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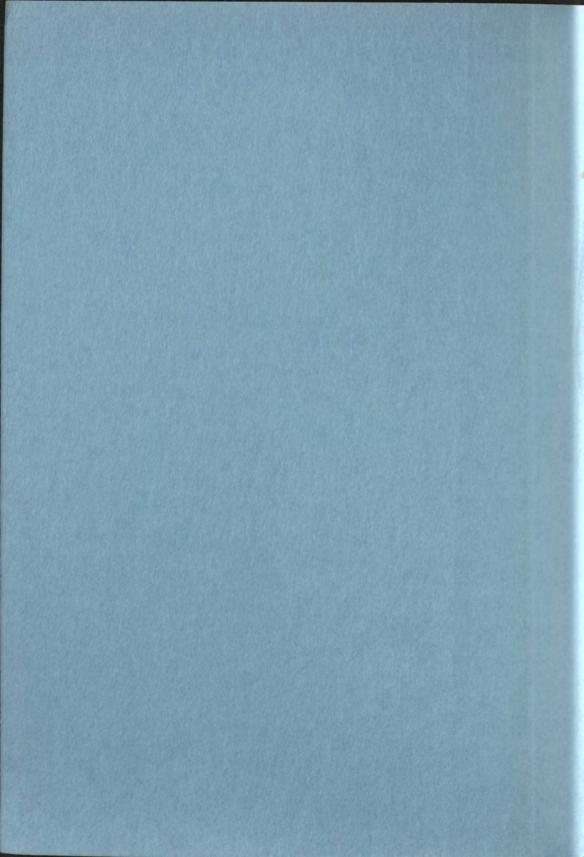
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Henry Wells Lawrence Memorial Lectures

VOLUME IV.

*Causes and Growth of the
American Revolution*

by Bernhard Knollenberg

Religion and the Skeptical Tradition

by Franklin L. Baumer

Erasmus: The Scholar and the World

by Myron P. Gilmore

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INTRODUCTION

The Henry Wells Lawrence Memorial Lectureship was founded in 1944 as a memorial to Dr. Henry Wells Lawrence, Chairman of the Department of History and Government at Connecticut College from 1920 to 1942, by friends, colleagues, and former students of Dr. Lawrence. The Lectureship brings scholars in the broad field of history to present their subjects "in the spirit of the liberal tradition to which Dr. Lawrence was devoted."

The present volume publishes the following Lectures for 1953, 1955, and 1957:

Bernhard Knollenberg's *Causes and Growth of the American Revolution;*
Franklin L. Baumer's *Religion and the Sceptical Tradition;*
Myron P. Gilmore's *Erasmus: The Scholar and the World.*

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CAUSES AND GROWTH OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

By Bernhard Knollenberg

The American Revolution about which I shall speak tonight is the revolution referred to in the well-known letter of John Adams to Hezekiah Niles in 1818. "The people of America," he wrote, "had been educated in an habitual affection for England, as their mother country; and while they thought her a kind and tender parent . . . no affection could be more sincere. But when they found her a cruel beldam . . . their filial affections . . . were changed into indignation . . . This radical change in the principle, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution."

The change described by Adams developed in two distinct stages: the first, 1759 to 1766, culminated in the colonial uprising of 1765-6 against the Stamp Act, the other, 1767 to 1775, in the bloody Day of Lexington and Concord. In speaking of colonial or colonies, I refer, unless otherwise indicated, exclusively to the thirteen British colonies on the North American continent that rebelled in 1775, though there was one other (Nova Scotia) in North America and eight island colonies in the western hemisphere in 1759, and three in North America and one in the West Indies were added in 1763.

The first British measure alarming the colonists was the tightening of Crown control over the colonial legislatures and judiciary in the royal colonies —Virginia, Massachusetts, North and South Carolina, New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire and Georgia—by rigid enforcement of two Crown instructions to the governors of these colonies, previously treated as discretionary.

One of the numerous instructions issued to the royal governors was for them to withhold consent to acts repealing or amending existing provincial acts unless a clause was inserted suspending operation of the new act until it was approved by the Privy Council in England. Since many acts repealing or amending existing acts would have little or no value unless immediately operative, rigid enforcement of this instruction was a serious threat to self-government in the royal colonies. The famous Two-Penny Act controversy in Virginia is the best known but only one of the consequences of this new policy of rigid enforcement of royal instructions.

