God

Do not imagine that these great mysteries are completely and thoroughly known to any of us.  

MAIMONIDES

As we approach the conclusion of this study we may appropriately end with the three themes made famous in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant—God, Freedom, Immortality. By these a mature religion will stand, if it stands, and without these it will certainly fall. Furthermore, there is a unique majesty about the really great themes. Consequently, we approach them with wonder and with humility. Whatever the true nature of God is, He is more than we know. The love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind.

A. THE IMPORTANT QUESTION

In previous chapters, particularly those of Part Two, we have seen something of the evidence for the faith that God is and that He is not merely an idea in human minds. The theistic hypothesis is better substantiated and answers more insistent questions raised in experience than is the case with any alternative hypothesis of which we have heard. But we cannot end with this, for the question of God's nature is more important, in some ways, than is the question of God's existence.

The popular question "Is there a God?" is never the right question. Heschel, in his philosophy of Judaism, points out that such a question is really presumptuous. "The ultimate question, bursting forth in our souls," he says, "is too startling, too heavily laden with unutterable wonder to be an academic question, to be equally suspended between yes and no. We can no longer ask: Is there a God? In humility and contrition we realize the presumption of such asking."  

It is easy enough to believe in "a God" providing we do not much care what kind. If we make the object of our search sufficiently broad and vague, existence is practically assured, but the value of the consequent faith is correspondingly lessened. Though Sigmund Freud is not, in most instances, a reliable interpreter of the religious scene, he does render a service by exposing the situation in which men use the language of practical faith but really mean something else. This Freud considered fundamentally dishonest. "Philosophers," he said, "stretch the meaning of words until they retain scarcely anything of their original sense; by calling 'God' some vague abstraction which they have created for themselves, they pose as deists, as believers before the world; they may even pride themselves on having attained a higher and purer idea of God, although their God is nothing but an insubstantial shadow and no longer the mighty personality of religious doctrine."  

It is because nearly all men believe in God in some sense that the question of divine character takes logical precedence over the question of divine existence. All of the major battles of religion are civil wars. Barnabas and Paul were not opposing the irreligious, but the inadequately religious when they cried out at Lystra, "We bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and all that is in them."  

How easy it is to use the word "God" and mean very little is shown vividly by the history of both deistic and pantheistic belief. The God of the deist is merely the First Cause, required by the demands of intellectual cogency, but such a God is not an active factor in day-by-day experience in the present world. He is not One whom men can love. The conception leaves no room for miracle, for prayer, for providential guidance, and, above all, it leaves no room for the direct religious experience such as Pascal's conversion or the deep intimacies reported by the author of the Imitation of Christ. Though the term is now seldom used, a great deal of what passes for belief today is sheer deism and nothing more and is, therefore, woefully inadequate. If the only God who exists is the God of the deist, it would not be worth while to write a book on the philosophy of

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3 Acts 14:15.
4 Religion. Deism may actually be less religious than primitive atheistic Buddhism, for, though the deist seems to speak of God, whereas the primitive Buddhist did not, he actually fails to have an object of ultimate concern, which the Buddhist undoubtedly had.

Pantheism also involves the use of the word "God," but that is no good reason for taking it seriously. Pantheism is the conception of divine immanence carried to its ultimate conclusion, without the corrective of divine transcendence. The pantheist really identifies God and the world, thus obliterating the distinction between the Creator and the creation. This has taken a deep hold on certain portions of the popular mind, especially that portion which says there is no point in trying to give careful evidence for God, because He can be seen everywhere all the time. This simple faith is even reflected in popular hymns when people sing, "In the rustling grass, I see Him pass; our God is everywhere." The central idea is that God animates the world as I animate my body. With God the soul of the world, nothing is alien to Him, and there is no existence of God apart from the existence of the world. Anything we find in the world is a part of God.

This conception, though more widespread than we usually suppose, 5 suffers terribly from its naive simplicity, in that it cannot account for the actual complexity and highly paradoxical character of the world as apprehended. Two particular defects are crucial. In the first place, if pantheism is true, God will die when the world dies. A painter may survive the destruction of his painting but, if the painter is the picture, the end of the picture is the end of him. There is much reason to infer, as Eddington has taught so persuasively, that the material order is due for ultimate stagnation, in which no part will be a scene of life and consequently a world devoid of value.

