucker² and John Locke³ are revealed in his definition of virtue which for him was "the doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God and for the sake of everlasting happiness."⁴ This definition, which makes the "good of mankind" the subject, the "will of God"; the rule and "everlasting happiness" the motive of human virtue, contains all the essential principles of Paley's system of ethics.

In the school of theological utilitarianism three names are prominent, Gay, Tucker and Paley. The distinguishing feature in Paley's definition, which sets it apart from that of John Gay and

¹ King, William. An Essay on the Origin of Evil, Preliminary Essay by John Gay, p. XXXVI.

² The Light of Nature Pursued, Pt. I, Ch. XXII, Sect. 2

³ Essay on Human Understanding, Bk. IV, Ch. XXI, p. 370.

⁴ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I. Ch. VII, p. 27.

Abraham Tucker, is his emphasis on eschatology. For him as for Butler life on this earth is a probation. Paley carried the results of human conduct into eternity and thus provided for his system a stronger theological sanction than appears in either of his predecessors. Tucker used the theological sanction very sparingly and avoided it altogether except where his system logically demanded it. On the other hand, Paley's system is permeated with theological references. He leans heavily upon the doctrines of rewards and punishments in eternity, while John Gay, whom we have observed to be the father of theological utilitarianism, makes no use of this idea at all. In saying this, the writer is not unmindful of the claim that all of the essential features of Paley's ethics were contained in Gay's Dissertation.¹ A careful examination of this Dissertation, however, has not revealed a single reference to rewards and punishments after death. On the other hand, there is scarcely one of Paley's sermons that does not mention it. Passages like the following occur very frequently.

The things of this world are diminished to nothing, when we place them by the side of that great event (eternal judgment) which will arrive to all of us.²

¹Hastings, James. Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge. "Article on Utilitarianism." Vol. XII, p. 560.

²Paley's Sermons, Vol. V, Sermon XXXIV, p. 313.

All the struggles, all the self-denial, all the pains we go through to preserve our virtue, will meet with a proportionable reward, a far more exceeding weight of glory.¹

The modern mind is prone to rebel at so bald a statement of rewards and punishments after death. For most writers of the eighteenth century, however, it was not apparent how the moral order could hold together without this, and for Paley it was not apparent why happiness in Heaven should be any more disreputable as a human goal than happiness on earth. Tucker had a more ingenious eschatology than did Paley. He turns his eschatology into a form of Universalism which Paley never embraced. Furthermore, Tucker embraced Cumberland's belief that eternal happiness and perfection are vitally related so that they form an additional incitement to the individual agent to seize every little opportunity of contributing towards an advancement of the life of the entire race of humanity. Tucker also sees with Locke that punishment cannot be absolutely endless, for this would violate the principle of equity by keeping the balance perpetually on one side. He reasons that since wickedness is permitted by Heaven, it must be for some purpose and that God

¹ Ibid., Sermon VI, p. 46.

could not be good if he did not purpose that the wicked in suffering for their sins should have some benefit from their sufferings.¹ In other words, suffering must be remedial. Paley was far too orthodox to allow his speculations to go so far. According to Mill, Paley does hold that our place hereafter will be determined by our degree of moral perfection, but this is not to be construed to mean that we shall be judged by the balance of our good and evil deeds, which depend upon opportunity and temptation. Rather shall we be judged by the intensity and continuity of our will to do good. That is to say, we shall be judged not by our deeds but by our dispositions.² He steadfastly believed that every step of advance in the direction of moral perfection will be something gained towards everlasting welfare. Paley is very close to the emphasis of St. Paul who made his appeal for sustained Christian service on the basis of the doctrine of resurrection. Following the discussion of the resurrection of the dead, St. Paul writes: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."³

¹ Light of Nature Pursued, Vol. II, p. 670.

² Mill, J. S. Dissertations and Discussions, Political and Historical, (1848) Second Edition, Vol. I, p. 153.

³ I Corinthians 15:58.

Shaftesbury's argument against basing ethics on rewards and punishments had been rather strongly felt until even the more optimistic types of theism were omitting this from their system in Paley's day and replacing it with an appeal for virtue for virtue's sake. Shaftesbury was insisting that to be honest without thought of heaven or hell is precisely the mark of a disinterested lover of virtue, and at the same time, Holbach was calling the doctrine of the future life "that mirage which blinds men to the real and remediable evils of the present life."¹ Believing that self-interest was the ruling principle in human nature, Paley was faced with the task of showing that it was to the agent's interest to be moral. No argument could prove this would always be true without the supernatural sanction of morality. Hence, Paley believed that theological utilitarianism which held out rewards and punishments after death was the only natural position for a Christian to embrace.

Furthermore, Paley believed that utilitarian theories had often suffered from a practical deficiency, for the motives they had offered to induce the individual to sacrifice his own pleasure to the happiness of society had not been sufficient. Paley's belief in a

¹ Systeme De La Nature.

Righteous Judge of the world who would mete out rewards and punishments in eternity thus had its advantages over theories which could only appeal to decidedly uncertain human sanctions.

After arriving at a sanction for his ethic, Paley undertakes an analysis of the virtues. In this he neither follows the primitive Christian pattern nor the medieval attempt to harmonize the Christian with the Greek ethical traditions. The Greek moral teaching has Plato as its originator and named four cardinal virtues—wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. The New Testament tradition recognized three cardinal graces—faith, hope and charity. The scholastics worked out an ethical pattern by combining the four Platonic virtues with the Pauline three and thus arrived at the seven cardinal Virtues which they set in contrast with the seven deadly Sins. They called the first four the 'natural virtues' and the remaining three the 'supernatural' virtues.'

Professor John Baillie calls attention to the fact that:

Such a solution appears as mechanical, and as lacking in true historical understanding, as the corresponding distinction between natural and revealed theology. The Platonic and Pauline lists are, fundamentally, not complementary but rival statements, each claiming to cover in itself the whole necessary ground;

so that instead of attempting to accept them both as they stand, we must either work them into one another or else choose between them.¹

A glaring weakness in Paley's system is that, while standing in the Christian tradition, he utterly overlooks the Pauline virtues and gives attention first of all to those he received from Plato and then makes a list of his own, very few of which are distinctly Christian. The four cardinal virtues which Paley names are: prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice. Beyond these cardinal virtues Paley further divides all virtues into three kinds of duties: first, duties towards God, as piety, reverence, resignation and gratitude; secondly, duties toward other men, or relative duties; as justice, charity, fidelity and loyalty; and thirdly, duties toward ourselves; as chastity, sobriety, temperance, preservation of life and care of health.²

The motive behind all moral conduct for Paley is human happiness. He does not, however, confine this to the happiness of the individual agent, for it is "the tendency of the action to promote or diminish the general happiness,"³ which makes it right or wrong.

¹ Our Knowledge of God, p. 128.

² The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, p. 28.

³ Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. vii, p. 28.

He thus unduly simplifies the motive of action making pleasure the end of action rather than the by-product of the achievement of another end. Paley does not recognize the fundamental paradox in hedonism that the impulse towards pleasure, if too dominant will defeat its own aim. He overlooks the fact which Butler pointed out, that many kinds of pleasure would not exist were it not preceded by desires for other objects. For example, the object of hunger is the eating of food, not the pleasure of eating it.¹ Even when the emphasis is placed not on individual but general happiness, still there remains the fact, as Hutcheson pointed out, that unless the desire for happiness is preceded by the desire for the welfare of others, no happiness could result therefrom. "Pleasure ensues upon the satisfaction of certain wants and the wants must be prior to the satisfaction."² Paley does not discuss whether it is total or average happiness that is to be sought nor does he tell us how far we are to consider the interests of posterity when they seem to be in conflict with those of the present generation.

¹ Butler, Joseph. Fifteen Sermons and A Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue. Sermon I, pp. 36, 37.

² Mackenzie, J. S. A Manual of Ethics, p. 72.

Paley's definition of happiness on first sight appears to be purely quantitative. He writes: "In strictness, any condition may be denominated happy, in which the amount or aggregate of pleasure exceeds that of pain, and the degree of happiness depends upon the quantity of this excess."¹ Happiness in this passage appears to be closely identified with pleasure and in the absolute sense is defined simply as "the greatest quantity of it (pleasure) ordinarily attainable in human life."² Sharing the aversion to metaphysics common in his day, Paley in no wise attempts to differentiate between the rational and the physical pleasures, for to him pleasures differ in nothing but in continuance and intensity.³ This apparent denial of qualitative distinctions between different classes of pleasures and pains sounds commonplace enough now, for it is generally agreed that it is the only consistent view for hedonism; however, while other English writers like John Gay had held views from which this position was deduced, Abraham Tucker was the first to state it,⁴ and it would seem that Paley is following

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. vi, p. 14.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 15.

⁴ The Light of Nature Pursued, Ch. XVI, Sect. 1.

him at this point. Professor Whewell called this opinion brutish since it recognizes no difference between the pleasures of man and those of the lowest animals.

Furthermore, it would appear that Paley naively believed that the computation of pleasure can be accurately made simply by observing the apparent cheerfulness, tranquillity and contentment of men of different tastes, tempers, stations and pursuits as if to say that the incalculable complexity of the human soul can be explored by observing a man's outward appearances. This reasoning is not unlike that of the student whose shoddy religiosity allowed him to contend that he could tell whether or not a man possessed the Holy Spirit by the way he smiled.

A more thorough reading of Paley, however, will show that his definition of pleasure includes a qualitative emphasis and that Professor Whewell's accusation that he lumped all pleasures together is somewhat harsh. On the contrary, he expressly denies that all pleasure is productive of happiness. For him, happiness consists neither in pleasures of the senses, be they the animal gratification of the appetite for food or the more refined pleasures of music, nor in exemption from pain, nor in human greatness, for the pleasures of sense are fading. The exemption from physical

pain does not free us from depression of spirits, and the pleasures of ambition are never fully satisfied. The only pleasures which are productive of happiness, Paley maintained, are those which possess the quality of endurance.¹ That which sets man's pleasure apart from the animals' is the fact that he has the ability to know beforehand those pleasures that endure. Hence, at this point, Paley was very close to Aristotle for whom pleasure was the satisfaction of the human being as a whole.

Instead of embracing the naive position with which he has been associated, Paley, in reality contends that since the capacity and constitution of men are so diverse, it is impossible to propose a plan of happiness which will succeed for all. He reasons that we can only hope with our limited means to ascertain those conditions of life in which men in general find cheerfulness and contentment and although the apparent happiness of mankind is not always a true measure of their real happiness, Paley contends that it remains the best measure that we have.²

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. vi, p. 20.

² Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. vi, p. 21.

Having settled on this hedonistic principle, Paley reasons that happiness consists in four things. First, it consists in the exercise of the social affections.¹ Those persons, who are surrounded by many objects of affection and endearment such as wife, children, kindred and friends, usually possess good spirits. The peevishness of monks and those who live a monastic life is attributed to the absence of those social affections. In this corporate social life described above there are opportunities for acts of bounty and beneficence which are productive of pleasure.

Again, it is observable that "the exercise of our faculties either of body or mind in the pursuit of some engaging end,"² is another main source of human happiness. The plentitude of present gratifications is not adequate to make the possessor happy unless he have something to look forward to in reserve. This intolerable vacuity of mind accounts for "the dejection and ennui of almost all who are either born to so much that they want nothing more, or who have used up their satisfactions too soon, and drained

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 22.

the sources of them."¹

The hope which is most important for our happiness is not that of idle repining but rather that which is most productive of engagement and activity. Herein, according to Paley, lies the value of a belief in a future state:

A man who is in earnest in his endeavors after the happiness of a future state, has in this respect an advantage over all the world; for he has constantly before his eyes an object of supreme importance, productive of perpetual engagement and activity, and of which the pursuit (which can be said of no pursuit besides) lasts him to his life's end. Yet even he must have many ends, besides the far end; but then they will conduct to that, be subordinate, and in some way or other capable of being referred to that and derive their satisfaction, or an addition of happiness from that.²

Significant engagement in projects such as public works, charities, etc., is a bulwark against the inroads of peevishness and irascibility, for Paley saw that when business engages the mind, man is usually happy, and that it is the intolerable idleness of mind that makes him so often miserable.

In the third place, Paley observes that happiness is dependent upon the prudent constitution of habits. "The art in which

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

the secret of human happiness in a great measure consists is, to set the habits in such a manner, that every change may be a change for the better."¹ He is not as rigid in his doctrine as was Aristotle who made the main issue in the moral life the establishment of good habits and then attributed to them such control over human conduct that moral freedom was virtually destroyed. On the contrary, Paley contended that the habits that are most advantageous are those which allow a deviation from them, for, said he, rigidity, or conformity often produces boredom and thus defeats man's true end which is happiness. For example, the socialite who habitually resorts in crowds receives no exhilaration from them as does the man who has learned to live alone and only occasionally enters the crowd. Solitude comes to the one clothed with melancholy; to the other, it brings liberty and quiet. On the same principle, Paley reasons that in circumstances of fortune it is not the income which a man possesses but the increase of income that affords the pleasure.²

Although Paley argues in favor of keeping one's habits flexible, he, nevertheless, places great emphasis on the value of

¹ Ibid., p. 24.

² Ibid., p. 26, Bk. I, Ch. vi.

habits in the regulation of human conduct. Contrary to the opinion of many of his critics, Paley had not insisted upon the adequacy of the hedonistic calculus for determining the course of conduct.¹ In fact, neither Paley nor his predecessor, Tucker, taught that we are to determine the morality of a particular action by computing its probable effects in the individual case. On the contrary, among the utilitarians it was Tucker who first anticipated the criticism which was to be so often brought against Paley by his critics.² Because Tucker and Paley recognized man's inability to compute adequately the consequences of his conduct they both insisted that we must act on general principles of expediency, not merely because we are intellectually finite beings, but because we are largely creatures of habit. The utilitarian theme was later brought into disrepute by the emphasis of Bentham who seemed to hold that we must compute our individual acts by this utilitarian principle instead of acting by general "rules" of utility.³

Although not an hedonist himself, Hutcheson has assumed without question the possibility of computing with sufficient exactness

¹ Ibid., p. 29.

² The Light of Nature Pursued, Ch. XXII, SS. 11, 12.

³ An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, pp. lff.

the effects of different kinds of actions, as regards their tendency for the general happiness, or unhappiness and of thus determining their 'objective' goodness or badness. As a matter of fact, only Hartley and Berkeley had even recognized a difficulty involved in the hedonistic calculus until Tucker did his work. Moreover, their suggestion of the difficulty was very general.

Tucker's blazing honesty caused him not only to recognize the difficulty involved in his theory but even to give it an over-emphasis. The following passage is a case in point:

Our tastes, varying as much as our faces, make us very bad judges of one another's enjoyments... Nor do we judge much better of our own pleasure, for want of being well aware of their aptness to cloy upon repetition, and to change their relish perpetually according to our disposition of mind or body, or the circumstances we happen to stand in: neither can we trust even experience itself in this case for because a thing has pleased us once, we cannot always be sure it will do so again... But if we make mistakes in estimating pleasures singly, we commit more in computing the value of a series of them taken collectively... Therefore, we are forced to take our pleasures in the lump, and estimate them upon view; as a man who guesses at a flock of sheep by the ground they cover, without being able to count them, and who will do it very imperfectly, until he has gotten an expertness by long and careful practice. For absent enjoyments, whether past or future, being not actually existent, we cannot hold them as it were in our hand to weigh them, but must

judge by the representative idea we have of them in our imagination; and we ordinarily determine their value by the degree of desire we feel in ourselves toward them.

The value of the above passage is that it shows that while Tucker was a thoroughgoing hedonist, he anticipated nearly all of the objections that were later to be raised by the anti-hedonists except the very important one which Spencer used in his early criticism of the Expediency Philosophy in Social Statistics, namely, that hedonistic values vary with the development of moral character.

The objections to Paley's principle of measuring conduct by its tendency to promote or diminish the general happiness may be summed up in three major points, namely, the inability of man to calculate accurately the consequences of his actions, the contention that happiness is not the sole determinant of man's action, and the fact that there is nothing distinctly Christian about this principle. It might be added that these were the criticisms levelled against Paley in his own day. Kant's most devastating contention that such a principle deals only with questions of prudence and does not penetrate the field of morals at all came later and will be considered in the final chapter of this thesis.