Another of the instructions to the royal governors directed them to make the commissions of judges and provincial courts terminable at the pleasure of the Crown. In New York and New Jersey, the governors had established the practice of granting judges of the provincial Supreme Court tenure during good behavior, (as the King was required by law to do with respect to judges in England), and other colonies had recently taken steps to provide for similar tenure of their judges. Under the new policy, the governors were peremptorily

forbidden to grant any further commissions not revocable at the King's pleasure. And, to demonstrate that no concession would be made to past practice, the governor of New Jersey was dismissed in 1761, when following the death of George II, he granted good behavior tenure in renewing the commissions of judges of the New Jersey Supreme Court.

In 1763, the British Government issued orders, injurious to all the northern colonies, for strict enforcement of the whole range of British acts restricting colonial trade. These included an act of 1733 known as the Molasses Act or Sugar Act levying prohibitive duties on colonial imports of molasses and sugar from the French and other foreign colonies in the West Indies and South America, designed to give British West India sugar interests a monopoly or near monopoly of the British colonial market for sugar, molasses and rum.

Heretofore, pursuant to an understanding between colonial merchants and British customs officers at northern colonial ports, colonial merchants had been permitted to declare only about a tenth of their cargoes of molasses, thus in effect reducing the duty on foreign molasses payable under the Act of 1733 from six pence to about a half-penny a gallon, a rate which the trade could comfortably bear. The new enforcement policy, putting a stop to this practice, injured not only northern colonial merchants, ship owners and farmers but also colonial rum distillers, whose chief source of supply was foreign molasses, Indian traders and slave traders, one of whose chief items of barter was cheap New England rum, and innumerable colonial users of rum and molasses for household consumption. Furthermore, it seriously affected northern farmers and fishermen by impairing one of the most valuable markets for their surplus farm products, lumber and fish, which northern merchants purchased to exchange for foreign colonial molasses.

Another exasperating though less important incident of the new enforcement policy was to stop an indulgence to the colonists, previously allowed by the customs officers, to import fresh fruit and wine in small quantities directly from southern Europe in violation of a British act of 1663 requiring that most European products, including these, be imported into the colonies exclusively by way of Great Britain.

The orders for rigid enforcement issued to customs officers in the colonies were implemented by sending a squadron of British war vessels to colonial waters to serve as an arm of the customs service and by ordering Sir Jeffery Amherst, Commander-in-Chief of the British army in North America, to use his troops to help enforce the restrictions on colonial trade.

In 1764, Parliament added to colonial exasperation by passing an act, called by various names but which I shall refer to simply as the Act of 1764, adding new restrictions on colonial trade and implementing more rigorous enforcement of all British restrictions on colonial trade, old and new.

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The most injurious and obnoxious feature of the new enforcement provisions affected the extremely important intercolonial coastwise and river traffic in small boats (the trucks of that period when roads were wretched and bridges on the lower reaches of the principal rivers non-existent) which hitherto had been carried on free of customs clearance.

This lack of customs clearance was incompatible with effective enforcement of a British act of 1673 designed to curb intercolonial trade in certain so-called colonial "enumerated" products, including tobacco, by levying heavy export duties on the export of these products from one colony to another, and of British acts of 1699 and 1732 designed to curb the growth of colonial manufacturing by forbidding the exportation of wool, woolen yarn, woolen goods, felt or hats from one colony to another. The lack of customs clearance also encouraged violation of the British act of 1663, previously mentioned, forbidding colonial importation of most European products from any place but Great Britain and a British act of 1721 forbidding colonial importation of Asiatic products from any place but Great Britain. Once a cargo of European or Asiatic products had been smuggled in from, say Holland, it could be distributed up and down the colonial coast without further danger of detection. And so, heedless of the effect on the colonial economy and on colonial goodwill, a provision was included in the Act of 1764 forbidding any vessel, regardless of size or build, to carry any cargo from one colony to another without obtaining from the nearest customs officer a cocket (certified bill of lading), detailing the cargo, to be shown to the captain of any naval vessel that might board her and to the customs officer at the port where the cargo was to be unloaded. This meant, for example, that if a farmer or country storekeeper at Stamford was about to ship wheat to New York City, he would first have to spend a day going to and from New Haven, where the nearest customs house was located, and get a certificate covering his cargo before he dared set sail.