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1 C. A. T. C. Tillich, Systematie Theology, vol. 1, p. 229. "If God is understood as that which concerns man ultimately, early Buddhism has a concept of God just as certainly as does Vedanta Hinduism. And if God is understood as that which concerns man ultimately, moral or logical concepts of God are seen to be valid insofar as they express an ultimate concern. Otherwise, they are philosophical possibilities but not the God of religion."

2 Among the most common expressions of essential pantheism in the modern world are the writings of Christian Scientists. Cf. Clyde E. Gunter, "Concerning Disease and Regeneration," Christian Science Journal, August, 1952, pp. 405 ff. "Everythiing in God's universe," says the author, "is under the control of divine Principle."
If there is no basic distinction between God and the world, and if increasing entropy is a fact, the life of God is of limited duration. Such a God is not an object of ultimate concern.

In the second place, pantheism cannot account rationally for sin and evil. If the world and God are identical, then God includes evil in His nature, with the consequence that He is not really worthy of reverence on moral grounds. "If God and man are one, then God, and not man, is responsible for evil." The pantheist cannot evade this crucial difficulty except by some effort to minimize the distinction between good and evil. He may either hold that good and evil are merely human in their reference, purely relative to man's wishes and therefore sheer illusion when applied to the objective world, or he may hold, on the other hand, that what appears to be evil is nothing but some good in disguise. In short, the pantheist is forced, in deference to his central dogma, to deny utterly that there is any problem of evil. It ought to be obvious that any philosophy which flies in the face of so much of human experience need not be taken seriously. C. S. Lewis calls it a boy's philosophy and brackets it with the watered-down Christianity which says that "there's a good God in Heaven and everything is all right—leaving out all the terrible doctrines about sin and hell and the devil, and the redemption. It is no good asking for a simple religion. "After all real things aren't simple." The following sentences from Lewis are bound to bring pause to all who are tempted to oversimplification in their conception of God and God's relationship to the world, including those who still speak of the Oversoul, in the way once made fashionable by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

If you don't take the distinction between good and bad very seriously, then it's easy to say that anything you find in this world is a part of God. But, of course, if you think some things really bad, and God really good, then you can't talk like that. You must believe that God is separate from the world and that some of the things we see in it are contrary to His will. Confronted with a cancer or a slum the Pantheist can say, "If you could only see it from the divine point of view, you would realize that this also is God." The Christian replies, "Don't talk damned nonsense.""8

It is probable that the best way to gain some understanding of the nature of God is to proceed as on a stairway, not trying to take the top steps first. We invite all to start in such a procedure, each taking as many of the steps as he can.

The common ground on which nearly all devout persons can unite is the conviction that God is the Power in the universe which drives it in the direction of goodness. Unless there is such a power in the world it is really impossible to explain the emergence of such values as are actually known. However imperfect our world is and however tormenting the problem of evil may be, it is a fact that ours is a world of order and that the order is such that it has led to the emergence of life, of mind and of spirit. The road from the infant planet to the reverent scientist is a long road, but it is all the same road. There is, then, in the world a thruster in the direction of increasing meaning, increasing sensibility, increasing appreciation of truth, beauty and goodness. Whatever else God is, He is at least this thruster. He is the Eros of which Plato speaks so movingly in the Symposium and of which Whitehead, that modern Plato, speaks in the end of Adventures of Ideas. Instead of using the term "God" he speaks of the "Unity of Adventure," which, he says, "includes the Eros which is the living urge towards all possibilities, claiming the goodness of their realization." The universe achieves its final justification in the Beauty which the Living Urge produces. "The Adventure of the Universe starts with the dream and reaps tragic Beauty." As we read these highly poetic, yet profound words we begin to get an accurate minimal idea of what there is in the world besides sticks and stones and living cells and finite minds. The dream of youth and the harvest of tragedy are not limited to human experience, but are, Whitehead believed, "at the heart of the nature of things." "God is the adventurous element in the universe. It is the character of God as both adventurous and ultimate that makes possible the best that men can know, the union of Zest with Peace." 9

Nearly all who believe in God with a sense of wonder, even though they cannot accept the notion of God as personal, would go this far in their characterization of the divine power. Thus, Henry N.