¹ The Light of Nature Pursued, Ch. XXII, SS 11, 12.

Let us now examine the first objection to Paley's principle, namely, that man is unable to calculate accurately the consequences of his conduct. It is said that the endless chain of causes and effects may be known only to omniscience and not by the limited faculties of man.¹ In answer to this, it should be remembered that Paley, along with the other early Utilitarians did not make of their system a mere calculating theory in this obviously impracticable sense. Furthermore, while Paley did not believe that man had the ability to calculate the infinite consequences of his actions, he recognized at the same time that the very possibility of free moral actions is based upon our ability to foresee their consequences in a general way.²

However imperfect our foresight may be, it remains a strong determinant of our conduct. It is not perfect, but neither is anything else in our constitution. Again, it should be remembered that the individual agent does not stand alone to predict the consequences of his actions, for he has not only his past experience to guide him but the accumulated wisdom of the ages. Hence, the uncertainty of the consequences of his actions is not as great as it

¹ Gisborne, Thomas. The Principles of Moral Philosophy Investigated and Applied to the Constitution of Civil Society, p. 53.

² Mill, J. S. Dissertations and Discussions, Political, Philosophical, and Historical, Second Edition, Vol. I, p. 141.

might appear at first thought.

The second objection to Paley's principle, namely, that happiness should not be the sole pre-determinant of man's conduct, is the most damaging of all. No one denies that happiness is desirable and to be sought. Nor can we deny that in a moral universe in some very real sense goodness and happiness are correlatives, as the seed and the fruit, but what we are not prepared to accept is that happiness is the sole pre-determinant of action. Life is far too complex for its springs of action to be thus simplified. Nor is it true that any one principle has yet been found that of itself offers to man an adequate guide. From a rational standpoint Paley's argument moves in a circle. He reasons from the goodness of God that He must desire every man's happiness, and when he is asked why we are to seek happiness, he answers because it is the will of God. The strong point in such argument is that it starts with an absolute and as Karl Barth is telling us today, man cannot live without an absolute. This is not to say that Barth would agree with Paley. His criticism of Paley would be the same that he brings against all natural theology, namely, that it fails to preserve the gulf between God and man, and when man arrives at a principle by which he may determine the will of God, he simply indicates that he has

taken God into his possession. This, for Barth, destroys the true meaning of revelation and robs God of his majesty. We shall discuss this further in the final chapter of this thesis.

The final objection to Paley's principle revolves around the fact that it is not distinctly Christian. It is seen that while Paley identifies rules of expediency with the will of God, he at the same time concludes that no such rules are absolutely binding. He contends that:

Moral philosophy cannot pronounce that any rule of morality is so rigid as to bend to no exceptions; nor on the other hand, can she comprise these exceptions within any previous description. She confesses that the obligation of every law depends upon its ultimate utility; that this utility having a finite and determinate value, situations may be feined, and consequently may possibly arise, in which the general tendency is outweighed by the enormity of the particular mischief; and of course, when ultimate utility, and consequently the will of God, render it as much an act of duty to break the rule as it is on other occasions to observe it.¹

But perhaps Paley is concerned here only to say that what appeared at one time to be the will of God for a man and on this authority was formulated as a rule of conduct may be altered under different circumstances.

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. VI, Ch. xii, p. 498.

It is further argued that the Deists, who did not believe in a special revelation, might be guided by Paley's principle as well as the orthodox Christian. Warburton affirms that Boyle, Collins, Tindal, Bolingbroke, and all the other writers against Revelation, except Hobbes, labored to show the Gospel system to be in the highest degree unreasonable.¹ A reference to Leland's account of deistical writers will show that by the term, "unreasonable", Warburton probably meant inexpedient. If, then, expediency is to be the supreme guide of Christian and non-Christian alike, what part is Christianity to play in determining man's moral conduct? Paley would answer by saying that Christianity affords the necessary sanction by offering rewards and punishments in eternity. We must bear in mind that Paley was not so much concerned with the discovery of ethical knowledge as he was with the provision of a strong sanction.

A direct appeal to Scripture has also been made to show that in no part of the Scripture are we directed to frame our conduct in obedience to the rule of expediency.² Gisborne argues that there are two kinds of rules in the Scripture, absolute and precise rules

¹ Warburton, William. Alliance Between Church and State. (4th edition), p. 78, note.

² Gisborne, Thomas. The Principles of Moral Philosophy Investigated and Applied to the Constitution of Civil Society, pp. 50, 51.

prohibiting idolatry, perjury, etc., and equally obligatory, general indeterminate rules, as reverence for parents. In the case of the first, no latitude is given for the exercise of human discretion while in the second, we are left to judge of the manner in which they are to be discharged. Yet there is no intimation in Scripture that expediency is to be the basis of our judgment. Moreover, it is contended that Revelation permits no doctrine that would be subversive to the spirit and obligation of her precepts. At the same time it is said that to allow every man to govern himself by expediency would take the government out of the hands of God and allow man to decide when God's laws are to be obeyed. It must be admitted that these criticisms may be justifiably brought against a thoroughgoing system of Utilitarianism. However, they manifest a decided misunderstanding of Paley's system. In the first place, let it be observed again that Paley is interested in applying the principle of expediency only where there is no clear word of God in the Scriptures. Not for a moment would Paley allow a man, as Gisborne contends that he does, to question the authority of God's written law and thus take to himself the authority to decide when he would or would not obey God's law. In the second place, it must readily be admitted that there is nothing distinctly Christian about Paley's principle of utility. This

also will be further discussed in the final chapter.

It was precisely because Paley recognized the limitations of the hedonistic calculus that he makes a strong appeal for the cultivation of proper habits. He contends that men rarely pause to deliberate on the moral implications of their conduct. On the contrary, action is determined immediately by an impulse which is the effect and energy of pre-established habits. In life's rapid opportunities there is little leisure for reflection. The value of good habits is seen in the fact that men who have to pause to deliberate when temptation confronts them usually reason themselves into error by what they consider at the time to be a plausible argument.¹ So strong does Paley believe the influence of certain habits to be that he virtually embraces a form of determinism which would leave a man so passive that he would not be free to choose his direction and would therefore all but be relieved of personal responsibility. At this point, Paley is close to the thoroughgoing determinism of Tucker.² We might ask if a man's conduct is determined by his habits, would it not be true that his teachers and his general environment rather than himself would be responsible for his conduct?

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. vii, p. 29.

² The Light of Nature Pursued, Ch. V, pt. I.

Paley would answer that man's responsibility lies "in the forming and contracting of these habits."¹ He writes:

There are habits, not only of drinking, swearing and lying, and of some other things, which are commonly acknowledged to be habits, and called so; but of every modification of action, speech and thought. Man is a bundle of habits.

There are habits of industry, attention, vigilance, advertency; of a prompt obedience to the judgement occurring, or of yielding to the first impulse of passion; of extending our views to the future, or of resting upon the present, of apprehending, methodizing, reasoning; of indolence and dilatoriness; of vanity, self-conceit, melancholy, partiality; of fretfulness, suspicion, captiousness, censoriousness; of pride, ambition, covetousness; of over-reaching; intriguing, projecting; in a word, there is not a quality of function, either of body or mind, which does not feel the influence of this great law of animated nature.²

From the above consideration, Paley deduces a rule of life which he believes to be of considerable importance, namely, that many things are to be done and abstained from, solely for the sake of habit. For Paley the proper course of moral development is for one to begin by considering the good of mankind as the subject, the will of God as the rule, and everlasting happiness as the

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. vii, p. 29.

² Ibid., p. 31.

motive and end of all virtue. When one becomes conformed to these principles, he performs many an act of virtue without having either the good of mankind, the will of God or everlasting happiness in his thoughts. Paley insists, however, that this can come about only as the result of having been consciously guided in the past by the desire to do the will of God, or to attain everlasting happiness or to contribute to the good of mankind, and that when these motives have solidified into a pattern of conduct, only then may they be forgotten.

The final factor in the production of happiness in Paley's system is health, which is simply defined as "freedom from bodily distempers." And also as "that tranquillity, firmness and alacrity of mind, which we call good spirit."¹ In this sense, health is of all things most needful and no price is too great to pay for it. It is an "enjoyment which the Deity has annexed to life."²

The next principle with which Paley was concerned was that of moral obligation. He presented this problem in the form of a question, namely, why am I obliged to keep my word? He then borrows the traditional answers cited by Gay.³ His first answer is

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. vi, p. 26.

² Ibid., p. 27.

³ Preliminary Dissertation Concerning the Fundamental Principle of Virtue or Morality, 1732, p. XXVIII.

that of the Cambridge Platonist, Richard Cudworth, namely, I am obliged because it is right; next he cites the Stoic answer, because it is agreeable to the fitness of things or because it is conformable to reason and nature; then the answer advanced by William Wollaston, because it is conformable to truth; the answer of Richard Cumberland, because it promotes the public good, and finally, the answer of John Locke, John Gay and Abraham Tucker, because it is required by the will of God. After citing these answers, Paley draws two conclusions. The first is that these answers all ultimately coincide:

The fitness of things, means their fitness to produce happiness; the nature of things, means that actual constitution of the world, by which some things, as such and such actions, for example, produce happiness, and others misery; reason is the principle by which we discover or judge of this constitution; truth is this judgment expressed or drawn out into propositions. So that it necessarily comes to pass, that what promotes the public happiness or happiness upon the whole, is agreeable to the fitness of things, to nature, to reason and to truth, and such is the divine character, that what promotes the general happiness is required by the will of God, and what has all the above properties, must needs be right; for right means no more than conformity to the rule we go by, whatever that rule be.¹

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. II.
Ch. i, pp. 36, 37.

The above, Paley believes, accounts for the fact that from whatever different principles moralists may begin their inquiry their conclusions ultimately coincide.

Paley's second conclusion is that not one of the traditional answers to the question of obligation is adequate, for upon receiving those answers to the question, why am I obliged to keep my word, a second question immediately occurs, namely, "Why am I obliged to do what is right, to act agreeably to the fitness of things, to conform to reason, nature, or truth, to promote the public good, or to obey the will of God?"¹ From this it appears necessary to inquire first into the meaning of obligation and then to cite reasons for such obligation.

Paley gives obligation the following meaning: "A man is said to be obliged when he is urged by a violent motive resulting from the command of another."² Strong emphasis is placed on the fact that the motive must be violent. For example, if one who has been my benefactor on a small scale should be a candidate for office and solicit my vote, I may out of a motive of gratitude give it to him, but it could hardly be said that I was obliged to

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 37.

do so. On the other hand, if my father, or master, any great benefactor or one on whom my fortune depends, solicits my vote, I would, because of the violent motive, be obliged to give it to him, and the only reason I need offer for such is that my father, master, or benefactor obliged me.

The second element that Paley finds necessary in obligation is that it must result from the command of another. It must come from without and from above rather than being self-imposed. He reasons that if I offer a man a gratuity for the performance of some service, he could not be said to be obliged to accept my offer. On the other hand, if such a man be commanded by a magistrate he is obliged to comply.

"Wherever the motive is violent enough and coupled with the idea of command, authority, law or the will of the superior, there, I take it, we always reckon ourselves to be obliged."¹ Hence, Paley concludes that we can be obliged by nothing except that by which we ourselves are to gain or lose something, for nothing else can constitute a violent motive to us. This is almost

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. II, Ch. ii, p. 38.

verbally the position which Butler advanced. Note the following passage from one of his sermons:

When we sit down in a cool hour we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it.¹

Paley went so far as to hold that we should not be obliged to obey the laws, or the magistrate, unless rewards or punishments, pleasure or pain, somehow or other depended upon our obedience. Neither should we be obliged to do what is right, to practice virtue, or to obey the commands of God unless we should gain by so doing or lose by not so doing.

It is very curious indeed that while Paley held that the individual's happiness must be subordinated to that of the public in general, his theory of obligation would make it impossible for him to make a sacrifice of his own happiness. He would agree with Butler, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson that self-renunciation could never be the result of calm deliberation. Paley would, therefore, pass under the judgment which Schleiermacher made on such theory when he wrote that the English school "with all

¹ Sermons, Vol. IV, p. 88.

their talk about virtue are really given up to pleasure."¹

Paley then answers the question why am I obliged to keep my word, by saying because I am urged to do so by a violent motive, namely, "the expectation of being after this life rewarded if I do, or punished if I do not, resulting from the command of another, namely, of God."² Beyond this, Paley sees no further question that can be asked. He, therefore, concludes that he has given a final answer to the question of moral obligation with the result that "private happiness is our motive and the will of God our rule"³ in all our behavior.

The chief weakness in such a position is that Paley reduces duty to meaning virtually the same thing as prudence. Furthermore, Paley fails to appreciate the fact that the distinction between prudence and duty was recognized even by those who did not recognize a divine command and who did not believe in a world to come. For example, Aristotle, who in his Ethics speaks of death as the "boundary beyond which there is neither good nor evil," and

¹ Kritik der bisherigen Settenlehre (1803), p. 54.

² The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. II, ch. iii, p. 39.

³ Ibid.

by Cicero in his De Officiis, who makes a distinction between the (Honestum) virtuous, and the (Utile) expedient and who derides the idea of fearing the wrath of Jupiter and gives no evidence that he believed in a personal existence after death. If, as Paley believed, the idea of virtue or duty is deducible only from the thought of rewards and punishments in the world to come, it is very strange indeed that we find these ideas in systems of ethics that made little or no use of this doctrine.

Paley expressly states that "he who would establish a system of morality independent of a future state, must look out for a different idea of moral obligation."¹ This position, however, is highly inconsistent with his account of how the idea of duty comes into being. That is to say, if the idea of duty is deducible only from the belief in a future state of rewards and punishments, then where such doctrine is not embraced it would be impossible for the idea of duty to come into being. Furthermore, where there is no idea of duty, there could be no moral obligation. By denying the doctrine of an innate moral sense and making the idea of duty dependent upon a belief in future rewards and punishments, Paley absolves the man

¹ Ibid.

who is ignorant of such future state from responsibility for his conduct, for as St. Paul wrote, "where there is no knowledge there is no transgression."¹ Neither could Paley say "Where there is no law every man is a law unto himself."²

Moreover, Paley's statement, that the difference between an act of prudence and an act of duty is that, in the one case, we consider what we shall gain in this life, and in the other what we shall lose in the next life, is like saying that sin does not lead to suffering because it is sin, but it is sin because it leads to suffering. At this point, Whately properly observes that this distinction between prudence and duty is no distinction at all, for whatever is done wholly and solely from motives of personal expediency, from calculations of individual loss or gain is always accounted a matter of prudence and not a virtue.³ This asks only what are the acts by which I will profit most? We need, however, in the face of such criticism again to remember that Paley was more interested in providing a strong sanction to enforce moral conduct than he was

¹ Romans 4:15.

² Romans 2:14.

³ Whately, Richard. Paley's Moral Philosophy With Annotations, Annotation to Chapter III, Bk. ii, p. 68.

in giving a principle by which moral acts could be defined, for it was the breakdown of strong and virile religion which he saw as the cause of the moral delinquency of his day.

Paley's theory of rewards and punishments is the only consistent answer that may be given if one is to show that the individual rather than society is to profit by his virtue. For those embracing the eschatological sanction in ethics there remains only one question, namely, "What actions will be rewarded, and what will be punished?" Paley's answer is, those actions which are in harmony with the will of God will be rewarded and those out of harmony with the will of God will be punished.

The question then arises, how are we to ascertain the will of God? In his answer, Paley might be called a rational revelationist. This is seen in the two methods which Paley proposes for ascertaining the will of God. The first is by the declarations of Scripture. The second is from the light of nature, or what we can learn of God's design from his works.¹ Paley believed with Locke that the works of nature everywhere sufficiently evidence a Deity

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. II, Ch. iv., p. 41.

and that "a rational creature who will but seriously reflect on them cannot miss the discovery of a Deity."¹ Paley affirms his belief in the complementary nature of natural and revealed religion. Both branches of religion, he contends, have the same object, namely, the discovery of the will of God, and are divinely ordained for that purpose.

Paley undertakes to answer Hume's complaint against the scheme of uniting ethics with Christian theology² by observing that Hume's own treatise, which is manifestly devoid of theological references, provides no adequate motives to withhold men from the gratification of lust, revenge and avarice, or to prevent these passions from arising.