The Act of 1764 also contained exasperating provisions designed to encourage the seizure and prosecution of vessels and cargo suspected of violating acts restricting colonial trade. The new Act provided that any suit for forfeiture under any of the acts might, at the election of the customs officer or other person suing for forfeiture, be brought in a colonial admiralty court, thus depriving the owner of the benefit of trial by jury. In admiralty courts, a judge, dismissable at the pleasure of the Crown, decided issues of fact as well as of law. The act further provided that in any dispute as to fact, the burden of proof should be on the defendant. And, to cap the climax, the new act provided for an additional admiralty court having general jurisdiction over offenses against the acts of trade, which was established not at New York or some other relatively large and centrally located port, easily reached and where experienced lawyers and good accommodations were available, but at the remote, and then raw village of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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The Act of 1764, as previously stated, also added new restrictions on colonial trade. Heretofore, the colonies had been permitted to ship iron and lumber (both of them so bulky in proportion to value as to be seriously affected by the freight charge) directly to Ireland. This was now forbidden. Henceforth a vessel carrying these colonial products to Ireland, must first go to a British port and there unload and reload the iron or lumber before it could legally be delivered in Ireland. Furthermore, the new act was designed to break up a flourishing direct trade between the colonies and Madeira, the Azores, and the Canary Islands, to which the North American colonists shipped surplus farm products and lumber in exchange for wine, by levying a very heavy duty on colonial importation of wine from these islands if the wine was imported directly rather than by way of Great Britain.

The Act of 1764 also introduced the revolutionary measure of British taxation of the colonies for revenue. Heretofore such British levies as had been collected in the colonies were incidental to the policy of regulating colonial trade or were for particular services rendered, such as postage. In the Act of 1764 import and export duties were now levied expressly and in fact as duties for revenue. Furthermore, in proposing the new duties (March 1764) George Grenville, First Lord of the Treasury, asked for and secured adoption by the House of Commons of a resolution that "it may be proper to charge certain Stamp Duties in the Colonies," thus giving notice of the probable levy of additional taxes on the colonies in the future.

Taxation of the colonies for revenue by Parliament would have been alarming enough if the tax had been for some object of particular advantage to the colonies or had been accompanied by some assurance, such as was given to Scotland concerning the land tax in the Act of Union of 1707, that the colonial share of imperial taxation would not exceed a fixed percentage of the whole. But neither of these factors, which might have made the tax more palatable and less alarming to the colonists, was present. No assurance whatever was given that once the precedent of taxing the colonies was established, Parliament would not proceed to levy such taxes on the colonies as it pleased. And, though the present tax was to be applied to maintenance of forces—greatly augmented forces—of British troops in the colonies, these forces were of the ordinary type of British regiments, excellent for general imperial use but of little value for frontier defense against Indian raids, which was the special military need of the mainland colonies. Far from being augmented, the ranger and light infantry units established during the French and Indian War for frontier service were disbanded—leading inevitably to colonial conviction that the troops stationed in the colonies after the war were designed either for general imperial use or to coerce rather than to protect the colonies.

Another act passed in 1764, restricting the issue of paper currency by most of the colonies, increased colonial discontent.

Many of the colonial assemblies passed resolutions protesting against the new duties for revenue and restrictions on colonial trade and the prospective stamp tax; but, apparently in the hope of propitiating the Ministry and staving off the stamp tax by not protesting against the duties levied by the Act of 1764, all of the protesting assemblies except New York expressly or by implication admitted the *right* of Parliament to levy these duties. An illogical and potentially dangerous line was drawn between stamp taxes, classified as "internal" taxes, on the one hand, and duties on imports and exports, classified as "external" taxes, on the other, even when the latter, as in the Act of 1764, were admittedly chiefly for revenue and not chiefly for the regulation of trade.

These colonial resolutions proved unavailing. At the next session of Parliament, George Grenville, First Lord of the Treasury and Prime Minister, introduced and Parliament passed by an overwhelming majority an act effective November 1, 1765, levying stamp taxes in the colonies. Acts somewhat relaxing the restrictions imposed by the Act of 1764 were passed at this same session, but they were of relatively little importance.

Inflamed by the various provocative British innovations culminating in the stamp tax and by a colonial business depression which, rightly or wrongly, was attributed to them, all thirteen colonies except Georgia prevented execution of the stamp act by coercing the stamp distributors, one appointed for each colony, to resign before the stamped paper they were to sell and distribute arrived from England. Furthermore, though subject to heavy penalties for publishing their papers on unstamped paper, most of the owners of colonial newspapers continued publication, and, before long, others, including even the customs officers, began to act without the stamped paper required by the act.