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8 Peter A. Bertoci, Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion, p. 317.
9 C. S. Lewis, The Case for Christianity, p. 35.
9 Ibid., pp. 53, 54.
9 Alfred North Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, p. 381.
Wieman describes God as follows: "God is understood to be the power more than human which saves man from ultimate disaster and transforms him into the best that he can ever become." It is obvious that the man who writes such a statement is trying desperately to be honest and not to go beyond his evidence. He is saying that the God so described is actually known in experience because we do find help in our moral endeavor. There is a Power that sustains us on life’s darkest as well as life’s brightest ways. However inadequate such a characterization of God may be, we can be grateful for the superlative honesty of those who refuse to go beyond their available evidence.

C. God as Personal

It is difficult to see how thinkers, such as those just mentioned, can come so close to ascribing personality to God without taking this important added step. After all, the aspect of our world which most cries out for explanation is precisely that aspect of the ascending series which is most truly personal. There are two major rocks on which religious naturalism must inevitably founder. The first of these is the fact that ours is undoubtedly a world which has persons in it, and the second is the fact that so much of the validated religious experience of mankind is reported in personal terms.

That our world has produced persons is, in many ways, the most astounding fact we know. And we know persons far better than we know anything else, because we ourselves are persons. By a person we mean a being with conscious intelligence, equally able to be conscious of self and others, and also able both to entertain purposes and to appreciate values. Though personality as we know it most intimately is associated with bodies, there is no good reason to suppose that such association is necessary. It is certainly possible that there are personal beings without bodies; that is, angels may exist. But whereas the existence of angels is problematical, the existence of men is not. The one part of the universe with which we have a fair acquaintance is not only one in which there has been an ad-venturous thrust toward life and mind, but one which has flowered in the production of creatures who can sometimes say “no” to their appetites in the light of what is believed to be objectively right and good. The end product we really know is a high type of freedom.

How can the naturalist account for himself? He believes in God, but there is a fundamental absurdity in supposing that the God in whom he believes is inferior to himself in the order of being. If God is a mere “power,” and not a center of consciousness, then I, the humble creature, am actually superior, in a very important way, to the Creator. Can the “Unity of Adventure” be less rich in content than that which this Unity produces? The strangest feature of Whitehead’s philosophy is his failure to see this point.

The tendency, in modern thinking, to suppose that a movement in the direction of impersonality is progress, is a very curious development, and hard to understand, because everything we know points the other way. If any man wants to hold that a creature, such as Socrates, is not superior to a stone, that is his privilege, but he will not be believed.

Our world is one which presents a series of levels of reality, with at least four levels apparent. The level of matter, as represented by a stone, is surpassed by the level of life, as represented in a tree, which unlike the stone, is capable of growth and reproduction. There is much interest today in the possibility that life may now be produced in laboratories by the combination of material factors and without reproduction. Indeed, a few scientists now claim to be close to success in this ancient endeavor. Some suppose that this operation would prove the reductive hypothesis that life is nothing but matter. It would, of course, prove nothing of the kind, and would be in no way disturbing. The men involved would simply be fortunate enough to observe a point in which the emergence from one level to another occurs. There would still be different levels, because there would be different laws in operation.

The level of mind, as illustrated in the thinking of a chimpanzee, uses life as life uses matter, but likewise surpasses it. Life is an emancipation from intrinsic passivity, but mind is an emancipation from simple location. A creature which merely lives has no relation-

11 By religious naturalism we mean any system which, even though it rejects the reductionist formula of materialism, fails to adopt a personalistic interpretation of events.
12 This is obvious, once it is pointed out, but it was not obvious to me until it was brought to my attention by Professor Lovejoy.
ship with other creatures except by immediate contact, but a creature who thinks is related to others by contemplation. The difference is a difference in kind. Spirit uses and surpasses mind as mind uses and surpasses life. In spirit we observe a final step in the direction of freedom, in that spirit is emancipated from the complete domination of the appetites. The biggest step ever taken is the step from "I want" to "I ought."