For Paley, wherever the Scripture speaks specifically about a moral problem, no further inquiry needs to be made. However, he does not believe the Scriptures to be a mechanical book of rules; therefore, our knowledge of the will of God will come most often from the light of nature. Following Gay and Tucker he reasons that God, who is absolutely good, must will

¹ An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Bk. I, Ch. IV, pp. 37, 38.

² Principles of Morals, fourth Appendix.

the happiness of his creatures. Therefore, those actions which promote happiness must be agreeable to him. Thus Paley arrives at the fundamental principle of his entire system and to support such principle he offers the following conclusions concerning the Divine benevolence; when God created human beings one of three things might have constituted his intention, either he desired their happiness or he desired their misery or he was indifferent and unconcerned about both. The fact that he did not desire the misery of the race is demonstrated by the presence in the human constitution of senses which bring us more delight than pain. If God were some demoniacal power who desired the misery of his creation, "He, for example, might have made everything we tasted bitter, everything we saw loathsome, everything we touched a sting, every smell a stench, and every sound a discord."¹ If, on the other hand, God were not concerned about either our happiness or our misery, we must attribute to a very fortunate accident the fact that our senses have the capacity to receive pleasure and that so many external objects are capable of exciting it. Inasmuch as it is inconceivable that such should be the product of an accident, Paley

¹ Natural Theology, p. 384.

concludes that we are left with the remaining proposition, namely, that God, when He created the race, desired its happiness and made provisions for it.

This is the cosmological argument which was a part of the common stock of eighteenth century moralists and upon which Paley leaned so heavily in his theological writings.¹ He believed that the predominant tendency of the design was accurate proof of the disposition of the designer and found that all things with which he was acquainted were beneficial in design.

Paley finds the benevolence of the Deity more manifestly demonstrated in the pleasures of very young children than in anything else, for while the pleasures of adulthood may be considered in a sense as the product of their own development and education, the overwhelming joys of childhood may not be so construed. Seeing the hand of God in the joys of childhood, Paley again concludes that God must desire and ordain the happiness of his creatures. Having established this conclusion, Paley proceeds to the rule built upon it, namely, "that the method of coming at the will of God con-

¹ Evidences of Christianity, Natural Theology and Horae Paulinae.

cerning any action, by the light of nature is to inquire into the tendency of that action, to promote or diminish the general happiness."¹

Paley concludes that since actions are to be estimated by their tendency to promote or diminish happiness, it follows that "whatever is expedient is right. It is the utility of any moral rule alone which constitutes the obligation of it."² Actions in the abstract are to be denominated right or wrong according to their tendency, and the agent is virtuous or vicious, according to his design. For example, in answering the question, whether it be right or wrong to minister to the needs of a common beggar, it would first be necessary to ascertain whether such would tend to promote public advantage or inconvenience. In answering the question, whether a man who ministers to beggars is to be adjudged virtuous, we must first inquire into his design. If his liberality arose from charity, he would be esteemed a virtuous man, if it arose from ostentation, he would not be worthy of such

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. II, Ch. V, p. 46.

² Ibid., p. 46.

esteem. From such reasoning we may conclude that Paley went deeper into the springs of moral conduct than would the thoroughgoing utilitarian and that much of the criticism directed against the selfishness involved in this theory was unjust.

It is also apparent that Paley was more aware of the complexity of moral conduct than some of his critics have believed, for he undertakes to break down this complexity by dividing the consequences of conduct into two categories, namely, the particular and general. He held that in estimating the consequences of a certain action it is never sufficient to observe merely the particular consequences. For on this procedure it would not be difficult to reason that the possessor of a great estate, who employs his power and influence for the oppression of all about him and whose estate would devolve by his death to a successor of opposite character, might be justifiably murdered. It is very apparent that such a crime would be useful in this particular case, however, there is a general consequence involved, which is far more relevant, namely, the violation of the necessary general rule, that no man should be put to death for his crimes, except by public authority. Paley writes:

The particular bad consequence of an action, is the mischief which that single action directly and immediately occasions. The general bad consequence is, the violation of some necessary or useful general rule.¹

Such an act as the one described above could not, in the final sense, be said to be useful, for the general consequence of it is evil. Paley further provides for man's inability to predict the consequences of his actions by binding him to the observance of general rules. He contends that because the general effects of actions are far more consequential than particular effects, man is, therefore, under heavier obligation to obey the general rules of society. This is seen in the following:

General rules are necessary in every moral government; and by moral government I mean any dispensation whose object is to influence the conduct of reasonable creatures.

¹ Ibid., p. 47.

For if, of two actions, perfectly similar, one be punished and the other be rewarded or forgiven, which is the consequence of rejecting general rules, the subjects of such a dispensation would no longer know, either what to expect or how to act. Rewards and punishments would cease to be such—would become accidents. Like the stroke of a thunderbolt, or the discovery of a mine, like a blank or a benefit ticket in a lottery, they would occasion pain or pleasure when they happened; but following in no known order, from any particular course of action, they could have no previous influence or effect upon conduct.¹

The very idea of rewards and punishments which constitutes the sanction of Paley's Ethics, he believes to be inseparably related to the existence of general rules so that the same reasons that prompt us to believe in the doctrine of future rewards and punishments at the hand of God would prompt us to believe that the distribution of such rewards and punishments must be made according to general rules.

For Paley the general consequence of an action may be determined by asking, what would be the consequence if the same sort of action were generally permitted? Paley's appreciation of the organic unity of society is seen in his contention that the

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. II, Ch. vii, p. 49.

measure of a man's guilt must always be in proportion to the whole mischief that would result if every man should act accordingly:

Whatever is expedient is right. But then it must be expedient upon the whole, at the long run, in all its effects collateral and remote as well as in those which are immediate and direct; as it is obvious, that, in computing consequences, it makes no difference in what way, or at what distance they ensue.¹

Paley undertakes to impress his argument upon his readers by a series of analogies. He reasons that the particular consequence of counterfeiting a guinea would be the loss of a guinea to the person who receives it: the general consequences (by which he means the consequence that would follow if the practice were generally permitted) would be the abolishment of the use of money. Again the particular consequence of breaking into an unoccupied house would be the loss of a pair of silver candlesticks: the general consequence would be that nobody could leave his house unguarded. It is on the basis of the general consequence of a crime that Paley deems it just to give one thief the same punishment for stealing five pounds as another would receive for stealing fifty.

¹ Ibid., p. 51.

By this line of reasoning Paley demonstrates the logic behind the proposition that we are "not to do evil that good may come," for however great the particular good consequence may prove to be, it could not compensate for the evil that would be rampant if everyone should decide to disregard the rule that forbade it.

Continuing his discussion of moral obligation, Paley makes "right" and "obligation" reciprocal. Wherever there is a right in one person, there is a corresponding obligation upon others.¹ That is to say, that one man's "right" to his estate means that others must abstain from it. Since moral obligation depends, as we have seen, upon the will of God, "right", which is correlative to it, must depend upon the same. "Right", therefore, signifies "the being consistent with the will of God."²

Paley was rather close to the Cambridge Platonists when he saw that right and wrong were not arbitrary considerations but that they were fixed distinctions determined by the divine

¹ Ibid, p. 54.

² Ibid.

will. This is simply another way of saying that God always acts rightly, and that it is inconceivable that he should act wrongly. By establishing the two principles, that God wills the happiness of his creatures, and that the will of God is the measure of right and wrong, Paley finds it possible to draw certain general conclusions which he regards as rules. From these rules we come to learn the specific actions that are right and wrong.

We have seen in this chapter how Paley arrived at his belief in the necessity of an objective standard in the treatment of ethics, that this standard must be formulated in terms of the will of God, which may be ascertained from the tendency of any action to promote or diminish human happiness, and which is sanctioned by the rewards and punishments of the Righteous Judge in eternity.

CHAPTER IV

THE APPLICATION OF PALEY'S ETHICS

Notwithstanding the weaknesses of his theory, Paley built a strong superstructure of ethics upon it. In fact, it is difficult to find fault with the way in which he applies his theory. Inasmuch as his chief concern was with practical applications rather than with expounding a theory, our judgment of his work should be primarily concerned with his exposition. Above all else Paley was an expositor, and we must not forget that exposition is as much a part of the science of ethics as is theory. W.R. Sorley reminds us that "ethics has not only to determine the end but to apply it to practice, so as to decide as to what is right or wrong in particular actions and virtuous or vicious in character."¹

In this chapter we shall be interested in Paley's consistency or inconsistency in the handling of his principles and his success or failure in deducing from these his concrete rules of morality.

The practical nature of the science of ethics in the mind of Paley is seen in his definition of ethics as "that science

¹ The Ethics of Naturalism, p. 9.

which teaches men their duty and the reasons of it."¹ From this Paley proceeds to divide man's duty into three categories, namely, our duties to others, called relative duties, our duties to ourselves, and our duties to God.

The relative duties are further divided into three categories, namely, the determinate, the indeterminate, and the constitutional duties. The determinate duties deal with the handling of property, the making of promises, the making of contracts, truth-speaking, oaths, subscription to articles of religion, and the making of wills. Under the relative duties which are indeterminate Paley discusses charity, slavery, resentment, anger, revenge, duelling, litigation, gratitude, and slander. Under the relative duties which result from the constitution of the sexes the following are discussed: marriage, fornication, seduction, adultery, incest, polygamy, divorce, the duty of parents, the rights of parents, and the duty of children.

The second general category, which Paley calls duties to ourselves, includes a discussion of the rights of self-defence,

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. i, p. i.

drunkenness, and suicide. Then in the final category, called our duties to God, Paley places prayer, the use of Sabbatical institutions, and reverencing the Deity.

Let us now examine these general categories by examining Paley's treatment of exemplary duties under each category.

I

Look first at those relative duties which he calls determinate. In this category we confront first of all a discussion of the use of the institution of property. This was one of the live issues in Paley's day. So important was his contribution to this subject that from the analogy with which he introduced his discussion of this problem he acquired the name "Pigeon" Paley. Here is his picture of the oppression of the masses of his day:

If you should see a flock of pigeons in a field of corn and if (instead of each picking where and what it liked, taking just as much as it wanted and no more) you should see ninety-nine of them gathering all they got into a heap; reserving nothing for themselves but the chaff and the refuse; keeping this heap for one, and that the weakest, perhaps worst pigeon of the flock; sitting round and looking on all the winter, whilst this one was devouring, throwing about, and wasting it; and if a pigeon, more

hardy and hungry than the rest, touched a grain of the hoard, all the others instantly flying upon it and tearing it to pieces: if you should see this, you would see nothing more than what is every day practiced and established among men.¹

Paley takes the above analogy and applies it to the masses of his day who were being denied the proceeds of their labor which they had rightfully earned. He laments the fact that the labor of the ninety and nine was being spent solely for the comfort of the few privileged land owners. Such an open tirade against the policies of the reigning party of the day was bound to call forth their wrath, and was sufficient to bar the way against the ecclesiastical promotion which Paley richly deserved. When we bear in mind the relationship of the possession of property to suffrage during the reign of George III, we begin to see how delicate was the problem with which Paley was dealing. Of the eight millions of people, only a hundred and sixty thousand were electors at all.² Walpole and Newcastle had made bribery and borough-jobbing the base of their power and George III

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. III, Part i, ch. i, pp. 68, 69.

² Green, J. R. A Short History of the English People, p. 765.

seized it in his turn as a base of the power he proposed to give to the crown. He used the royal revenue to buy seats and to buy votes. By scrutinizing the voting-list of the two houses George III distributed rewards and punishments as members voted according to his will or no. "Promotion in the civil service, preferment in the Church, and rank in the army was reserved for "the King's friends."¹ In the light of this those who have considered Paley as a quiet conformist need to observe his courage when upon receiving a warning from Bishop Law that if he included his analogy concerning the pigeons that it might exclude him from a Bishopric, Paley sternly replied "Bishop or no Bishop it shall go in."²

Furthermore, Paley struck at the very roots of the political corruption of his day with his vigorous protest against bribery. Concerning the oath against bribery in the election of members of Parliament he wrote the following:

The several contrivances to evade this oath, such as the electors accepting money under colour of borrowing, and giving a promissory

¹ Ibid.

² Paley, Edmund. The Life of Dr. Paley, p. cclvi.

note or other security for it, which is cancelled after the election; receiving money from a stranger, or a person in disguise, or out of a drawer, or purse, left open for the purpose; or promises of money to be paid after the election; or stipulating for a place, living, or other private advantages of any kind; if they escape the legal penalties of perjury, incur the moral guilt: for they are manifestly within the mischief and design of the statute which imposes the oath, and within the terms indeed of the oath itself; for the word "indirectly" is inserted on purpose to comprehend such cases as these.¹

There is no doubt but that Paley's work stirred the public opinion against the corruption of that day until the second Pitt was able to lead such reforms as virtually to obliterate the bribery of the members of Parliament.

There appears to be a rather curious inconsistency in Paley's insistence on the one hand on a rigid conformity to the oath by members of Parliament, while on the other hand he appeals for a rather loose interpretation of the Articles of Faith for Clergymen. In fact, he has been credited with the statement that "a man's conscience is no worse for a little ink." In all fairness to Paley, however, it should be remembered that he was not in this case appealing

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, p. 133.

for the right of the Clergy to be indifferent toward the Articles of Faith. On the contrary, he was appealing for the right to look behind the Articles themselves to the purpose for which they were instituted. This purpose, he insists, cannot be discovered in the bald statement of the Articles themselves but must be traced back to the intention of the thirteenth Elizabethan legislature, which was the imposer of the Articles.¹ Paley contended that the intention of this legislature was not that each clergyman should believe every separate proposition in the Articles. Instead of this, it was their purpose to exclude from office all abettors of Popery, Anabaptists, who were at that time a powerful party on the Continent, the Puritans, who were hostile to the episcopal constitution, and in general the members of such leading sects, or foreign establishments, as threatened to overthrow the Church of England.² Paley insisted that any one finding himself within the above descriptions ought not to subscribe to the Articles. He, however, emphatically stated that for Protestant Churches to renounce with all their might the infallibility of the Popes and at the same time insist on the infallibility of the thirty-nine Articles was highly inconsistent. Further-

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. III. Ch. XXII, p. 138.

² Ibid.

more, said Paley, subscription to these Articles does not bind a man against altering his opinion.¹

Paley's critics have seen in his vacillation concerning the belief of each separate article of religion and in his later reasoning that one has justifiable grounds for lying to a murderer or a robber, ample proof of the moral unworthiness of the utilitarian theory.² Compared with the strong statement of Kant concerning truth-speaking as an absolute obligation, Paley's argument loses its lustre. However, J. S. Mill denies that the principle of utility leads to the conclusions that Paley drew. For, says Mill, thoroughgoing utilitarianism would demand that in estimating the consequences of actions for the purpose of measuring their morality not only must the outward interests of all persons involved be considered but also their inward interests, namely, the consequences to their characters.³ The complexity of this consideration is far greater than Paley allowed for. He did not consider the effects that taking such liberty with the truth would have upon the character of the agent himself and also upon

¹ A Defense of the Considerations on the Propriety of Requiring a Subscription to Articles of Faith, Sermons and Tracts, London (1802), p. 7.

² Gisborne, Thomas. The Principles of Moral Philosophy Investigated and Applied to the Constitution of Civil Society, Bk. II, Ch. vi, p. 46.

³ Dissertations and Discussions, Political, Philosophical and Historical, Vol. I, Second Edition, pp. 129, 130.

the others involved. Nor did he consider the total effect that the dulling of moral judgments of man would have upon society. That is not to say, however, that Paley was totally unaware of the internal principles at work in true morality, for in his sermon on honesty he states that the final judgment of a man's character must be decided by asking the question, is he honest upon principle or honest out of policy? That is to say, his honesty is a virtue only when he is honest from principle. Says Paley, the "test of honesty as a principle is when a transaction is of a nature to be perfectly secret, when the truth of it is known only to ourselves, to act then with complete fidelity is to have honesty as a principle."¹

Coming back to Paley's views on property, his utilitarianism is clearly seen when he raises the question whether or not private ownership of property will stand the test of expediency when its excessive possession causes so much poverty among the masses who do not and cannot possess it. To this question he brings the following answer: there must be some very great advantages in maintaining the right of private possession of property to counteract the misery suffered by those who possess none. Paley sees the following advantage in this institution: the fact that the cultivation

¹ Paley's Sermons, Vol. V, Sermon ix, p. 438.

of the land can best be encouraged by keeping the masses dependent for their livelihood on such employment. Again, the production of the earth is preserved to maturity by men who possess the land and refuse to open their orchards to the passerby who would pluck the fruit prematurely. Furthermore, the possession of property improves the conveniency of living in two ways: it stimulates the division of mankind into distinct professions, which is impossible unless a man can exchange the productions of his own art for what he wants from others, and the possibility of exchange implies the possession of property. When a man is his own tailor, carpenter, cook, and huntsman, he, in all probability, will never be an expert in any of these callings. Consequently, life under such circumstances could never advance to the stage of convenience known in a highly cultivated society. Hence, Paley concludes that for all the disadvantage involved in the private possession of property, they are far outweighed by the advantages and that while inequality of property, in the degree in which it exists in most countries of Europe, abstractly considered, is an evil, it is an evil which flows from these rules concerning the acquisition and disposal of property by which men are incited to industry, and by which the object of their industry is rendered secure and valuable.