If Grenville, who was bitter against the colonies for resisting the measures sponsored by him and his Ministry, had remained head of the Treasury and Prime Minister, the Stamp Act would presumably have been retained and the army and navy ordered to help execute it, in which event the American Revolution would probably have broken out in 1766 rather than in 1775. But, before the date the Act was due to take effect, George III, exasperated by the Grenville Ministry for various reasons, had called in a new Ministry headed by Lord Rockingham and the Duke of Newcastle, the latter of whom, during his many years of office before 1762, had pursued the policy of cultivating colonial good-will because of the importance to Great Britain of its trade with the colonies. The new Ministry decided to propose repeal of the Stamp Act, and, with the strong support of William Pitt, a political free lance at this time and the acquiescence of George III, secured the repeal of the Stamp Act in March 1766. The repeal was accompanied by an act declaring the right of Parliament to legislate for the colonies in all respects; but the colonists were assured by correspondents in Great Britain that there was no reason to fear that they would be burdened with any additional British taxes.

The repeal of the Stamp Act ushered in a period of relative calm in the relations between Great Britain and the colonies. Many colonists, particularly among the well-to-do residents of Boston, Newport, New York City and Philadelphia, had been so disgusted and alarmed by rioting in these cities accompanying or growing out of the movement to drive the stamp distributors from office that they were ready to acquiesce in almost any British measures rather than risk further disturbances and possible social revolution in the colonies. Controversies in New York over furnishing supplies to British troops stationed there and over a proposed change in procedure in appeals from the New York Supreme Court to the Privy Council sitting as a court of final appeals, were locally disturbing; but, in general, relations were much improved for almost a year after the repeal.

However, the ground was laid for renewed controversy in the summer of 1766 by the King's dismissal of the Rockingham Ministry, which had failed to redeem its promise to ask Parliament to grant a handsome annual allowance to the King's brothers, in favor of a new Ministry. Headed by Pitt (raised to the peerage as Lord Chatham) Lord Privy Seal, with the Duke of Grafton, First Lord of the Treasury second in command, the new Ministry included Charles Townshend, long an advocate of colonial taxation for revenue, in the important office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Early in 1767, Townshend (apparently without protest from Pitt, who, though ill, was informed by fellow Ministers of Townshend's project) proposed and secured an act of Parliament levying duties for revenue on various colonial imports and exports effective September 29, 1767.

Spurred by a series of brilliant essays of John Dickinson, Philadelphia lawyer and member of the Pennsylvania Assembly, published in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle* and afterwards collected and republished as a pamphlet entitled *Letters of A Farmer in Pennsylvania,* colonial Whig leaders began a campaign to secure repeal of the Act of 1767. The former distinction between internal and external taxes for revenue was discarded and the stand now taken that any Parliamentary tax for revenue in the colonies was unconstitutional. The most telling feature of the campaign was the pressure put on British merchants and manufacturers to work for repeal by agreements among colonial merchants, retailers and planters not to import any but a few indispensable items from Great Britain until the Act was repealed.

There were marked differences between the colonial opposition in the later period than in the earlier. For one thing, though divided as to the most prudent way to protest, during the earlier period the colonists were practically united in opposing British taxation, whereas, in the later, many colonists, the so-called Tories, declined to participate in the non-importation agreements and other forms of opposition to Parliament's taxing the colonies. For another, while in the earlier period there were a number of British measures which seemed to be

about equally provocative and alarming, in the later, the issue of taxation overshadowed all others, important as some of these continued to be.

There was likewise a marked change in Great Britain. In the earlier period, there is practically no evidence of hostility to the colonists. In the later, a number of British ministers and other members of Parliament, antagonized by persistent colonial opposition and other factors, manifested signs of decided anti-Americanism.

The injury to British business from the colonial non-importation agreements led the British Ministry, in 1770, to recommend repeal of all duties levied by the Act of 1767 except the one on tea, which (according to Lord North who had succeeded Grafton as First Lord of the Treasury) should be retained to preserve the principle of Parliamentary taxation of the colonies. This recommendation was adopted by Parliament, and, distasteful as the retention of the tea duty was to most of the colonists, a solution was found: though the British maintained their claim by retaining the duty on tea, the colonists maintained theirs by smuggling most of their tea from Holland thereby largely nullifying the duty.

This solution was disturbed in 1773 by Parliament's passing an act, apparently designed chiefly if not exclusively to benefit the British East India Company (which was in financial difficulties), authorizing the Company, hitherto restricted to selling tea by auction in London, to export and sell its tea in foreign countries and the colonies. Whether or not incidentally intended to make the duty on colonial imports of tea effective, the new act would obviously have this tendency, since the Company would be able to undersell smuggled tea and would, of course, pay duty on the tea imported on its own account into the colonies. To prevent the landing and collection of duty on tea sent by the Company to Boston, the Boston Whigs threw the tea overboard, entailing a loss to the Company of over £10,000.