Now, the point is that if we stop short of thinking of God in the highest terms we know we are guilty of a kind of blasphemy. It is really a terrible thing to suggest that I can be conscious of God, whereas God cannot be conscious of me. Here is where the spiritual genius of Judaism appears most brilliantly. "The God of Hebraic religion," says Herberg, "the God of the Bible, is a Living God. In this tremendous phrase—the Living God—which has become so strange to our ears, but which recurs repeatedly in the Bible and continues right through rabbinic tradition, is concentrated the full potency of the Hebraic ‘God-idea.’ Only it is no longer a mere ‘God-idea’: it is the Living God himself."

What Herberg and men like him are talking about is not an abstract idea or an intellectual principle, and certainly not the Absolute, but "a dynamic power that is personal." Heschel is even more explicit when he writes: "The living soul is not concerned with a dead cause, but with a living God. Our goal is to ascertain the existence of a Being to whom we may confess our sins, of a God who loves, of a God who is not above concern with our inquiry and search for Him; a father, not an absolute."

The idea of God as fully personal means that God is a center of consciousness and of self-consciousness and, therefore, utterly different from mere brute power or the reign of law, though God is undoubtedly the source both of power and of natural law. God, in the most advanced thought, especially of Christians, is never equated with some abstract quality. The phrase "God is love," though it appears in the New Testament, cannot be considered a definition or an exhaustive statement, and must be understood in connection with other statements, such as "God so loved the world." Love without a lover is a pure abstraction.

It is Martin Buber, more than any other living philosopher, who has recovered for modern men the wonder and depth of the personal understanding of the mystery at the heart of the world by his emphasis on the ultimate meaning of Thou. The cruel paradox of our time is that, enamored of natural science, we have sought to penetrate the mystery of electrons and have tended to forget the far greater mystery of the persons who study the electrons. To be able to say "Thou" truly and meaningfully is to be a person. God is not an Object merely to be spoken about, but One to be spoken to, and listened to. The mystery of personality is deep enough, at best, but it is absolutely impermeable if God is merely an impersonal force, a mere it.

If naturalism has a hard time accounting for the emergence of personality in the world, it has an even harder time accounting for religious experience. The sophonene may suppose that he can discard all religious experience or explain it psychologically, but the wise man does not think so. To suppose that all of those who, in the simplicity of prayer, have felt the sustaining hand of God were deluded is to be guilty of monstrous arrogance. But what is so significant is the great amount of the reported experience, as found in countless journals and implied in countless prayers, that is deeply personal.

"Why is it," Herberg asks, "that we, modern-minded men, are so scandalized when we are seriously asked to think of God as personal?" Part of the answer is no doubt the one which he suggests, that "we have inherited the Greek metaphysical conception of God as Pure Being," but there is an added reason. Being children of a scientific age, we are well aware that new science tends to destroy old science, and we are accordingly skeptical of conclusions which have the antiquity of those of the Bible. Can you trust the judgment of a man who never went faster than a horse could run? Perhaps the

14 Ibid., p. 59.
15 *The Writings of Martin Buber*, p. 54.
notion of God as Father is merely another antiquated idea which we ought to outgrow, particularly when we realize that it is rooted in the psychological needs of childhood. But, whatever the explanation, the deep misgiving is usually expressed in a big and ominous-sounding word, anthropomorphism. To think of God personally, some say, is really to be anthropomorphic, that is, to think of God in the form of a man.

The criticism is an old one, to which nothing of importance has been added in more than two thousand years, though the attack may be made directly or in an oblique fashion. An unusually clear example of the direct attack on the belief in God as personal is provided by the religious writings of Albert Einstein, writings which indicate that a man may be a great mathematician without being a careful thinker in other fields. Einstein’s attack was as follows:

During the youthful period of mankind’s spiritual evolution human fantasy created gods in man’s own image, who, by the operations of their will were supposed to determine, or at any rate to influence, the phenomenal world. Man sought to alter the disposition of these gods in his own favor by means of magic and prayer. The idea of God in the religions taught at present is a sublimation of that old concept of the gods. Its anthropomorphic character is shown, for instance, by the fact that men appeal to the Divine Being in prayers and plead for fulfillment of their wishes.