In an age when France was in the convulsion of a revolution Paley's cautious good sense enabled him to remind Englishmen of their love of order and law, their distaste for violent changes, and their reverence for the past. In his Reasons for Contentment Addressed to the Labouring Part of the British Public, which he considered the best thing ever to come from his pen, Paley urged the laboring men of Britain to believe that nothing good would be finally gained in a division of the great estates. He again brought his utilitarian principle to the front and argued that:

Either...large fortunes are not a public evil, or, if they be in any degree an evil, it is to be borne with, for the sake of those fixed and general rules concerning property, in the preservation and steadiness of which all are interested.¹

Paley proceeds from this point to show that the condition of the laboring man is just as blessed as that of the nobility by enumerating the following advantages which he possesses: the constant train of employment, the want of which is one of the greatest plagues to the human soul, the advantage in providing for children. "With health of body, innocency of mind, and habits of industry, a

¹ Paley's Works, Vol. VIII, 1809, "Reasons for Contentment", p. 183.

poor man's child has nothing to be afraid of."¹ On the other hand the nobleman's child is accustomed to ease and the parent is faced with the task of assuring him of an income which will guarantee him the pleasure of continuing in that ease. Furthermore, the poor have a greater relish for their pleasures than do the rich whose desires are dead and whose sensibilities are worn and tired. When once the habit is formed, Paley argues that the luxurious receive no greater pleasures from their dainties than the peasant does from his homely fare. He warns the poor against envying the rich man's ease, for that which is most frequently construed as ease is inactivity. Nothing, says he, is farther from ease than inactivity. Rest is ease, but no man can rest until first he has worked. Rest is cessation from labor. It cannot therefore be enjoyed or even known except by those who have known fatigue.

In his appeal for contentment Paley writes:

To learn the art of contentment is only to learn what happiness actually consists in. Sensual pleasures add little to its substance. Ease, if by that be meant exemption from labour, contributes nothing. One, however, constant spring of satisfaction, and almost infallible support of

¹ Ibid., p. 188.

cheerfulness and spirits, is the exercise of domestic affections, the presence of objects of tenderness and endearment in our families, our kindred, our friends. Now have the poor anything to complain of here? The poor man has his wife and children about him; and what has the rich more? He has the same enjoyment of their society, the same solicitude for their welfare, the same pleasure in their good qualities, improvement and success. if I were disposed to envy anyone, the subject of my envy would be, a healthy young man, in full possession of his strength and faculties, going forth in a morning to work for his wife and children or bringing them home his wages at night.¹

After this strong appeal for contentment, Paley continues with this reminder. The only change to be desired is that gradual and progressive improvement of our circumstances which is the natural fruit of successful industry; when each year is something better than the last.² His concluding word is to warn the masses against seeking to seize the rich by force through the medium of public uproar, for such would be to "not only venture out to sea in a storm, but to venture for nothing."³

¹ Ibid., pp. 193, 194.

² Ibid., p. 196.

³ Ibid., p. 198.

On the surface the above argument might appear to make Paley the champion of the privileged classes of his day. It should be remembered, however, that Paley was a vigorous defender of the rights of the poor. He worked tirelessly for the advancement of the Sunday Schools, that every poor child in the Kingdom might have a chance to learn to read. Not only did Paley advocate this, but he prepared a manual for teaching reading in the Sunday Schools.¹

He inveighed against the popular opinion that it was not for the advantage or safety of the state that the children of the poor should receive any kind of education, or be even taught to read, contending that:

It is in the highest degree both dishonorable to human reason, and disparaging to the institutions of social life, it, in fact, insinuates that the bulk of mankind can only be governed by the suppression and debasement of their intellectual faculties, and it likewise insinuates that the institutions of civil life rest for their support upon the ignorance of the greatest part of those who live under them.²

Paley then passionately declared, "I should be glad to see the day

¹ Paley's Works, Vol. VIII. "The Young Christian Instructed in Reading and in the Principles of Religion," p. 201.

² Paley's Sermons, Vol. VI, Charge viii, p. 62.

when every child in the Kingdom was taught to read."¹

In the second division of relative duties Paley places indeterminate duties. The most outstanding phase of this part of his work was his treatment of the question of slavery. As indicated in the biographical section of this thesis Paley was a strong crusader against slavery.

In the year 1792, the residents of Carlisle met for the purpose of petitioning Parliament for the abolition of the slave trade. Mr. Paley had been made acquainted with the cruelties involved in this pernicious traffic by a relation who had made a fortune in the West Indies as a planter. He now found that neither his humanitarian feelings nor his common sense of morality would allow him to remain silent on the subject.

In April, 1789, the newspapers carried a short treatise by Mr. Paley entitled "Arguments Against the unjust pretensions of slave dealers and holders, to be indemnified by pecuniary allowances, at the public expense, in case the slave trade should be abolished," which had been sent to the committee on abolishing

¹ Ibid.

slavery. This was designed to reach them for use in the first great discussion in the House of Commons on the abolition of the slave trade. The resolutions drawn up at Carlisle became the basis of the petition afterwards presented to the House of Commons, which presented a clear and comprehensive view of the leading arguments which eventually led to the abolition of slavery.

It is much to Mr. Paley's honor that he suggested a plan for promoting the civilization of Africa, and for making some restitution to that devastated continent, for the malicious injustice and oppression which it had so long suffered. His proposition was that from the United States of America several little colonies of free negroes should be exported and allowed to settle in different parts of Africa that they might serve as patterns of more civilized life to the natives in these localities.

In his Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Paley defines slavery as "an obligation to labour for the benefit of the master without the contract or consent of the servant."¹

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. III, Part ii, Ch. 3, p. 149.

This obligation may arise according to the law of nature from three causes: from crimes, from captivity and from debt. When, slavery is the punishment of the offenders crime, says Paley, the continuence of the slavery ought to be in strict proportion to the crime and when it is the result of captivity in war or the refusal to pay a private debt, it should cease as soon as the demand of the injured nation, or private creditor, is satisfied.

Having enumerated what he considers the only justifiable causes of slavery Paley concluded that the slave trade upon the coast of Africa was not to be excused on any of the above principles. The fact was that when the slaves were brought to market in Africa no questions were asked about the origin or justice of the vender's title. It was, therefore, very evident that the title was not always founded on the commitment of some crime, the injury of some tribe nor even the refusal to pay a private debt.

A defective title, however, was the least of the crimes with which the slave traffic was chargeable. Paley saw as the greater crime the fact that the natives, were being incited to war and mutual depredation for the sake of supplying their contracts, or furnishing the market with slaves. Here the wickedness begins:

The slaves torn away from parents, wives, children, from their friends and companions, their fields and flocks, their home and country, are transported to the European settlements in America, with no more accomodation on ship-board, than what is provided for brutes. This is the second stage of cruelty; from which the miserable exiles are delivered, only to be placed, and that for life, in subjection to a dominion and system of laws, the most merciless and tyrannical that ever were tolerated upon the face of the earth.¹

Paley deals with each of the defences projected by the slave-traffic as follows: to the argument that slavery was an economic necessity in America, that is, that the land could not be cultivated by hired servants without putting an impossible price on the produce of the land, he replies that the necessity for which the slave owner contends amounts to no more than saying that a pound of sugar which now sells for sixpence could not be afforded should it be advanced to sixpence-halfpenny. To the contention that slavery was a part of the civil constitution of most countries when Christianity appeared yet no passage is to be found in the Christian Scriptures by which it is condemned or prohibited, Paley replied that Christianity in seeking admission into all nations of the world abstained from intermeddling with the civil institutions of any. But, said he, it does

¹ Ibid., p. 149.

not follow from the silence of Scripture concerning them, that all the civil institutions which then prevailed were right.

Moreover, the discharging of slaves from all obligation to obey their masters would have turned loose one half of mankind upon the other. The basis of the appeal for adherents to the Christian religion would have been lowered. Slaves would have been tempted to embrace it from ulterior motives, and masters would have been repelled from it and the most calamitous of all contests, a bellum servile, would have ensued, to the everlasting reproach if not to the utter annihilation of the Christian religion.

To Paley's sound remarks may be added the fact that the Apostles while exhorting slaves to patience, never vindicated the institution choosing rather to dwell on the duty of taking care not to bring an ill-name on their religion. They are rather to suffer a wrong than to raise a prejudice against Christianity.¹ The Apostles considered it the Christian duty of a slave to forego any rights he may possess if such is necessary for the furtherance of the Gospel.

Paley's proposal concerning emancipation was that it should be gradual under the protection of civil government and by

¹ I Timothy V.

the mild diffusion of the light and influence of Christianity. Howbeit he called his own government to immediate action and warned Britain that it was questionable:

Whether a legislature, which had so long lent its assistance to the support of an institution replete with human misery, was fit to be trusted with an empire the most extensive ever obtained in any age or quarter of the world.¹

Under his definition of relative duties Paley places in the third division those duties which result from the constitution of the sexes and proceeds to discuss the public use of marriage institutions, fornication, seduction, adultery, incest, polygamy, divorce, marriage, the duty of parents, the rights of parents and the duty of children.

Paley's utilitarianism is very apparent in his treatment of the marriage institution. Marriage promotes the comfort and security of the female sex, makes possible the production of the greatest number of healthy children, facilitates the best form of government by distributing the community into separate families and by appointing over each the authority of a master of the family, secures the state by promoting the good behavior of its citizens, and encourages

¹ Ibid., p. 150.

industry to provide for the needs of the family. Paley gives as a reason for insisting upon abstinence from any conduct which tends in its general consequence to obstruct marriage the fact that whatever promotes the happiness of the majority is binding upon the whole.¹

Paley argues against fornication on the ground that promiscuous concubinage discourages marriage, by abating the chief attraction of it. Says he, the male of the species will not undertake the incumbrance, expense, and restraint of married life, if they can gratify their passions at a cheaper price. Paley believed that since sexual passion is natural, it was intended to be gratified, but that the circumstances under which it may be gratified must be determined by the utilitarian principles and by the Scriptures. He condemns the practice of keeping a mistress even under circumstances of mutual fidelity and answers those who say that such a relationship is the same as marriage by raising the question, why, then, do they not marry? Furthermore, the relationship is not the same for the children, born in such a union. Moreover:

It is immoral because it is pernicious that men and women should cohabit, without undertaking certain irrevocable obligations, and mutually conferring certain civil rights; if, therefore,

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy,
Bk. III, pt. iii., ch. 1, p. 185.

the law has annexed these rights and obligations to certain forms, so that they cannot be secured or undertaken by any other means, which is the case here, (for whatever the parties may promise to each other, nothing but the marriage ceremony can make their promise irrevocable), it becomes in the same degree immoral that men and women should cohabit without interposition of these forms.¹

Every incentive to fornication must be viewed as an accessory to the crime. Among such accessories he lists wanton songs, pictures and books which incite temptation.

Seduction is condemned on the ground that it destroys the greater happiness of the victim by diminishing her prospects of marriage. Marriage is that from which a woman expects her chief happiness. Without it she is bereft of security. If she is to support herself through employment, her very employment is dependent upon her character and reputation. If through seduction she has lost these, she has left one alternative, either to starve or to have recourse to prostitution for food and raiment.

More detrimental than the economic aspect is that the loss of chastity destroys her moral principle. This destruction takes place whether the unlawful intercourse is discovered or not.

¹ Ibid., Bk. III, part iii, Ch. 2, pp. 188, 189.

To calculate the enormity of the crime of seduction Paley proposes that a father or a brother should announce for what consideration they would suffer this injury to a daughter or a sister. His conclusion would most often be that the total loss of his property would not create as much suffering on his part as would the loss of chastity on the part of his daughter or sister.

Again the public at large loses the benefit of the women's service in her proper place and destination as a wife and parent. Weighing all the consequences Paley concludes that "not one half of the crimes for which men suffer death by the laws of England, are so flagitious as this."¹ He laments the fact that in the light of the above the only punishment for this offense is a pecuniary satisfaction to the injured family for the loss of the daughter's service during her pregnancy or nurturing.

Adultery receives the same treatment at the hands of Paley. Here a new sufferer is introduced, the injured husband who receives the most painful and incurable wound to his affections that human nature knows. Not only does adultery receive the condemnation of Paley, but he contends that "all behavior which is designed,

¹ Ibid., p. 192.

or which knowingly tends, to captivate the affection of a married woman, is a barbarous intrusion upon the peace and virtue of a family, though it fall short of adultery.

In his discussion of divorce Paley first of all discusses the congruity of the right of the husband to put away his wife with the law of nature. He finds such a practice incongruous with the law of nature because such makes it impossible for parents to fulfill their duties to their children. Furthermore it is incompatible with the right which the mother possesses, as well as the father, to the gratitude of her children and the comfort of their society; of both of which she is deprived when she is dismissed from her husband's family.

Paley then traces the effects of divorce upon the general happiness of married life and concludes that a lawgiver, whose views are directed by views of general utility, would make the marriage contract indissoluble because it preserves the peace and concord between married persons and gives them an incentive to contribute to their mutual well being realizing that neither can find their own comfort without promoting the pleasure of the other.

Furthermore, new objects of desire would be continually sought after, if men could at will be released from their marital obligations. Expediency would demand that the real and permanent

happiness of one half of the species should not be surrendered to the caprice and voluptuousness of the other half.

Following his custom of combining expediency with the teachings of Scripture, Paley shows that while the law of Moses, for reasons of local expediency, permitted the Jewish husband to put away his wife, Christ revoked this permission and promulgated a law which was thenceforward to confine divorces to the single cause of adultery in the wife.¹ Paley held rigidly to the plain meaning of Christ's teaching. He held that when it was necessary for their mutual happiness that a husband and wife should separate, they may separate by common consent, nevertheless they are not to have the right of re-marriage.

II

In the second major category Paley places the duties to ourselves including self-defence, the consideration of drunkenness and suicide. The latter two duties are included because they are offences against the care of our faculties and preservation of our persons, which are accounted as duties to ourselves.

¹ Matthew xix.9.

Concerning the rights of self-defence Paley reasons that the law of nature immediately justifies taking the life of an assailant when one's life is threatened. This is true because the laws of society have not restrained the intended murderer nor can society make restitution of the life about to be taken. Homicide is justifiable to prevent the commission of a crime, which when committed, would be punishable with death, and in suppressing riots and in apprehending malefactors.

As seen in the biographical section of this thesis, Paley was an ardent crusader for temperance even going so far as to seek the revoking of the licenses of many grog shops in his day. He argued against the mischief of drunkenness on the grounds that it weakens those inhibitions upon which our controlled behavior depends, and leads into excessive anger, and sins of lewdness; it disqualifies men for their duties by disordering their faculties, it is attended with expenses which most cannot afford, it brings great anxiety to the family of the drunkard, and shortens life. Not least among the consequences of drunkenness is the corruption of the drunkard's companions. While one may be free from family responsibilities and able by virtue of a strong constitution to withstand the devastation of constant drinking, in all probability there will be

those in his society who have family responsibilities and whose constitutions cannot withstand the ravages of liquor. Furthermore, Paley reminds us of the endless chain of consequences which follow the influence of a drunkard upon another and he in turn upon another.

To his argument Paley brings the argument of St. Paul. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess."¹ "Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness."² "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor drunkards, . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God."³

Furthermore, Paley sees that the guilt of drunkenness will be in proportion to the probability of criminal conduct which it incites. By virtue of this rule, those vices which are the acknowledged effects of drunkenness, are virtually as criminal as if committed when one has all his faculties and senses about him. A person then incurs a part of the guilt of these crimes when he brings himself into the condition which incites them.