The British Ministry retaliated by introducing and securing the passage of the so-called Intolerable Acts. These included the Boston Port Act, prohibiting any but small boats carrying fuel to enter or leave Boston until the destroyed tea was paid for and the King was satisfied that the British acts of trade and customs would be obeyed there. Another was the Massachusetts Government Act permanently amending the charter of Massachusetts to provide that members of the Massachusetts Council (the upper House of the provincial legislature) previously elected should hereafter be appointed by the King. To enforce these measures, ten regiments of British troops were sent to Boston, and Thomas Hutchinson was replaced as Governor of Massachusetts by General Thomas Gage, Commander-in-Chief of the British army in North America.

The Massachusetts Assembly appealed to the assemblies of the other colonies to join with delegates from Massachusetts in an intercolonial Congress to

decide what should be done to meet the crisis precipitated by the passage of these acts, and, in response to this appeal, strong delegations were chosen in one way or another by all thirteen colonies except Georgia.

This first Continental Congress, which met in Philadelphia in October 1774, passed resolutions approving the opposition by the inhabitants of Massachusetts to the Intolerable Acts; declaring, if an attempt was made to execute these acts by force, that all America ought to support the opposition to such enforcement; proposing an agreement in all the colonies not to import anything from the British Isles on or after December 1, 1774 until several specified British acts passed since 1763, including all the Intolerable Acts, were repealed; petitioning the King for redress of the grievances complained of; and calling for another intercolonial Congress to meet in Philadelphia May 10, 1775 unless the grievances were redressed by then.

While the Congress in Philadelphia was meeting, the situation in Massachusetts became very tense. A Massachusetts provincial Congress, encouraged by the firm stand of the Continental Congress and other developments, took steps to defend the colony from attempts fully to enforce the Intolerable Acts, resolving that at least a quarter of the provincial militia be ready to move instantly to such place as a Committee of Safety chosen by the Congress might order and voting £20,000 for the purchase of cannon, small arms and other military supplies.

Gage at Boston, of course, kept the British Ministry informed of developments in Massachusetts, and on December 15, 1774 wrote fully concerning the warlike measures of the Massachusetts Congress. Receipt of this letter on January 18, 1775 by Lord Dartmouth, Secretary of State in charge of colonial affairs, was quickly followed by British measures for war. Both Houses of Parliament rejected motions for conciliatory measures, and, on January 27, 1775, Dartmouth wrote Gage that "The King's Dignity, & the Honor and Safety of the Empire" required the use of force, and that, though the available force was not as large as Gage believed was required to crush the Massachusetts rebels, probably "a smaller Force now, if put to the Test, would be able to encounter them with a greater probability of Success than might be expected from a Greater Army" later.

Dartmouth's letter reached Gage on April 14. On the evening of the 18th he sent out an expedition of about 750 picked men to destroy military stores collected at Concord, Massachusetts. Learning of Gage's movement, Whig leaders in Boston sent out messengers to alert the militia of the surrounding towns, and, when an advance party of the expedition, under Major John Pitcairn, reached Lexington, it found a body of local militia assembled on the square there.

The British fired, killing eight and wounding at least eleven Americans,

and either before or after this fatal fire (the testimony is conflicting) one of the British soldiers also was wounded. Proceeding to Concord the British destroyed such supplies as they could find and then set out for Boston. They encountered sharp opposition at Concord, and on their way back, were so heavily beset that, if timely reinforcements had not been sent by Gage, the whole British force might have been forced to surrender. Even so, the British lost over 260 officers and men, killed, wounded and missing, while the colonial casualties were about 60 including the 19 killed and wounded at Lexington.

Probably this bloodshed, without more, would have destroyed any chance for peaceful settlement. But lurid tales of shocking atrocities by the enemy, spread by both sides, clinched the matter. There was now apparently no alternative but to fight to the bitter end, and so the war of the American Revolution was launched on its eight year course of death, suffering and mounting bitterness.

There are, of course, many important and interesting details to be added to the brief resumé I have given. But in the few minutes of remaining time, I prefer to comment on a couple of what may be termed by-products of my study.

The first is my view as to why the British West Indian and other island colonies did not join the mainland colonies in opposing the Stamp Act which, proportionately, bore as heavily on them as on the mainland colonies. Numerous factors contributed to this; but the chief, I think, was the desperate need at all times of West Indian colonists for the British navy to protect them from slave insurrection and French attack and to the immense value to them of a heavy differential in the tariff on British importation of sugar in favor of British colonial sugar. If the British West Indies provoked Parliament, this differential might, probably would be repealed, with calamitous loss to the West Indian sugar planters. The latter of these considerations was wholly absent in the case of the thirteen mainland colonies and the former present to far less degree.