Nobody, certainly, will deny that the idea of the existence of an omnipotent, just and omnibenevolent personal God is able to accord man solace, help and guidance; also, by virtue of its simplicity it is accessible to the most undeveloped mind. But, on the other hand, there are decisive weaknesses attached to this idea in itself, which have been painfully felt since the beginning of history. That is, if this being is omnipotent, then every occurrence, including every human action, every human thought, and every human feeling and aspiration is also His work; how is it possible to think of holding men responsible for their deeds and thoughts before such an Almighty Being? In giving out punishments and rewards He would, to a certain extent, be passing judgment on Himself. How can this be combined with the goodness and righteousness ascribed to Him?

The main source of the present day conflicts between the sphere of religion and science lies in this concept of a personal God.\(^ {17}\)

Einstein showed by this statement how little he understood the  

\(^ {17}\) Albert Einstein, Ideas and Opinions, pp. 46, 47.

history of religion. He repeated the ancient claim of Xenophanes that man has made the gods in his own image, but was he aware of the prophetic teaching that warns against this very danger, while keeping the sense of personal immediacy? He presented omnipotence as though he had not heard of the fact of freedom, which means that God is not directly responsible for the acts of men which go against His will. In short, the whole position is remarkably naïve and gets its apparent strength from its naïveté. Of course, it would be wrong and inadequate to think of God as limited to the imperfect character of men, but such an absurdity is a straw man; it is not what is meant by following the Biblical insight and seeing God as fully personal. There is a middle ground between anthropomorphism and impersonalism.

The direct attack, like that of Einstein, is relatively easy to meet, but the situation is harder when the attack is oblique and when it comes from the mind of a man as able as Paul Tillich. There is a strain in Tillich’s thinking in which he attempts, not a denial of personal characteristics in the divine, but such a radical reinterpretation of divine personality as to break utterly with what the plain man of prayer normally means. In the end this might be a more damaging approach than that of the direct challenge. Tillich speaks of the personal character of God as a “myth,” and says, “Where the myth is taken literally, God is less than the ultimate, he is less than the object of ultimate concern, he is not God in the infinite and unconditional sense of the great commandment.”\(^ {18}\)

Such a statement calls for careful analysis. What, for example, is the meaning of “taken literally”? He cannot mean “taken as though God had a physical form like man’s form or appetites and temptations.” The inadequacy of that conception would be obvious to every thinking person and not worth Tillich’s attention. He must mean “taken seriously.” But in that case his conclusion does not follow. If I believe “literally” that God is personal, because I believe that the highest order of being is personal being, why is God less than ultimate? Conscious love is not a limitation, but the greatest emancipation we know or can imagine. To picture God as an impersonal absolute, a mere being with no consciousness or purpose,  

is to involve oneself in one absurdity while trying to escape another. God is not the object of ultimate concern if He lacks the simple majesty of the freedom which man undoubtedly has.

The central point is that, if God is not personal, in a literal sense, then God is not the ultimate explanation of that which most requires explanation. What baffles the materialist is the emergence of personal character in a world of chemical reactions. Only one who is supremely personal can be the Ground for the emergence of even the finite personality which we see in our fellows and know intimately in ourselves. If God is only an impersonal force, then the stream has risen higher than its source, for we can at least be certain that personality appears in us.

The people who have tried to hold to belief in God while rejecting the personal aspect of the Divine have sincerely tried to make an advance over a primitive view, but they have, unfortunately, moved in the wrong direction. Just as life is manifestly superior to matter and as consciousness is superior to mere biological phenomena, the appreciation of personal value is superior to mere awareness of external environment. The line of advance is not away from the personal, but toward it and possibly through it. Many of those who resist the notion of God as personal are, no doubt, trying to avoid what seems at first to be a limitation to our size and experience, and this effort is wholesome, but personality is not such a limiting conception. No one in his senses would think of interpreting the personal character of God as limited to the low level of personality illustrated in ourselves. Of course, God is more than we are, but He must be at least as much as we are. The alternative to He or Thou is It. Perhaps what we need to do is to coin a big word, from Greek derivatives, which will be as frightening to the "impersonalists" as anthropomorphism has been to the personalists.