¹ Ephesians v. 18.

² Romans XIII. 13.

³ I Corinthians vi. 9, 10.

Upon the subject of suicide Paley marshalls all his dialectical skill to show the general consequences of such a practice. For the sake of argument he reduces the problem to this: May every man who pleases to destroy his life, innocently do so?¹ Most often men come to the decision to destroy themselves from the conclusion that they have become useless to mankind and forget that melancholy minds are prone to think themselves useless, when they really are not so. Suppose, said Paley, what the general consequence would be if a law were promulgated allowing each private person to destroy every man he met, whose longer continuance in the world he judged to be useless. The general consequences would assuredly be a permission to commit murder at pleasure. Moreover, no man can declare himself to be permanently useless, for he may always regain some measure of usefulness.

Again, those contemplating suicide are called upon to consider whether the general sorrow for their death would not exceed that which they should suffer by continuing to live. Any consideration that would increase the toleration of suicide would result in the loss of many lives to the community and inasmuch as mankind must

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. IV. Ch. iii, p. 245.

live in continual alarm for the fate of their friends and dearest relations, the unspeakable suffering that would result from this could not be justified on utilitarian grounds.

Paley's eschatological emphasis comes to the front here as he reminds those who contemplate suicide that by remaining in this world and exercising those virtues which remain within their power, the opportunity to improve their condition in a future state is maintained.

Finally there are many passages of Scripture from which we may deduce the will of God concerning suicide. In the Bible human life is spoken of as a term assigned or prescribed to us. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us."¹ "That I may finish my course with joy."² The belief that we are at liberty to determine the duration of our lives is thus inconsistent with the implication of Scripture which considers life as a "race that is set before us" or as "our course."

¹ Hebrews 12:1.

² Acts 20:24.

III

The final major category of duties deals with our duties towards God including the duty of prayer, public worship, Sabbath observance and reverencing the Deity. Paley realizes that in one sense every duty is a duty to God since it is his will which makes it a duty. In this category he places those duties of which God is the object as well as the author. The moralist can only deal with the visible expressions of devotion to God. Paley divides these external duties into worship and reverence. The distinction between these two is that one consists in action and the other in forbearance. For example:

When we go to Church on the Lord's day, led thither by a sense of duty towards God, we perform an act of worship: when we rest in a journey upon that day, from the same motive, we discharge a duty of reverence.¹

Paley deduces the duty of prayer from the light of nature by showing that it is the universal method of man to obtain the object of his desire by entreaty. Says he, what is universal must be natural, and the impulse which God has planted in the human heart to obtain what we want from others by entreaty must lead us to intreat him as our supreme Governor for our desires.

¹ Ibid., Bk. V, Chap. 1, pp. 253, 254.

Prayer is necessary in the Christian life as a constant reminder of man's dependency upon God. Yet Paley makes the duty of prayer primarily dependent upon its efficacy, for, says he:

I confess myself unable to conceive how any man can pray, or be obliged to pray, who expects nothing from his prayer; but who is persuaded, at the time he utters his request, that it cannot possibly produce the smallest impression upon the Being to whom it is addressed, or advantage to himself. Now the efficacy of prayer imparts that we obtain something in consequence of praying which we should not have received without prayer.¹

To the objection to prayer which says that God's goodness and wisdom is such that if what we request in prayer be fit for us, we shall have it without praying and if it be not agreeable to his goodness and wisdom we cannot obtain it by praying, Paley replies that it is agreeable to the perfect wisdom and goodness of God to give us through prayer what he could not give us without prayer. It is God's will to change his will through prayer. Paley did not think of the immutability of God as the immobility of God but rather as his moral self-consistency.

The question then arises what virtue is there in prayer which would make the granting of a favor consistent with God's

¹ Ibid., Bk. V, Ch. ii, pp. 254, 255.

wisdom, which would not have been so without it? Paley's reply reflects his utilitarian principle.

The granting of a favor as a result of prayer, says he, would have a stronger possibility of producing good effects upon the recipient. That which is received without asking is often received without gratitude. Furthermore, the wisdom of the Deity is reflected in answered prayer by virtue of the fact that by withholding his favors until they are asked for, he encourages devotion in his rational creation by sustaining in them a sense of their dependence upon him. Again, prayer has a natural tendency to bring the petitioner within the rules which God has prescribed to the dispensation of his favors.

Even the inconstancy of answered prayer Paley interprets in the light of expediency for, says he, if prayer were allowed to disturb the order of second causes appointed in the universe too much, it would be extremely detrimental to human well-being. For example, few would be willing to work if they could receive their wants through prayer. Moreover, no man would care for his health if prayer would immediately check the course of disease and restore his health. Therefore, there is of necessity the right possessed by God to withhold an answer to prayer, and even then God is discouraging carelessness

and disorderliness in the race which restraint is necessary to the happiness of humanity.

Against those who argue for the irrationality of praying for particular favors by name or of interceding for others or for whole nations as if to say that the happiness of others or whole nations could be dependent upon our prayers, Paley answers by saying:

The happiness and misery of great numbers we see oftentimes at the disposal of one man's choice, or liable to be much affected by his conduct; what greater difficulty is there in supposing, that the prayers of an individual may avert a calamity from multitudes, or be accepted to the benefit of whole communities.¹

Having argued from the light of nature the probability of answered prayer, Paley then turns to the revelation of Scripture for the positive affirmation of the propriety of prayer. He then lists specific passages which enjoin prayer in general, for example, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find."² Examples of prayer for particular objects are also given, for example, "For this thing (to wit, some bodily infirmity, which he calls a 'thorn

¹ Ibid., Bk. V, Chap. ii, pp. 260, 261.

² Matthew VII. 7.

given him in the flesh') I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me."¹ He calls attention to the directions to pray for natural or public blessings, for example, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."² Examples of intercession are mentioned as "Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made, without ceasing, of the Church unto God for him."³ Finally, a list of declarations and examples authorizing the repetition of unsuccessful prayers is given, for example, "And he left them and went away again, and prayed for the third time, saying the same words."⁴

Paley makes a strong appeal for a rigid observance of the Sabbath on the grounds of public utility. Because of the relaxation afforded to the laboring part of humanity and the consequent happiness of so great a part of humanity, it is every man's duty to uphold the observance of the Sabbath. The benefits of Sabbath observance are extended by Paley even to the brutes as they find respite from their toil. The light of nature reveals the necessity of one day's rest out of seven but only the Revelation of God can tell us which day to observe.

¹ 2 Corinthians XII. 8.

² Psalm CXXII. 6.

³ Acts XII. 5

⁴ Matthew XVI. 44.

At this point Paley takes up the question concerning the day which is to be observed, that is, whether it should be the seventh day of the week, the Jewish Sabbath, or the first day of the week, the Christian's Lord's day. He argues that it was not until the wilderness sojourn of the Israelites that an express command of God was given concerning the Sabbath. This, says he, emphasizes the fact that the Sabbath was distinctly a Jewish institution. Paley does not believe that the statement in the second chapter of Genesis concerning the sanctifying of the Sabbath day meant that God sanctified it as a universal institution at the dawn of creation, rather did he take the fact of his resting on the seventh day as the basis for sanctifying the day for his people in the wilderness. The passage in Ezekiel XX: 10, 11, 12, speaks of the Sabbath as being given to Israel. Paley believes this to be a reference to the historic event in the wilderness. If, then, the divine command was not given at the creation but rather in the wilderness, it does not apply to all men but only to the Jews. Furthermore, Paley shows that Exodus XXXI. 16, 17, speaks of the Sabbath as a sign between God and his people.

Coming to the relation of the Christian to the Sabbath, Paley shows that the observance of the Sabbath was not one of the articles enjoined by the Apostles in the fifteenth chapter of Acts,

upon them "which from among the Gentiles were turned unto God." In Colossians II. 16, 17, Paul considers the Sabbath as a part of the Jewish ritual. The supreme question at this point should be: Did the founder of the Christian religion deliver any new command on this subject? The answer to this Paley finds in the fact that the practice of holding religious assemblies on the first day of the week was so early and universal in the Christian Church that it carries with it considerable proof of having originated from some precept of Christ or his Apostles, though none such is now extant.

It was upon the first day of the week that the disciples were assembled, when Christ appeared to them for the first time after his resurrection.¹ The second meeting with the disciples was also on the first day of the week.² The same custom is found prevailing in a Church far from Jerusalem.³

By the time John wrote the Revelation the first day of the week had obtained the name of the Lord's Day. Paley did not contend for the carrying over of the Jewish prescription for the observance of the Sabbath into the Lord's day but only for the observance of worship on that day. In fact he states that:

¹ John XX:19.

² John XX.26.

³ Acts XX.6, 7.

A cessation upon that day of labour, beyond the time of attendance upon public worship, is not intimated in any passage in the New Testament; nor did Christ or his Apostles deliver, that we know of, any command to their disciples for a discontinuance, upon that day, of the common offices of their professions.¹

Paley continues by insisting that it would have been highly improbable that Christ would have enjoined upon the Jews to whom he addressed his Gospel another day of rest when they already were observing one. Moreover, it is held that there is not sufficient proof that Christ intended to retain the duties of the Jewish Sabbath by shifting them to the first day of the week. Paley further contends that, while it is not improbable, still there remains no evidence in Scripture that the first day of the week was distinguished in commemoration of our Lord's resurrection.

The law of Christianity is that the assembling upon the first day of the week for the purpose of public worship and religious instruction is of divine appointment. Further resting from employment is to be based on the law of nature and is binding upon the conscience because of the benefits it bestows upon the people.

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. V., Ch. vi, p. 291.

The final duty discussed in this category is that of reverencing the Deity. Paley pleads for a rigid observance of the third commandment, namely, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." By vain is meant that which is useless and it is useless when it is not likely to serve a good purpose. For example, when the name of the deity is used in anger, in mirth, or to express courage, it is used in vain. Christ's command against swearing is a reaffirmation of the third commandment as well as an enlargement upon it.¹ Included under this should be mockery and ridicule of the Scriptures, for such is inconsistent with a religious frame of mind. A mind intent upon the attainment of heaven, says Paley, must reject with indignation every attempt to entertain with jests about heaven, for nothing but the most frivolous dissipation of thought can make even the inconsiderate forget the supreme importance of everything which relates to the future existence:

Whilst the infidel mocks at the superstitions of the vulgar, insults over their credulous fears, their childish errors, and fantastic rites, it does not occur to him to observe that the most preposterous device by which the weakest devotee ever believed he was securing the happiness of a future life, is more rational than unconcern about it. Upon this subject, nothing is so absurd as indifference;—no folly so contemptible, as thoughtlessness and levity.²

¹ Matthew V.35.

² The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy,
Bk. V, Chapt. IX, p. 298.

CHAPTER V
AN EVALUATION OF PALEY'S ETHICS
IN CONTRAST WITH
CURRENT CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Thus far in this thesis the writer has endeavored to set forth the principles of Paley's ethics in the light of his eighteenth century environment and to give a positive exposition of the practical application of his ethics. The next project will be to offer a critical evaluation of Paley's ethics in the light of current trends. Much that has been written against the utilitarian theory and psychological hedonism in general would, of course, apply to Paley.

The most devastating criticism which has been brought against all the utilitarian theories is the contention of Kant that there is an absolute distinction between matters of prudence and matters of ethics. That is to say, simply to ask what action will bring the most happiness(?) raises only the question of prudence and does not touch the problem of morals. However, Kant is much closer to utilitarianism than is ordinarily thought. In fact, he insists that anyone who denies that he is in search of happiness

is falsifying. Yet he denies that it is possible to calculate the relevance of any action to happiness. Therefore, it becomes necessary to act according to moral law. The way to make a happy world is to do one's duty and to act only in a way that one could wish all others to act. Kant insisted that "there is nothing in the world, or even out of it that can be called good without qualification, except a good will."¹ Paley is not far from Kant at this point. According to J. S. Mill, Paley held that we shall be judged by the intensity and continuity of our will to do good. That is to say, we shall be judged not by our deeds but by our dispositions.²

As to Kant's objection that man is unable to predict the consequences of his action, let it be insisted that a part of man's moral responsibility is based upon his ability to see the consequences of his actions. A most convincing statement of man's ability at this point is made by Schäffle. He reasons that we are at least able to see as far as the next stage in the scenes of historical progress, and this is thought to lead to the

¹ Metaphysics of Morals. Section I.

² Dissertations and Discussions, Political and Historical.
Vol. I, p. 153.

conclusion that we should make this next stage of development our end; further than it, we cannot see, and, therefore, need not concern ourselves with a further end. If this is to mean that we have no ultimate end for conduct, Schäffle consoles us with the thought that we shall at least never be without a proximate end—and one which is always changing with the course of events.¹

It is very apparent that the most commendable thing about utilitarianism is that it lends itself most directly to practical application by describing a definite end to be aimed at in life, namely, the greatest happiness of the greatest number. From this principle it is quite a simple matter to deduce rules upon which human conduct may be based.

Adam Smith went so far as to say that the regard for general rules "is the only principle by which the bulk of mankind are capable of directing their actions." If this be true, it is not difficult to explain the readiness with which the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries responded to utilitarianism. In the subsequent development of moral philosophy it has become more and more apparent that no one principle can be adequate for the governing of the

¹ Bau und Leben des sozialen Körpers, ii, p. 68.

infinite complexity of moral conduct.¹ Perhaps, however, we should not judge Paley by later Monistic Moralists. For it was the chief concern of moralists of Paley's day to find a simple method by which man might know his moral duty. In fact, John Gay said that this was the only problem confronting the moralists of his day.

It has been charged that Paley had no originality. This is largely true, but perhaps there is a sense in which originality is not thinking differently from others but rather thinking for oneself. In this sense Paley was original. He was strongly influenced by his contemporaries. Yet he carefully weighed his material and made it his own. The hedonistic calculus was a part of his eighteenth century heritage. Butler, in referring to virtuous conduct, had said, "When we sit down in a cool hour we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, 'till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it."² Shaftesbury and Hutcheson insisted that it is not necessary to reflect upon the principle of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number,"

¹ An excellent treatment of the inadequacy of any one single principle for the guidance of the moral life may be found in Dr. Simmel's Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft.

² Sermons, Sermon IV, p. 88.

since it is naturally embodied in any cultivated taste. Sorley reminds us that even though these eighteenth century moralists were opposed to the selfish theory of human action, they never spoke of any sacrifice of private happiness.¹ In the light of this environment Paley's statement that, "We can be obliged by nothing but what we ourselves are to gain or lose something by,"² is not so obnoxious.

Now, if pleasure is the object of action, then the utilitarian theory is the only valid one, and any argument against utilitarianism would logically begin with an attempt to show either that pleasure is not the end of action, or that it is not the sole end, or that it is not the chief end. Against the belief that pleasure is the goal which man pursues in action is the paradox of hedonism which insists that the quest of happiness is self-destructive, for the way to get happiness is to forget about it and aim at something else. Again, it should be remembered that pleasure is not an entity having an existence by itself independently of the object in which pleasure is felt. Consequently pleasure could never be the immediate goal of action.

¹ Ethics of Naturalism. Ch. IV, p. 19.

² Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. ii, Ch. ii.

It should be said to Paley's credit that in an age when reason was being emphasized so much that all of man's other powers were forgotten, that he recognized that man was not motivated solely by reason but that pleasure and pain are strong determinants of action. However, he failed to appreciate the fact to which Professor Sorley calls our attention, namely, that man is motivated "directly by pleasure and pain, and not by a mere estimate of pleasure and pain, but by pleasure and pain themselves."¹ Estimates of future pleasure and pain become motives for action not by being merely recognized (intellectually) but felt (emotionally), that is, by themselves becoming pleasurable or painful.

It is obviously true that anything that satisfies the ultimate demands of our nature will be accompanied by pleasure and may be described as pleasure. This pleasure, however, must have some objective content which is something other than itself. The object producing pleasure may be any of a number of things as the pleasure of others or the fulfilment of duty. These things are objects which bring pleasure, but they are not pleasures in themselves.