The other by-product is my divergence from the widely held view that the inhabitants of the old British colonies in America had long wished for independence and that therefore the American Revolution was almost inevitable as soon as they were relieved of the need of British protection from the French in Canada by the British conquest of Canada. In the many hundreds of colonial letters from 1750 to 1764 read in the course of my research, I found only two, prior to 1764, indicating any desire for independence. Moreover, not one of the many colonial letters rejoicing over the French cession of Canada to Great Britain in 1763 mentioned, much less exulted over any enhanced possibility of colonial independence opened by this event. Once the disturbing British innovations laid before you this evening had alarmed and exasperated the colonists, they were perhaps bolder in protest, opposition and eventual rebellion than

they would have been had Canada still been French. But they apparently were reasonably content with their status prior to 1759. The British innovations of 1759-74, not the British acquisition of Canada, were, I am convinced, the decisive cause of the American Revolution.

Delivered October 27, 1953

RELIGION AND THE SCEPTICAL TRADITION

By Franklin L. Baumer

The twentieth century, particularly since the Great War of 1914-1918, has been called a number of things more or less appropriate: "age of uncertainty" and "anxiety," "age of unreason," "age of suspicion." But from the point of view of religion, which I propose to treat chiefly in this lecture, no term more exactly hits the mark than "age of longing."

This is the title of a recent novel by Arthur Koestler, and to lay my foundations I shall have to describe its central *motif*, if very briefly. *The Age of Longing* is a religious book, not in any narrow or credal sense but in the sense that it deals with what are essentially religious themes, faith and doubt, death and pain, and apocalypse. The scene is Paris in the 1950's, the *dramatis personae* a heterogeneous group of people, mostly intellectuals, from all parts of the western world. What these people all have in common—with the signal exception of Fyodor Nikitin, the Russian cultural attaché—is a longing for faith, faith in a meaningful universe. "We are the dispossessed," says Julien Delattre, the poet of the company, —"the dispossessed of faith; the physically or spiritually homeless."[1] "LET ME BELIEVE IN SOMETHING" is the agonized cry of Hydie, the American girl who had been educated in a convent but who had since lost her faith.[2] It is this longing for faith that draws her to the Communist Nikitin as to a magnet. He at least believes in something, even if it is only a utopia measured in terms of kilowatt hours, bushels, and tons. In the end Nikitin's faith repels Hydie, but it is her fate, and it is the fate of the others too, not to be able to crawl back into the sheltering womb of traditional Christianity. "I won't have any of your patent medicine," says Delattre to the Roman Catholic priest, Father Millet. "What you ask of me is the unconditional surrender of my critical faculties."[3]

Koestler's book is obviously at once an allegory and a parable. Under a fictional guise it seeks to represent real people and a real situation in the western world today. Koestler, who as much as any contemporary writer has seen and personally experienced the agony of Europe over the past thirty years, describes in his book what is essentially a new species of *homo sapiens*: the hollow, homeless, dispossessed man, the spiritually displaced person if you like, who drifts—like the characters in Aldous Huxley's novels of the early 1920's, but also unlike them in that he is painfully conscious of drifting and of longing not to drift. The story also points a moral. This, says Koestler, who obviously does not belong to the art-for-art's sake school of literature, is not a healthy

[1] Arthur Koestler, *The Age of Longing* (New York, 1951), pp. 28-9.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 352, 354.

state of mind to be in, and to the extent that it has captured the intellectual and political leaders of society, it threatens to pollute the very springs of western civilization. People who have no faith but who long for a faith become schizophrenic, and their creative faculties and even their will to resist tyranny dry up. When this happens on any large scale, civilization itself succumbs to a longing for death, the Freudian death-wish. What can be done about it? Well, says Delattre, who often seems to speak for Koestler, the only hope lies in the emergence of a "new transcendental faith," not identical with the old religious faiths, which will nullify the false religion of "Society" by which western man has been living for several hundred years. Who will invent this "new transcendental faith"? There is the rub, for "religions are not invented; they materialise." We shall just have to wait for it to happen.[4]