To say that God is completely different from us is as absurd as to say that He is completely like us. He may differ from us, C. S. Lewis suggests, not as white differs from black but as a perfect circle differs from a child's first crude attempt to depict a wheel. Human personality makes sense if it is a childish attempt to achieve the complete personality which God, and God alone, demonstrates.

If God is, indeed, truly personal, as so much of experience indicates, we should expect that His most vivid revelation would necessarily be a personal one. The complete way in which He could be shown to us would not be in the majesty of mountains or in the wonder of the stars or even in the intricacy of a cell, but only in a personal life, sharing, as do our little lives, in both affection and temptation, yet perfect where we are imperfect. The good news, according to Christians, is that this has occurred! All other historical persons can be approached or forgotten at will, but there has lived One whom men cannot leave alone. He revealed the truth of God and man, not merely by what he taught, but far more by what he did and, above all, by what he was. The major faith of the Western world is centered in a personal revelation.

D. Transcendence

The conclusion to which our cumulative argument has led us is that the explanation of the world is to be sought in a Personal Reality, or, to use the Biblical phrase, the Living God. Can we envisage, more precisely, His relation to the world and its process? It seems clear, if our argument is sound, that God is the explanation of the world in such a manner that it is dependent upon Him as He is not dependent upon it. Personality is always more than its own self-expression. The artist undoubtedly puts himself into the painting, but, even on the finite level of personality, the effect does not exhaust the cause; how much less so must it be when we are dealing with infinite personality! In short, the more we take the concept of the personal seriously the more we realize that for God to be truly personal He must be transcendent. Transcendence and immaturity are not incompatible, but are complementary concepts. God is seen immanently in the order of the world, but there would not even be this order if He were not more than the order. Only if God is transcendent can the world be the medium of His personal action. It is because God is transcendent that miracle is possible; there is no good reason to suppose that God's freedom is destroyed by the order of nature which He has made. This is why no law of nature, as discovered by physical science, is ultimate; only the Personal Reality is ultimate.

Here is the ground of the chief debate between all naturalism on one side, and full theism, on the other. To be a theist, we remember,
is "to adopt the hypothesis that the process of nature in all its range is to be accounted for by the intelligent purpose of Mind." 10 In short, the theist holds that nature is not autonomous or self-explanatory and must look beyond itself for an explanation of itself. The modern naturalist, on the other hand, rejects all transcendence as something unnecessary. 10

The fact of transcendence, which means that the ultimate Object is a Subject, follows necessarily from the recognition that Mind and nothing else provides the principle of explanation which the natural process requires. But if God is a true Subject and not a mere Object, then our entire relationship to Him is put on a new footing. Religion is not then a one-way search of man for God, as though we were searching for a deposit of uranium. If God is the Infinite Subject, He is reaching for us even as we reach for Him. Too often our religious philosophy has been poising on the assumption that God is silent, hidden, and unconcerned about our search. But there have been strong voices raised in protest. Possibly the most enduring of the books of the late Rutus M. Jones is one which he wrote early in his career with the self-explanatory title The Double Search. The familiar assumption that only man is the seeker has been challenged in contemporary thought by the remarkable resurgence of Biblical thinking of which the very title of Heschel's great book, God in Search of Man, is illustrative. "All human history as described in the Bible," he says, "may be summarized in one phrase, God in Search of Man."

The failure of a number of wise and good men to make the full deduction regarding Divine Personality is one of the most curious phases of the philosophy of the recent past. Of these, Professor Whitehead is characteristic. He says much about God, particularly in the concluding pages of Process and Reality, but he explains that he is thinking of God in terms of Organism rather than in terms of Personality. The curious feature is that, though the beautiful things

11 This seems to be the position of William H. Bernhardt of Iliff Theological Seminary. As I understand him, this deeply religious man rejects all super-natural or transcendent conceptions of God and says that he can do so by virtue of the fact that he sees nature more rich than it is ordinarily seen. Cf. "The Cognitive Quest for God." Journal of Religion, vol. 23, no. 2, p. 99.