Moreover, to say that the most happiness of the most people is to be the goal of human action is the same as saying that the general

¹ The Ethics of Naturalism, p. 34.

happiness is a good to the aggregate of all persons. The fallacy involved in this proposition is known in logic as "the fallacy of composition." As Professor Mackenzie pointed out, this fallacy infers that:

Because my pleasures are a good to me, yours to you, his to him, and so on, therefore, my pleasures, plus your pleasures, plus his pleasures, are a good to me, plus you, plus him. It is forgotten that neither the pleasures nor the persons are capable of being made into an aggregate.¹

If all human minds were capable of being rolled into one so as to form an aggregate, the above argument might hold true. But "the aggregate of all persons" is nobody. Therefore, nothing could be good to a nonentity. In other words, a good must be good to somebody.

Paley was most assuredly in error when he insisted on a purely quantitative estimate of pleasure. He writes:

In strictness, any condition may be denominated happy, in which the amount or aggregate of pleasure exceeds that of pain, and the degree of happiness depends upon the quantity of the excess.²

The fallacy here is that a sum of pleasures can no more be called pleasure than a sum of men can be called a man, for

¹ Manual of Ethics, p. 219.

² The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. VI, p. 14.

pleasures can no more be added to one another than men can be added to one another. A particular pleasure may be desired but not a sum of pleasures, for such is a nonentity.

The hedonism which identifies pleasure with our desires overlooks the fact that it is not our desires that we seek to satisfy but ourselves and that which would satisfy our desires depends upon the kind of person behind the desire. The nature of the highest happiness, then, would depend not on its quantity but on its belonging to the highest kind of character. In other words, it depends on the nature of the self and the spiritual environment in which he lives. The highest happiness then would be attained by living in the best spiritual environment and by satisfying the desires that belong to that environment.

Furthermore, happiness is not found in the simple gratification of one single desire or of the greatest possible sum of desires. On the contrary, the real meaning of happiness is found in the systematizing of desire. Happiness at its highest is the feeling which accompanies the harmonious adjustment of the various essential elements in our lives or for the Christian man his essential unity with his fellows and with God. Therefore, while happiness is not the end of moral conduct it is an essential and inseparable element in its attainment.

It should be remembered that Paley did not consistently hold to his quantitative theory of pleasure, for in insisting that not all pleasure is productive of happiness, he was introducing a determining factor which is above pleasure. One pleasure is more desirable than another, not because of its nature as pleasure, but because of some other quality it possesses. That is to say, pleasures must be rationally defined in order to determine those which are enduring, for only enduring pleasures are productive of happiness.

II

The chief concern of this chapter is not with the metaphysical implications of Paley's theory. On the contrary, since Paley was primarily an apologist of the Christian religion and was chiefly concerned with providing a theological sanction for ethics, we shall confine our efforts to answering two questions; namely, has the modern church made any significant advances beyond Paley in the field of ethics; and was there anything in Paley's system that the modern church needs to recapture? For the sake of simplification this discussion shall be arranged under four live issues in the field of ethics in Paley's day and in our own; namely, the relation of religion to ethics, the place of revelation in ethics, the place of reason in ethics, and finally, the place of eschatology in ethics.

i

In the intervening period between Paley and the twentieth century, moral philosophers have emphasized their belief that the theological answer is too simple and easy to provide the final clue to man's moral problems. Obsessed with the theory of evolution the nineteenth century gave its allegiance to relativistic theories of ethics, and the breach between theology and ethics became strongly pronounced. Today, however, there is a movement away from relativism toward an authoritarian ethic. There are remarkable parallels between Paley's insistence upon the necessity of building the science of ethics on a theological foundation and the thought of men like Barth, Brunner and Niebuhr. In Paley's definition of virtue as, "The doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God...",¹ he was reacting against the eighteenth century humanistic rationalism which contended that morality may be based upon an innate moral sense. This was the position of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson who had a profound influence on Kant and caused him to be strongly prejudiced against a "theological ethic."

In the Christian Church today there is a marked effort to bring ethics back to her only proper foundation, namely, a religion

¹ The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Bk. I, Ch. vii, p. 27.

which has as its center a revelation of the will of God. The fact that revelation is the keystone of modern Christian ethics is seen in Barth's definition of ethics:

Ethics, so-called, I regard as the doctrine of God's command and do not consider it right to treat it otherwise than as an integral part of dogmatics, or to produce a dogmatics which does not include it.¹

Barth continues: "What is at stake in Christianity is the rule of God and nothing else."² Barth contends that in the realm of morals we must begin with God and to recognize the one and only God means to make all human systems of ethics relative. Furthermore, Barth supports this relativity of all human systems of ethics by citing Jesus' reply to the rich young ruler. "Why askest thou me concerning the good? One is good."³ That is to say, only one possesses absolute goodness; goodness which is never on trial. Therefore, any objective ethical test cannot but lie beyond the world of space and time. Barth writes: "Our demonstrated existence in this world is measured upon a standard which is not at all a part of existence as we know it or conceive it."⁴

¹ The Doctrine of the Word of God, Trans. G. T. Thomson, p. XIV.

² The Resurrection of the Dead, p. 103.

³ Matthew 19:17.

⁴ The Word of God and the Word of Man, Trans. Douglas Horton, p. 138.

Barth demonstrates the emptiness of all relative systems by contending that: "When the knowledge of God becomes manifest, they (all relative systems of ethics) no longer possess ultimate credibility."¹

Barth sees the relativism of all our codes and all our interpretations of life becoming evident in the modern revolt against "authority for its own sake." The "family for its own sake;" "art for its own sake;" "work for its own sake;" even "religion for its own sake," are all rightly being rejected. These idols, says Barth, cannot stand alone.² In his concern to show the dependence of ethics upon a revelation from God, Barth argues that neither the unaided conscience nor the so-called religious consciousness can give us truth. On the contrary, truth can exist only in the moment of God's speaking to us, which determines our very existence. Starting with this conception of ethics Barth proceeds to show first that man is incapable of apprehending ethical truth or of fulfilling its requirements; and second, that both ethical truth, and ethical achievement are wholly dependent upon God's speaking to us.

¹ The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, Trans. J.L.M. Haire and Ian Henderson, pp.18, 19.

² The Word of God and the Word of Man, Trans. Douglas Horton, pp. 292, 293.

This emphasis is continued in the ethics of Emil Brunner.

Insisting that there is but one true approach to morality and that all other approaches are ambiguous, Brunner starts with "a Divine Being" who must be the source of morality.¹ He discredits the practical approach to morality which looks for its authority to the agreement among men on moral issues and writes:

There is scarcely one moral commandment which is everywhere accepted as final, on the contrary, the moral codes of the various peoples and civilizations completely contradict one another, not merely in points of detail but in principle.²

Brunner is very close to Paley in his insistence that "to try to discover an original moral common sense behind these influences of the various religions is simply a wild-goose chase."³ He insists that even conscience is not the voice of God but a sinister force driving us to despair.⁴ Brunner concludes that man's endeavor to build human moral systems has culminated in the insoluble antithesis of religion versus ethics, freedom versus necessity, content versus formalism, individuality versus universality, and endaeonism versus rigorism.⁵

¹ The Divine Imperative, p. 28.

² Ibid., pp. 32, 33.

³ Ibid., p. 33.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 155ff.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 58ff.

For Brunner the good is the sum of all the moral predicates which are not independent entities. On the contrary, ethics is the dependent child of theology and never its parent nor independent partner. Even the law of nature is the command of God.¹ His meaning is seen more clearly in his declaration that:

Here there is no intrinsic good. What God does and wills is good; and all that opposes the will of God is bad. The good has its basis and its existence solely in the will of God.....² the will of God only is good, and it is to be done because He wills it.³

Another follower in this train is Reinhold Niebuhr. Concerning the ethic of Jesus, Niebuhr writes:

It is concerned with the absolute demand of God upon human life and not with the expedients required to keep the peace within a given society. It calls for an absolute obedience to the will of God without consideration of the consequences of moral action which must be the concern of any prudential ethic.⁴

Niebuhr also insists on the thoroughgoing relativity of all human ethical insight and activity. He contends that the structure of human nature is such that any system of human ethics must

¹ Justice and the Social Order, Trans. Mary Hottinger.

² The Divine Imperative, p. 53.

³ Ibid., p. 58.

⁴ An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 63.

necessarily be relative.¹ He sees the fundamental fallacy of rationalism in the fact that it regards man primarily as essentially an intellect which can by his unaided powers grasp all time and eternity. At the same time romanticism labors under the illusion that man is altogether a product of irrational forces. Niebuhr sees the failure of both rationalism and romanticism as due to "the lack of a principle of interpretation which can do justice to both the height of human self-transcendence and the organic unity between the spirit of man and his physical life."² Although man has his rootage in this finite world, still on every side his nature aspires toward infinity until "the limits of the self lie finally outside the self."³

Thus Niebuhr reasons that since man is ever in the tension between what he is and what the reality which transcends him tells him he ought to be, it is inevitable that evidences of the relativity of his ethics should be manifested on all sides.

Especially is this relativity in evidence in the sphere of relations between social groups. Niebuhr believes with Karl Mannheim that the ethical thought of all groups constitutes mere ideologies

¹ The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I, Chap. ii and v.

² Ibid., p. 123.

³ Ibid., p. 156.

⁴ Ibid., p. 196, 197.

relative to social conditioning.¹ Man is always prejudiced in his judgment of other parties:

No party to the conflict has a perspective high enough to judge the merits of the opponents position. Every appeal to moral standards thus degenerates into a moral justification of the self against the enemy.²

For example, Niebuhr argues that in the dispute between the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine there is no human basis for a solution:

The participants cannot find a common ground of rational morality from which to arbitrate the issues because the moral judgments which each brings to them are formed by the very historical forces which are in conflict.³

Niebuhr sees the same tragic relativity characterizing efforts to judge international conflicts. For even the so-called neutrals are incapable of disinterested action:

There is, in short, no position in an international conflict from which impartial judgments are possible. Every judgment is colored by interest and every claim to impartiality falls in the end to obscure the partial and particular interest which prompted or corrupted it. Thus the international situation is a perfect picture of human finitude....⁴

¹ Ibid., pp. 196, 197.

² An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 126.

³ Ibid., p. 127.

⁴ Ibid., p. 130.

Going from the group to the individual, Niebuhr reasons that the individual is less biased in his judgment than the group but only in degree, not in kind, for: "We always judge ourselves by our own standards and weigh ourselves in balances which gives us a special advantage."¹ This finiteness of perspective and bias which characterizes all human judgments manifests the hopeless relativity of human ethics, however, the deepest expression of this relativity Niebuhr finds in the fact that any attempt to escape relativity is sinful and only intensifies it. Furthermore, Niebuhr argues that the very essence of sin is seen in man's effort to exalt his relative ideas into absolutes or to pretend that he is God. He writes: "That sin has its source not in temporality but in man's willful refusal to acknowledge the finite and determinate character of his existence."²

All of man's attempts at morality are themselves tainted:

Thus the moral urge to establish order in life is mixed with the ambition to make oneself the center of that order; and devotion to every transcendent value is corrupted by the effort to insert the interests of the self into that value.³

¹ Ibid.

² The Nature and Destiny of Man, p. 177.

³ An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 85.

Moreover, Niebuhr contends that any attempt to elevate moral ideals is futile, for : "The higher the aspirations rise the more do sinful pretensions accompany them."¹ Thus he sees the international situation not only as a "picture of human finitude", but also as "a tragic revelation of the consequences of sinful dishonesty which accompany every effort to transcend it."²

On the positive side of Niebuhr's ethic he contends that since man's relative nature is always reaching beyond itself, if the relativity of human ethics is to be transcended, it must come through the contacts between man and that which is beyond him. While Niebuhr believes that these contacts can only be described in myths rather than in the language of science, he nevertheless believes that they do take place in the revelation of God to man. Christian ethics is utterly dependent upon these revelations of God to man. Niebuhr writes:

It does not establish a connection with horizontal points of a political or social ethics or with the diagonals which a prudential individual ethic draws between the moral ideal and the facts of a given situation. It has only a vertical dimension between the loving will of God and the will of man.³

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 130.

³ Ibid., p. 39.

In saying that Barth, Brunner and Niebuhr are like Paley in seeing the final meaning of morality in the will of God, we do not mean that they were in agreement as to how the will of God is known. On the contrary, they would utterly repudiate Paley's philosophical method of discerning the will of God through principles of expediency. When man presumes to thus describe the will of God he is, according to Barth, usurping the throne of God, for only God can manifest the will of God.¹ Brunner writes concerning the hedonistic calculus that while it is true that God wills our true happiness, we must not forget that, "He wills it in such a way that no one else knows what His will is."² Furthermore, Niebuhr insists that: "No pattern of human reason but only the will of God can be the principle of the form and order to which human life must be conformed."³ Niebuhr repudiates Paley's method of reasoning from the goodness of God that He must desire the happiness of all men by contending that while God is a good God, He is, nevertheless, completely free.⁴ We are not, therefore, to suggest that even the goodness of God is the basis of morality, for

¹ The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, p. 20.

² The Divine Imperative, p. 120.

³ The Nature and Destiny of Man, pp. 28, 29.

⁴ Ibid., p. 142.

should we so do, we would be exalting a human relative category to an absolute status. Niebuhr emphatically insists that it is God's free self which is final and not merely something we can see in God. Moreover, Niebuhr refuses to give any further definition of good itself because to do so would be to subject himself to his own condemnation of the sin of making absolutes of the human thought patterns of a particular time and place. Therefore, the only account of good which he is willing to give is to identify it with the will of God who meets us at the limit of our experience.

This insistence of Paley and of the modern school of neo-orthodoxy on an ethic based on religion is thoroughly in accord with the Christian tradition. Moreover, it is in complete harmony with the Hebraic psychology within which Christianity was formulated. Professor John Macmurray reminds us that the thing that distinguishes Hebrew culture from all others is that:

Art and science, politics, law, morality and philosophy, or rather what corresponds to these autonomous spheres of activity in other cultures, remain, as in primitive society, aspects of religion. Religion, thus, never becomes a particular sphere of human activity, but remains the synthesis of all.¹

¹ The Clue to History, p. 28.

Christianity is not a dualistic view which severs ethics from religion, for it recognizes no ultimate separation between the service of God and social behavior. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"; "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." These are the two basic commandments, and they stand together.

The close connection between religion and ethics within the framework of Christianity is revealed in the characteristic manner in which Paul writes his epistles. The first part deals with his theology or his reflection upon religious themes while the second part contains his ethical precepts and admonitions. A similar result is found in the Gospels where the evangelist follows a duality of structure. A narrative of events which contains the historical facts of theology will be given followed by certain ethical precepts. In other words, the ethical teaching of the New Testament is contained in a context which consists of a report of historical facts and an explanation of their religious significance.

In the Old Testament there was a relationship between "haggada", the declaration or exposition of religious truth and "halakha", regulations for conduct. Likewise in the primitive Christian religion there was the distinction between the "kerygma", the proclamation of "the good news," and the "didache", the teaching.

A convert to Christianity first of all responded to the "kerygma" and placed himself under the judgment and mercy of God revealed in Christ. He thus became a member of the Christian community, the church, and began to live a new life. He was then instructed in the ethical principles and obligations of the Christian life which are described by the Greek term, "didaché", or teaching.

Thus the order of approach in Christianity was first the proclamation of the Gospel and then the beginning of instruction in morals. This approach to ethics was set in marked contrast to that of contemporary Greek moralists who from the time of Aristotle had determined to establish a self-contained and self-justifying system of ethic. Christianity, however, presented ethics not as self-contained nor as self-justifying but as arising out of a response to the Gospel.

In what is Paul's earliest extant epistle, and perhaps the earliest document of Christianity, the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul addresses a congregation of newly converted Christians in the city now called Salonica in Macedonia. Fearing that these new converts from paganism might not fully appreciate the moral demands of the Gospel, Paul, after reviewing his theology

in the first three chapters, proceeds to give to them what he calls "orders." The term which he uses was employed in military circles to describe army orders. This throws great light on Paul's attitude toward Christian liberty. He certainly does not think of the Christian attitude as anarchism. His "orders" to the Christians of Thessalonica are extremely practical. They are told to observe decent self-control in sexual relations, to respect the rights of others, to be honest and industrious, etc.