Now doubtless Koestler exaggerates, not only in order to point his moral but also because he is an ex-Communist, for it is a fact, I think, that ex-Communists are prone to see too much faith on one side of the iron curtain and too little on the other. It is well to remember too that Koestler has mainly western Europe in view, and not North America. Yet he did not dream it all up either, of that we can be reasonably sure. This is external evidence, much of it circumstantial perhaps, to show that *is* in reality an "age of longing." I can barely allude to the evidence here: the spiritual odysseys, in part autobiographical, like Huxley's *Ends and Means* and C. E. M. Joad's *The Recovery of Belief;* the psychologist Carl Jung's discovery of "modern man in search of a soul"; hollowness and loneliness as a major theme of modern literature (Koestler is by no means the only writer to report the longing of modern man); the "anxiety" and "forlornness" described by the atheistic existentialists; the "escape from freedom" of countless people to the totalitarian systems supply a faith of sorts; even some sociological evidence, such as the remarkable survey of religious belief in England made by Rowntree and Lavers shortly after World War II.[5] Perhaps the best evidence comes from ourselves, for how many of us can truthfully say that we do not share in some degree the longing of Delattre and Hydie.

Assuming, then, that at least to some extent Koestler mirrors a real state of mind, we want to know *how* this state of mind crystallized and *what* if anything can be done about it—not out of idle curiosity, but because it is an existential problem, a problem of deep personal concern to all of us. In this lecture I propose to take up these two questions, not with the idea that I can fully answer them—the time is too short even if I had the knowledge and wisdom to do so— but in the conviction that the historian is peculiarly fitted to throw light upon them and to make suggestions. For the historian sees, as people without histor-

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[4] *Ibid.*, p. 137.
[5] B. Seebohm Rowntree and G. R. Lavers, *English Life and Leisure* (London and New York, 1951), chap. XIII.

ical training do not always see, that the two questions are interconnected. That is to say, *what* to do about any given situation depends to a large extent upon *how* that situation developed historically. As Edmund Burke pointed out *a propos* of the French Revolution, men and nations are what they are because of their history, and to achieve workable solutions to their problems they must think and act within the framework of their history.

Now the first question—the "how" question—resolves itself into two subsidiary questions: (1) why does the prodigal son—the Delattres, the Hydies—find it so hard to return home to his ancestral faith? and (2) why, at the same time, does he long for a faith? The answer to the first of these subsidiary questions is *the sceptical tradition.* The prodigal son cannot go home, or at least he can go only part of the way home, because he is the heir of a tradition which at fundamental points challenges the religious tradition, the Judaeo-Christian tradition, of the West. Whenever he takes the notion to pack up and go home, the shades of Voltaire and Ernest Renan and Sigmund Freud and many other eminent sceptics rise up around him and persuade him to stay where he is—wherever that is. This sceptical tradition had its origins long ago in headwaters of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. These headwaters emptied into rivulets, and the rivulets, coming from all directions, eventually flowed together to form a mighty river which swept innumerable people before it, at first mostly the educated classses, but later many from the masses too.

It is convenient to think of the sceptical tradition as developing in three main stages. "This plague," says the American colonel in Koestler's book, "must have started in the eighteenth century" ("plague," incidentally, is the colonel's word for it, and not mine).[6] Actually, the eighteenth century marks the second, and not the first stage in its history. The trial of the Christian God by the rationalists and self-styled "philosophers"—the "intellectual *cause célèbre*" of the eighteenth century, as Carl Becker called it—could never have taken place without an initial stage in which philosophical and scientific sceptics, most of them sincere Christians, prepared the way for religious scepticism by dismantling traditional conceptions of nature and knowledge. Nevertheless, the colonel was basically right. The eighteenth century was the first great age of religious scepticism, in the sense that it then became the talk of the town, that is to say, fashionable not only in esoteric intellectual circles, but also in café-society, among the middle and upper classes. Even the powers that be took a hand in the trial of the God of the Catholics and Protestants when at the end of the century several determined attempts were made at the top to dechristianize revolutionary France.

In the nineteenth century the sceptical tradition moved into a third phase. The majority of the eighteenth-century dechristianizers were not, after all, anti-

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[6] Koestler, *The Age of Longing,* pp. 303-304.