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God

he says are appropriate if God is personal, they are not appropriate if God is a mere organism, without conscious purpose and affection such as we know, though imperfectly, in our own lives. "The very reason which gives to the Christian scheme its philosophic superiority is that which precludes Professor Whitehead from adopting it." 22 What is strange is that a man who put us so greatly in his debt and who saw so much did not see more.

Equally mystifying is the stand of Professor Tillich at another level. He goes much further than Professor Whitehead went and speaks of God as "Personal," but refuses to speak of Him as "Person." This is doubly curious in view of the fact that Tillich makes freedom his main point of philosophic departure. Having said that "personal God" is a symbol which is "absolutely fundamental because an existential relation is a person-to-person relation" and that "Man cannot be ultimately concerned about anything that is less than personal," he makes his qualification in the following sentences:

"Personal God" does not mean that God is a person. It means that God is the ground of everything personal and that he carries within himself the ontological power of personality. He is not a person but he is not less than personal. It should not be forgotten that classical theology employed the term persona for the trinitarian hypostases, but not for God himself. God became "a person" only in the nineteenth century, in connection with the Kantian separation of nature ruled by physical law from personality ruled by moral law. 22

Here is a challenge which must be met, but it can be met on several grounds. In the first place, the distinction between "personal" and "a person" is a mere quibble, since the adjective is strictly meaningless without reference to the noun. The only reality that is personal is person. Otherwise, it is a smile without a face. In the second place, it is not true that "God became a person in the nineteenth century." He was clearly a Person for Christ. How else could Christ say "O Father?" Can a direct appeal be made to that which is personal, but not a person? Only a person can reasonably be addressed as "Thou." Furthermore, if we take the trinitarian formula seriously, it is necessary to hold that the language referring to each

22 William Temple, op. cit., p. 259.
part of the Trinity refers to the whole of the Living God, for these three are one. The problem which Tillich raises about the Kantian legacy of the separation between the natural and the moral world need not bother us now, providing we have a philosophy according to which Personality, as the ultimate principle, is the explanation of both the natural and the moral world.

If it is the indefinite article that bothers Professor Tillich, we can leave off the article, but we are on very shaky ground when we omit the noun. What we are driven to is the conclusion that God is the Personal Reality, in short, the Transcendent Person. It is important to realize that William Temple, who may be justly considered the most distinguished theologian of our century, did not hesitate to use the plain language of common piety and prayer. His central conviction, often repeated in different contexts, was that “God is the explanation of the world because He is Person.”

Even Punch has written, “If Christian sanity survives in the modern world, none will deserve a greater share of the credit than William Temple.” Punch, Aug. 11, 1948.


19
Freedom

If man were “just an animal” he would never have found that fact out.

LEWIS MUMFORD

In one sense we are all existentialists. We are deeply concerned about the human predicament, and we are eager to learn what man is. It is one of the special marks of man that, at least since the dawn of serious reflection, he has been a problem to himself. Almost all of the great philosophers, as well as many other men, have been interested in the question of man’s precise mode of differentiation from all other animals. It has been said that man is the only animal who laughs, the only one who weeps, the only one who prays, the only one who walks fully erect, the only one who makes fires, the only one who can invent, the only one with a written language, the only one who is proud, the only one who can make progress, the only one who guides his own destiny, the only one who is penitent, and the only one who needs to be. The list could be continued much further, and its very length gives vivid evidence of how keenly thinkers of various periods have been interested in the problem.

The modern study of this basic question is called philosophical anthropology and has involved a number of first-rate minds, such as Heidegger and Scheler. All realize that the answers we give to the problems faced in this particular discipline are crucial, not only for ethics, but also for almost all other areas of experience. Two great answers, one general and the other particular, emerge, by a remarkable consensus, from such inquiries. The general answer is that man is unique in virtue of the very fact that he is puzzled about his uniqueness. So far as we know, no other animal is concerned with questions of this kind. There is one conclusion to which all facts point, the conclusion that man is the animal who reflects, who is eager to understand himself, who is curious about matters which are