Dr. C. H. Dodd has observed that these "orders" to which the Apostle refers belong to a regular course of ethical instruction for converts, the technical term for which was "catechesis".¹ Paul also speaks of this body of instructions as "traditions". Dr. Dodd understands Paul's claim, that he received this tradition from others (I Corinthians 15:1-3), to mean that there was already in existence a traditional body of ethical teaching given to converts from paganism to Christianity.² In writing to the Roman church, a church which he had not yet visited, Paul assumes that this body of ethical teaching has already been given them. He thanks God that the Roman Christians obey what he refers to as "the pattern of teaching" which they had received (Romans 6:17-18.)

¹ Gospel and Law, p. 14.

² Ibid., p. 15.

Moreover, the style and form as well as content of such ethical exhortations as are found written by Paul in First Thessalonians (5:14-18), by the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews (13:1-3), and by Peter in his First Epistle (3:8-9), give evidence that these writers were influenced by the familiar form of ethical instruction or "catechesis" which existed in the earliest days of the Christian church.

In addition to this Paul also claims to have a body of ethical instruction which he has received from the Lord and which is absolutely authoritative (1 Corinthians 7:8-12, 25, 40). He called upon his converts to "fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Thus believing himself to have received authority from Christ, he gave "orders" to his converts, and unequivocally demanded obedience. It should be remembered, however, that Paul taught that these commands are addressed to those who have the resources of supernatural grace for their fulfilment. The law of Christ is based upon the revelation of the nature of the eternal God, and it affirms the principles upon which His world is built and which men cannot ignore without subjecting themselves to direst peril. Thus we conclude that ethics is dependent upon

religion and that all moral obligation flows out of the moral nature of God as revealed in Christ. This does not mean, however, that an action is construed to be wrong because it is against an arbitrary will of God, but because it is against His intention for human life and therefore, it is against our highest welfare. By obeying the will of God man finds the highest fulfilment of that for which he was made. To refuse to act according to God's will is for man to find at death that he has not lived at all.¹

ii

The second item before us is the relation of revelation to ethics. How much Paley emphasized the central role of revelation in ethics has already been observed. We have also seen the central role of revelation in the system of Christian ethics that is fast moving to the front in current Christian circles. It must be remembered, however, that what Paley meant by revelation and what Barth, Brunner, and Niebuhr mean by it are vastly different. When Paley speaks of revelation he means the Bible as the Word of God. He regarded the Bible as the record of the dealings of an immutable God with people whose temperaments and circumstances were often like our own.

¹ Macmurray, John. The Clue to History, p. 68.

When, therefore, we wish to ascertain the will of God, we have only to go with seeking minds to the Bible and find how God dealt with men under similar circumstances in other days.

Over against this neo-orthodoxy¹ is insisting that the Word of God is not to be identified with the Bible. The Word of God for Barth, Brunner, and Niebuhr cannot be divorced from God himself. For the Word of God to come to man is nothing less than for God himself to come. God's Word may come through the Bible or through preaching, but it is never to be identified with these. The Bible is the result of revelation. It is not the static vehicle which contains God's revelation, for God's revelation is never static. It is always dynamic and immediate. It is not something that hangs suspended in the stratosphere as a set of principles from which we, through the process of ratiocination can discern the will of God. It is rather, God breaking right through with this message to this man in this moment.

It is significant that this view has spread very widely outside the school of neo-orthodoxy. For example, Dr. William

¹ The writer understands that Barth, Brunner and especially Niebuhr have repudiated the idea that they belong to a school of thought. However, since many reviewers in America are choosing to classify them together under the category of "neo-orthodoxy," for the sake of convenience he chooses to follow this pattern.

Temple says: "What is offered to man's apprehension in any specific revelation is not truth concerning God but the living God Himself."¹ Principal John Baillie writes:

Revelation consists neither in the dictation of writings nor in the communication of information, but in personal communion—the self-disclosure of a personality. So also in the sphere of morals what has been revealed to us is not a code of rules which we must obey but a person to whom we are constrained to respond.²

Coming back to Barth we find him contending that: "What God utters is never in any way known and true in abstraction from God Himself."³ God manifests His word in three forms, namely, preaching, Scripture, and revelation. Of these three Barth regards revelation itself as being ultimate while preaching and Scripture are mere forms of witness to the revelation itself. Furthermore, revelation can never be formulated into a code or system or displayed in scriptural quotation.⁴ On the contrary, revelation is always personal, living and purposive. It always has been and must forever remain God's mystery which when manifested leaves no residue that in itself may be called the "Word of God." For Barth contends

¹ Nature, Man and God, P. 322.

² Our Knowledge of God, p. 37.

³ The Problem of Ethics Today, p. 155.

⁴ Ibid., p. 159.

that if God did not retain the manifestation of Himself in His own hands He would cease to be God.¹ The Word of God cannot be known by the exercise of the intellect but only through divine grace acknowledged by faith which is itself the gift of a God who bestows it upon whom He pleases. Moreover, the Word of God is not a gift to mankind in general but is given "to this and that particular man."² The only element of hope that Barth holds out in his ethics is seen in his contention that the other side of our despair is the breaking through of the Word of God upon us. This comes when we realize our impotence and look up to see the Light of God dawning upon us.³ This light does not come as a revelation of the particular acts which God approves but as a certain kind of existence which God demands. Neither does the light of God prescribe rules or details of our duty. Instead of this God demands that we choose our way in the light of the new existence which He approves for us.

Brunner also follows in this tradition. He insists that the Bible represents a witness to the revelation of God which is not to be slavishly followed. While the commandments are helpful guides,

¹ The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, p. 20.

² The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 181.

³ The Word of God and the Word of Man, p. 167ff.

they do not of themselves constitute the Divine Imperative. This Divine Imperative must be unincumbered by any form of human control in order that it may come afresh to the particular person. Throughout his argument Brunner sternly warns against any human attempt to reduce the consistency of God to a principle, for this consistency itself can never be known save through the special revelation of God. Brunner stedfastly rejects any system of morality which would allow a moral code to usurp the throne of God. It is absolutely unthinkable to him that God should conform to a standard of good outside Himself. Brunner takes his stand firmly within the Old Testament tradition as he writes:

An idea like that in the religion of Zarathustra that God became Lord because he chose the Good, the idea of a law which is even higher than God Himself is unthinkable in the Old Testament.¹

Brunner combines his doctrine of revelation with his doctrine of man and insists that there is in man no nature apart from revelation. "Man has Spirit," he writes, only in that he is addressed by God...therefore, the human self is nothing which exists in its own right, no property of man, but a relation to a divine thou.² "The

¹ The Divine Imperative, page 53.

² God and Man, English Translation, p. 155.

humanity of man rests in nothing else than the divine Word addressed to him."¹

For Niebuhr there are two kinds of revelation: private or general revelation, and public or specific revelations in history.²

The basis for our acceptance of special revelation is to be found in general revelation, however, we cannot fully understand general revelation apart from a special revelation in which God gives direction and force to conscience. In the special revelation of the Bible, Niebuhr says:

A universal human experience, the sense of being commanded, placed under obligation and judged is interpreted as a relation between God and man in which it is God who makes demands and judgments upon man.³

Apart from such an interpretation of conscience through historical revelation, "conscience becomes falsified, because it is explained merely as man facing the court of social approval or disapproval or as facing his own 'best self'."⁴

These current conceptions of revelation are far more dynamic and vital than was that of Paley. However, it was commend-

¹ Ibid., p. 160.

² The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I, pages 125 ff.

³ Ibid., p. 129.

⁴ Ibid., p. 130.

able in Paley that in the face of the deistic opposition to all special revelation from God that he maintained his respect for the Book which contained the old, old story of God's dealings with men. Although, at times it appears that he is guilty of Bibliolatry, we must admit that even that is better than the total abandoning of the Bible. For if we are to be delivered from ethical relativism, we must begin with God. This is only made possible as God comes to us and as we have some word from God upon which our moral precepts may be founded. As Professor Pitirim Sorokin of Harvard has said: "It is only because they are derived from God that "the moral values of Christian ethics are absolute."

It has been objected that Paley's authority is an external force of a non-moral kind since it cannot be reasoned that the mere power of a supreme being could be accepted as sufficient ground for voluntary obedience to him. For such obedience would thereby become a "must", not an "ought." But this is a misinterpretation of Paley. He reasons from the absolute goodness of God that he must desire man's welfare and happiness. For him God's will is not an arbitrary fiat but the expression of absolute goodness.

¹ The Crisis of Our Age, p. 139.

Therefore, he grounded the basis of obligation to strive for the good in the nature of the good itself.

iii

The third phase of this chapter is to deal with the relation of reason to ethics. In common with the blithe spirit of eighteenth century England Paley saw man as the creation of a God who desired above all else man's happiness and had made the whole created order to serve this purpose. To be the recipient of God's bounty all that was necessary for man to do was for him to obey a rational interpretation of Scripture, and if this did not provide sufficient light, to reason from the standpoint of expediency concerning what course of action would bring the most happiness to the most people. Paley thus made reason and revelation to work hand in hand in the determining of the will of God.

Since the work of Immanuel Kant, morality has become in many circles the by-product of logic. This trend developed until the liberalism of the early part of the twentieth century said that man is essentially good because he is rational, and his rationality is divine; so divine that all reason-defying paradoxes of the Christian faith, may be smoothly by-passed as not belonging to the essence of

Christianity. Man was made the center and measure of all things, and it was held that the most distinctive emphasis in the teaching of Jesus was His emphasis upon the essential dignity of human personality which said that that which elevates and enriches human personality is right, and that which debases and destroys human personality is wrong.¹

The current neo-orthodoxy is calling us away from the blind impasse of optimistic liberalism with its deified man and humanized god to a new realism about man and to a God who sits regnant above the human scene, a God who, to use Kierkegaard's phrase, possesses an "infinite qualitative difference." To neo-orthodoxy God is "ganz anders", wholly different and, therefore, cannot be defined in a rational formula. Niebuhr sees the pre-eminent sin of the twentieth century as man's pretension to have achieved a degree of knowledge which is beyond the limit of finite life. This he calls the "ideological taint" in which all human knowledge is involved and which is always something more than mere human ignorance. It is always partly an effort to hide that ignorance by pretension. Niebuhr concludes that: "No pattern of human rea-

¹ Fosdick, Harry Emerson. A Guide to Understanding the Bible, p. 70.

son but only the will of God can be the principle of the form and order to which human life must be conformed!"¹

Furthermore, Niebuhr refuses to give any further definition of good itself because to do so would be to subject himself to his own condemnation of the sin of making absolutes of the human thought patterns of a particular time and place.

For Barth God is altogether incomprehensible to us. Our insight can never penetrate beyond his revelation nor can it fully grasp that revelation. Consequently the ultimate meaning of right and wrong for us can never mean anything more than the sovereign incomprehensible approval of God. Logic cannot serve to disentangle us from the relativistic ethical situation, for logic itself is dependent upon ethics. For Barth, knowledge is: "that confirmation of human acquaintance with an object whereby its trueness becomes a determining factor in the existence of the man who knows."¹ If knowledge is real for us, it must change us in our very existence, therefore, logic, which is the science of knowledge, is dependent upon ethics:

It is only when the logical question about things as they are is merged in the ethical question, about

¹ The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 226.

things as they might be, about the good, that it becomes ultimate.¹

Barth continues:

Absolutely nothing, therefore, can come of submitting the question about the good to the question about the truth in the logical sense—as if it were not the very ground upon which the latter substantiates itself.²

Throughout the ethics of neo-orthodoxy there runs the common strain of scepticism, agnosticism and irrationalism which utterly contradicts the optimism and rationalism of Paley. For all the tremendous contribution of these writers, we at times yearn for the sweet reasonableness of the eighteenth century. Perhaps this is an evidence of the truth in Niebuhr's contention that man is not willing to own his finiteness. However, we would still believe that it is a grave error to belittle the rational factor in morality, for morality must be able to commend itself to man who is not solely intellect but who, nevertheless, has an intellect. Furthermore, if man's reason is as corrupt as these writers suppose, it is difficult to see how it can be used to prove that this is the case.

¹ The Word of God and the Word of Man, p. 137.

² The Problem of Ethics Today, p. 137.

Perhaps Barth's refusal to assign to reason its proper place accounts for the fact that while his thought has affected the church most profoundly, it has done so only from a negative standpoint; and has not challenged the thought outside the church at all. The reason for this is very apparent. Barth has been more interested in establishing the absolute uniqueness of the Christian theology and ethic than in propagating it throughout the world. He has repudiated Christian apologetics but has also rejected the philosophical defense of the Christian world view as not only baseless or unconvincing, but as out of harmony with the Christian doctrine of revelation. He emphatically repudiates the belief that Christian truth is grounded in human reason.

Emil Brunner joins Barth in this conclusion as he says that: "Revealed knowledge is poles apart from rational knowledge. These two forms of knowledge are as far from each other as heaven is from earth."¹

Niebuhr does not go as far in the revolt against reason as does Barth and Brunner, and yet his use of paradox often appears to

¹ Revelation and Reason, p. 16.

be a convenient device for admitting the futility of attempting a rational explanation of man's moral predicament. For example, along with his neo-Calvinistic conception of sin Niebuhr places an equally confusing conception of human freedom in the following:

Man is thus in the position of being unable to comprehend himself in his full stature of freedom without a principle of comprehension which is beyond his comprehension...the ultimate proof of the freedom of the human spirit is its own recognition that its will is not free to choose between good and evil....

Man is most free in the discovery that he is not free...Man's self-love and self-centeredness is inevitable, but not in such a way as to fit into the category of natural necessity. It is within and by his freedom that man sins. The final paradox is that the discovery of the inevitability of sin is man's highest assertion of freedom.¹

This theology of paradox impresses the unsophisticated intellect as a gratuitous mystification; a twisted jungle of inconsistent opinions that get us nowhere. Instead of letting their yea be yea and their nay be nay, the neo-orthodox theologians feel that they must prove man's depravity by demonstrating to him his inability to wade through a maze of theological jargon. It would, of course, be grossly unfair to accuse these men of deliberately propagating theological irrationalism. On the contrary, even Karl

¹ The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I, pp. 125, 258, 260, 263.

Barth declares that "Christian faith is not irrational, not anti-rational, not super-rational, but rational in the proper sense."¹ At the same time he repudiates altogether the idea of a rational justification of faith.

Perhaps this confusion has arisen over a misunderstanding of the nature and range of reason, and is due to the maintenance of the traditional dualism of faith and reason which refuses to see the broader view which instead of sharply differentiating between reason and the other essential phases of mental life sees reason as pervading life as a whole. The view of the function of reason which has become increasingly common in philosophical and theological circles since the time of Kant, Hegel and Schleiermacher is that it is practical as well as theoretical; it is concerned with values and norms as well as bare facts; and it has to do with ultimate reality as well as phenomena. In this sense reason is operative in religion, morality, and art as truly as it is in mathematics and natural science. "It is, then, proper to speak of a religious reason, a moral reason, and an aesthetic reason as well as a theoretical reason."²

¹ Dogmatics in Outline, p. 23.

² Knudson, A.C. Basic Issues in Christian Thought, p. 43

In contrast with this modern revolt against the use of reason in theology and ethics stands Paley's firm confidence in man as a creature capable of receiving the revelation of God as it is recorded in the Bible. Furthermore, Paley never doubted that God, in making man a responsible being had endowed him with the ability to decide for himself what the will of God for his own life is. That is to say, Paley believed in a revelation from God which man is capable of receiving. He did not, like Barth, think of revelation as an experience in which man is neutral and inactive. Barth believes that even man's religious impulse, his reaching out after God has no independent spiritual significance. It "differs from the need of sleep only in degree."¹ Faith, however, is different from the religious impulse. Says Barth it is a divine response within us to a miraculous divine revelation and stands apart from all natural human activities.

Paley believed that morality is best promoted through clear definitions of right and wrong. This does not mean that he was not aware of the infinite complexity of the moral demands made upon life. It simply means that Paley knew that man's conduct can only be properly judged in the light of his ability and that unless one can

¹ Römerbrief, p. 219.

discern for himself the highest good, which for him was equated with the will of God, he could not be held morally responsible for doing the good.

Instead of the "ganz anders" of Barth, for Paley God was the "wholly good" who wished the happiness of his creation. So thoroughly convinced was he of God's goodness that he felt himself justified in identifying anything which contributes most to the happiness of the most people with the will of God. Naive as this may be to the sophisticated mind, it has far more practical value for the ethics of the common man than does the baffling system growing out of the theology of paradox. The paralyzing agnosticism and pessimism of the neo-orthodox ethic is seen in Niebuhr's contention that it is characteristic of high religion that, "it excludes no action, not even the best, from the feeling of guilt."¹ In his doctrine of the sinfulness of even our best efforts Niebuhr cuts the nerve of morality. Perhaps it is wholesome to insist that the goal is never attained, but to say that our best is still only a guilty compromise is to encourage even the best man to ask, "What's the use?" In connection with our best possible action there may be a normal and rational feeling of imperfection but not of true guilt. Instead of seeing only the bad in man Paley saw the good and recognized that in

¹ An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 82.

formulating a doctrine of man it must be remembered that there is a problem of good as well as a problem of evil.

The theological foundation of the ethics of Barth, Brunner and Niebuhr is fundamentally weak in that it stresses the fall of man more than the incarnation, the cross of victory, the open tomb of triumph and the extension of the incarnation through the union of the believer with Christ. This is not to deny the reality of the fall, for as Pascal said, "this is the mystery without which man becomes a mystery to himself." Yet rather than holding before man the dark Old Testament picture of the fall as the primary item in theology, it appears to be closer to the New Testament to insist that the incarnation itself argues the fact of man's capacity to receive God. This is not to deny that the incarnation is a miracle of divine grace nor that the incarnation was a unique event in human history. But it is to say that the incarnation posed no problem for God that was not cared for in man's creation when God made man in His own image with the capacity for fellowship with God.

Furthermore, by insisting upon the primacy of the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection the scene is changed from the darkness of the fall to the portrayal of the fact that God by His grace has now entered the field on the side of man and that in the conquering cross and the open tomb He offers man victory over sin and death in a

fellowship of faith that overcomes the world. As the Apostle put it: "As in Adam all die even so in Christ shall all be made alive."¹

Barth would call this theology of the divine immanence the arch heresy of the modern church and in so doing maintains the traditional view which Borden P. Bowne characterizes as an emphasis on "the undivineness of the natural and the un-naturalness of the divine."²

In certain passages Brunner also seems to stand against any emphasis upon the immanence of God. For example, he writes:

Believing God is the antithesis of experiencing God....our faith stands opposed to all experience just as it stands opposed to death and the Devil.³

Christian faith for this school is so superempirical and superhuman that Barth tells us that we do not know when we have it; we can only "believe that we believe."⁴

¹ I Corinthians 15:22.

² The Immanence of God, Preface.

³ Die Mystik und das Wort, p. 388.

⁴ Römerbrief, p. 128.

Over against this one finds the following statement

by John Oman most refreshing:

The present vehement insistence that religion should only be a crisis of decision about our dealings with a transcendent God, . . . and that all concern with human affairs is a descent from the empyrean into the quagmires and mists of time, seems to be a mere denial . . . that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. . . ." ¹

The school of neo-orthodoxy has turned from understanding to cling to mystery. They reject knowledge to trust in a misguided concept of faith. Our Lord did not identify faith with a blind plunge into the dark but with the courage to venture according to the understanding. His question was "Why are ye so fearful? How is that ye have no faith?" Modern dualism makes faith the opposite of understanding—an irrational assertion of something that we cannot understand. Professor John Macmurray calls this interpretation, "Moral cowardice masquerading as faith," ² . . . "a will to believe in mystery which is in itself the manifestation of fear." ³

¹ Concerning the Ministry, pp. 104, 105.

² The Clue to History, p. 99.

³ Ibid., p. 100.

iv

The final concern of this chapter will be with the relationship of eschatology to ethics. As often stated throughout this thesis Paley's chief concern was with providing a theological sanction for utilitarianism. He believed that the only way of bringing egoistic conduct into harmony with utilitarianism was by emphasizing that God has ordained the general happiness as the rule of human conduct and that He will reward or punish in another life those who obey or disobey that rule.

A review of the sermons of Paley will discredit the claim that he was crudely materialistic in his concept of eternity. He writes, "Heaven is infinitely greater than mere compensation, which natural religion might lead us to expect."¹ In another sermon he states:

I can easily believe that many of the opinions and notions we now erroneously entertain, especially concerning the place, condition, nature, occupation, and happiness of departed saints, may hereafter appear to us as wild, as odd, as unlikely and ill founded, as our childish fancies appear to us now.²

Furthermore, Paley does not make the fear of eternal punishment the basis of morality. He expressly states that, "There

¹ Sermons and Tracts, Sermon XXII, p. 201.

² Ibid., Sermon XXV, p. 335.

is great uncertainty in what is done under the impression of some fright...when the thoughts are...disturbed and the spirit is sunk and overwhelmed."¹ Again he states, "Salvation comprehends much more than being saved from punishment...."²

The recognition that the resurrection of Christ was in the forefront of Apostolic preaching and the belief in its practical corollary that all men shall rise again from the dead, "they that have done good to the resurrection of life and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation" led Paley to conclude with the Apostles that we should ask since this is true, what manner of men ought we to be? He observes that whenever a set speech of the Apostles' at a new place is recorded, that is, whenever he first opens the great message of Christianity to strangers, the great argument is the resurrection. For example, Paul declares that he delivered unto the Corinthians "first of all" the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:1ff.). Based upon the resurrection of Jesus is His promise of victory over death to the believer. Concerning the promise of Christ of the resurrection (John 4:28-29), Paley writes:

¹Ibid., Sermon X, p. 236.

²Ibid., Sermon XXVI, p. 248.

These words are so important that if Jesus Christ had never delivered any other, if he had come into the world and pronounced only this simple declaration, and proved the truth and certainty of it by the miracles which he wrought, he would have left enough to have guided his followers to everlasting happiness; he would have done more towards making mankind virtuous and happy than all the teachers and all the wisdom that ever appeared upon the earth had done before him¹

Paley believed in the enduring value of human personality and realized that to take away the eternal hope would mean that there would be no Gospel left. "If we in this life only have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable." (I Corinthians 15:19.)

There is also a strong eschatological sanction running throughout the ethics of neo-orthodoxy. However, it is a sanction related to what has come to be called "axiological eschatology", the belief that every generation is directly under God's judgment (as opposed to "teleological eschatology", which puts the judgment at some future time.) Niebuhr, however, goes beyond the present scene and looks for the fulfilment of our hopes in a kingdom beyond this world. In his discussion of the resurrection of the body, Niebuhr

¹ Sermons and Tracts, Sermon XXIX, pp. 28-29.

takes it as a symbol which means that the body and the natural basis of life are integral components of the personality, not something to be repudiated in the interests of a purely spiritual life. When, therefore, life reaches its goal, these too will have a share in its fulfillment. He does not, however, expect the resurrection of the body which has been committed to the grave. Niebuhr insists that while we must take the symbols seriously, we should not take them literally. He firmly holds to the belief that our unfulfilled hopes may be realized in eternity, in a Kingdom of God which lies beyond our success and failure, into which the one is built and the other is redeemed. He sees the end of history in the final judgment and our final satisfaction in the city which hath foundations where beyond these voices there is peace.¹

Karl Barth sees the resurrection of Jesus as the completion of the victory of God. He warns:

We must not transmute the resurrection into a spiritual event. We must listen to it and let it tell us the story how there was an empty grave, that new life beyond death did become visible... To those who know this, the break between the old world and the new is proclaimed. They have still a tiny stretch to run, till it becomes visible that God in Jesus Christ has accomplished all for them.²

¹ An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 247.

² Dogmatics in Outline, p. 123.

Barth does not agree with Paley's conception of God as a judge. He sees that the Biblical meaning of the judge is not primarily one who rewards some and punishes others. Rather is he the one who creates order and restores what has been destroyed. At the same time Barth insists that these visions of the last judgment are not meaningless. They signify that God knows everything that exists and happens. As we ponder this we may well be terrified, for "that which is not of God's grace and right cannot exist."¹

There can be no question but that the doctrine of life beyond the grave is a basic part of the Christian religion. In describing this Professor A. E. Taylor writes:

For the Israelite until long after the return from the captivity, as for the ordinary Greek, all the real interests of men, including even the interest of worshipping Yahweh and keeping His laws, belong to this side of the 'great divide.' What lies on the other side is an existence so dreary and meaningless that a man does best to keep it at arm's length so long as he may, and to avert his thoughts from it. In the great tradition of Christianity... the point of view is completely reversed. Practical emphasis falls always not on this life, but on that which awaits man on the other side of bodily death. It is there that we are told to look for our real home and our true destiny.²

¹ Dogmatics in Outline, p. 123.

² Ibid., p. 135.

Since this is the characteristic view of a Christian, we are not to condemn Paley for emphasizing it so strongly in his ethic. Of course, there is the familiar humanistic objection that the Christian belief in a future life has unduly diverted attention from this life.

Moralists in general object to basing ethics in this world on rewards in another world on the grounds that this tends to lead us to the attitude that this life is unimportant. The pragmatist says the future is too nebulous: what we need is to get busy and make a better world in the present. As Paley presented his sanction it is quite obvious that an infinite amount of happiness in eternity could outweigh any amount of earthly misery. There is no doubt but that an extreme transcendentalism which defines religion solely in terms of another life reflects the inability to believe in God and this world at the same time and is therefore spiritually deficient. However, the belief in a future life of bliss does not logically imply that the values of this life are to be neglected, and in practice it is the exception rather than the rule that it leads to the neglect of this world. In fact, Paley emphatically insists that while keeping his eye on a more abiding city the Christian must at the same time earnestly intercede for the peace and welfare of this

world.¹ Moreover, it must be recognized that some of the world's most ardent toilers have been those who were sustained by a blessed hope. For example, the writer has the privilege of teaching in a theological seminary where many students are trained for foreign mission service. After ten years of intensive preparation in medical and theological training, one of the most capable and charming young ladies ever to enroll in our seminary was appointed by our foreign mission board to go to Joinkrama, Nigeria in the delta region of British West Africa which has been called "the back side of nowhere." There life is unspeakably hard. The rain falls three hundred and sixty days out of three hundred and sixty-five. There is no electricity, no running water in the houses. The river is the place where the natives bury their dead, wash their clothes, bathe, and then drink the water. One out of every seven has leprosy. Small pox is rampant. The mission appointee, Miss Aletha Fuller, gave this testimony: "There is only one doctor in all the area of Joinkrama and when I get there I will be the only nurse." Then she asked, "Do I think of it as a sacrifice? No, for I want to give the best years of my life in service for Christ and to God whose grace

¹ Sermons, Sermon XI, p. 142.

has always and shall always be sufficient." Then she said in closing:
"If I may see a host of black faces up yonder it will be worth all
the effort."

In reply to the critic who says that a belief in a future life makes one indifferent toward service in this life it might be noted that the man who says this life is all, therefore, make the most of it, usually means make the most of it for yourself.

One of the most amazing achievements of the Apostolic era is the fact that in this period when the sense of impending catastrophe was so strong and everything in the world seemed temporary and so much emphasis was being placed upon the thought that only things which would survive the passing of heaven and earth were worthy of attention, that the church should produce anything like a code of social ethics. We should expect that in the face of the expectation of the end of the world with the immediate return of the Lord the Apostles would be utterly indifferent to human affairs. But notice the emphasis in the First Epistle of Peter:

But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (I Peter 4:7-10.)

Paul writes : "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore, cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light." (Romans 13:12) "The world", writes John, "is passing away, and the world's desire, but he who does God's will abides forever." (I John 2:17.)

Now we do not criticize Paley for his belief in life after death nor for his belief in rewards and punishments after death, nor can we say that working for rewards in eternity is not a part of the Gospel. In answer to the objection that this is a very selfish view we might answer that surely our Lord knew what He was talking about when he said: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal,"¹ and also: "for great is your reward in Heaven."²

It is conceivable, however, that if this motive should become too dominant it might destroy the very essence of the Christian

¹ Matthew 6:20.

² Matthew 5:12b.

faith. For example, if one is simply interested in the prudential earning of rewards, he might soon forget that he is a debtor to divine grace. If he seeks what God has to give more than God Himself, he becomes an idol worshipper. The witch of Alexandria, walking the streets armed with a pitcher of water and a flaming torch, and crying "Would that I could quench hell with this water and burn heaven with this torch, so that men would love God for Himself alone," was mistress of a white magic, not of a black art.¹ The Christian is explicitly taught to seek not his own glory here or hereafter but the glory of God.

The doctrines of heaven and hell are facts that belong to the Christian religion, but this does not mean that they are essentially related to the highest motives for ethics. Rewards and punishments may belong to a certain stage of moral development in a child. Perhaps it would help in the forming of good habits, but as the child matures morally, the need for rewards and punishments should disappear. Our Lord had something to say against those who followed Him for the loaves and fishes. Instead of thinking in terms of external rewards perhaps it would be better to regard eternal life as John regarded it as the present gift of God to the man who through

¹ Buttrick, G.A. The Parables of Jesus, p. 163.

faith enters the fellowship of Christ. This means that what the man of faith shall be in eternity he is rapidly becoming today. John construes the goal of the Christian life in terms of character. "Beloved it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (I John 3:2-3). A remarkable silence surrounds the Apostles description of the believer's final destiny. It is somewhat akin to the wholesome agnosticism of Richard Baxter who wrote:

Our knowledge of that life is small.
The eye of faith is dim,
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all
And I shall be with him.

Moreover, if a man could be scientifically certain of rewards for his good deeds in eternity would this not cut the nerve of faith by removing the element of venture therefrom? Furthermore, it is declared that the motive behind Christian service is to be love. Only one new commandment did Jesus give His disciples, namely, this: "A new commandment give I unto you that ye love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34.)

It would thus appear that Paley might have improved his ethic by making it more distinctly Christian. Instead of making

heaven and hell pure appeals to a selfish, self-regard he might have viewed them as the normal result of a life that delights in or refuses the fellowship of God here. The Christian is to find delight in the fellowship of his Lord more than in anything his Lord might give him:

He and I in that bright homeland
One great joy will share.
Mine to be forever with him,
His that I am there.

Paley might also have emphasized that religion brings blessedness in our present life and that the only assurance that a man may have that he will enjoy the fellowship of God beyond the grave is the assurance that he shares that fellowship now. This fellowship is a fellowship of love which the Apostle Paul found so rich and deathless here that he could declare, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39). As John Oman puts it:

We should not be reconciled to God because we believe in another life, but we should believe in another life because, being reconciled to God, we find a meaning in life which is ever expanding and a purpose death cannot end... Thus we rightly and religiously believe in another life, because we are serving the purpose of a love for which this life is too small.¹

¹ Grace and Personality, p. 306.

Oman reasons further that the ethical meaning of love is to treat every man as an end in himself and to respect him for what he ought to become. Then he concludes:

Yet how are we to continue to say what he ought to be, when, if the whole story end at the grave, we know it is what he never will be?¹

Oman concludes his argument for eternal life by holding that although the moral order is valid though it is not fully realized in time, yet it does not follow that it would still be valid even if it were never to be realized. He contends that instead of a castle in the air, morality is either life's ultimate meaning or it is nothing. The ultimate meaning of this moral order is love, but it would be absurd to say that a moral order with love at its heart could finally issue in death. He sees love as self-abnegation, not self-regard. This, however, does not mean that love is self-destruction or self-disregard. It is, therefore, only because love is itself our best self-realization, that it has the right to avert attention from ourselves to the fulfillment of its own behests; and it can be so only if the world is so constituted that deliverance from self means to be saved. He concludes:

¹ Ibid., p. 310.

This gives a due place to self-love, while delivering us from a utilitarian morality, which makes self-love the measure and end of morals. Utilitarianism says, conscience is only self-love wisely judging what really pleases us; a true morality says, right self-love is only conscience wholly determined by God's will of love, which serves what is worthy of God's image in us and blesses us because it is in accord with the true order in which God has placed us.¹

Let us conclude by saying that while he gave imperfect expression to the central features of his ethic, still do we believe that Paley did well in insisting that religion is the foundation of morals, that belief in revelation is essential to Christian ethics, that reason must have its part in the apprehension of revelation and that the eschatological goal must be included in any complete statement of Christian ethics. For his contribution along these lines we must at least be grateful enough to disagree with Shelley who said: "He would rather be damned with Plato and Sophocles than to go to heaven with Paley and Malthus."²

¹ Ibid., p. 312.

² Quoted by Tsanoff, Radoslav A., The Moral Ideals of Our Civilization, p. 468.

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