religious, at least not on the surface. Voltaire's battle-cry "crush the infamous thing" referred, not to religion as such, but to a particular kind of religion, revealed religion, Christian orthodoxy. He could not conceive of nature without a God to create it, a watch without a watchmaker. Robespierre, at the Feast of the Supreme Being in June, 1794, not only applied the torch to a symbolic figure of Atheism but also tried to substitute for the old established religion a new religion of the Supreme Being. And he was by no means the only revolutionary leader who could not conceive of a society without some kind of organized church to uphold morals and civic spirit. In these respects the majority of the religious sceptics of the eighteenth century looked backward as well as forward. But in the next century men in ever increasing numbers contrived nothing less than the "death of God," as Nietzsche so dramatically phrased it, and not merely the Christian God. The century of August Comte and David Friedrich Strauss, of Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx, of Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir James Frazer, witnessed the triumphant march of agnosticism (the word was invented by Thomas Henry Huxley, and it signified suspended judgment), of materialism, and perhaps most ominous of all, religious indifference. Religion, in the traditional sense of belief in the gods, was debunked in countless new definitions: religion is the opiate of the people, religion is myth, religion is self-projection, religion is anthropology; religion is what man eats, an instrument in the class struggle; religion is childishness, a phenomenon now outmoded in man's evolution toward control of nature, and so on. The new breed of intellectuals were not loath, moreover, as so many of their eighteenth-century forbears had been loath, to discuss religion before the servants, and there is evidence to show that the servants were beginning to learn their lesson. In view of this sceptical drift, is it any wonder that the prodigal son left home in the first place and then afterwards found it difficult to go back, however much he might desire to do so. Throughout the three stages, of course, Christianity was by no means obliterated; indeed, at times it showed a remarkable ability to counter-attack, as in the Methodist and evangelical movements in England and in some phases of the so-called romantic movement. Yet there can be no doubt that for the first time in its history Christianity—and not only Christianity but religion in general in the nineteenth century—was forced to beat a serious retreat and to yield considerable territory to a powerful enemy.

It is impossible in one lecture to detail this development. I shall therefore confine myself to several broad observations which are pertinent to my final thesis. First of all, it is important to recognize that the scepticism of which we have been speaking was not a plot, nor, with regard to its effects, altogether a "plague." The eighteenth-century sceptics and their opponents, the Christian apologists, often attributed to each other the lowest of human motives. Priests and kings were said to have invented revealed religion for their own greedy

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advantage. On the other side, the sceptics were contemptuously labelled "Ca-couacs," a tribe descended from the Titans, who emitted poison whenever they spoke.[7] This was, of course, a gross misrepresentation. The sceptical tradition was the result, not of a diabolical plot, but of righteous indignation and honest doubt, and failure to recognize this fact at the outset can lead to some very false conclusions about the present-day religious situation. Furthermore, this doubt was not the result of abstract thinking, or at least it was not wholly so. As I see it, great changes in the human consciousness never come about in just that way. Change is, so to speak, from the bottom up as well as from the top down, or from the outside in as well as from the inside out. The intellectuals articu-late the change—who else?—but they do so as much and more because they live in a life-situation as because they cogitate on the logical possibilities of an intellectual problem. That is to say, events in the world around them incite them to radically new ways of thinking which in another kind of environment might never have occurred to anyone.

How, then, if not as the result of a plot, was modern religious scepticism generated? To answer this question satisfactorily we should have to subject the first stage of the sceptical tradition to a much more complete analysis than we can do here. We should have to assess the effects upon religious thinking of such apparently far removed events as western Europe's contacts with extra-Christian cultures and the warfare between the sects within western Christen-dom; the creeping secularization of the Roman hierarchy in the late Middle Ages; the clash of rival philosophies and theologies during the Renaissance and Reformation which stimulated the pyrrhonism of a Michel de Montaigne, the minimal theology of a Sebastian Castellio, and the incipient deism of a Lord Herbert of Cherbury; the tendency of the Reformation, on its Zwinglian and left-wing side, to empty the world of its religious symbolic content; the rise of a middle-class culture with its inevitably new attitude toward work and man's rational control of his environment; the reduction of the world to mathematical categories by Copernicus, Galileo, and Descartes; etc.

From the complex interplay of these and other factors there gradually grew up in men's minds a new idea of nature, a new conception of knowledge, and a new vision of time, all of which militated against the old religious interpreta-tion of the world and man. The modern world has produced two ideas of na-ture which have been damaging to the cause of religion in the long run. The first of these ideas pictured nature as a machine, the second described it as red in tooth and claw. What these two ideas had in common was that they provided a naturalistic, as opposed to a teleological or theological, explanation for physi-cal and biological events. By the "mechanical philosophy," as Robert Boyle dub-bed it in the seventeenth century, all natural effects could be explained by the

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[7] The term "Cacouacs" derives from a well known book entitled *L'Histoire des Cacouacs*, published in 1757.

laws of local motion, without having recourse to final or formal causes except, possibly, in the first instance. Back of this philosophy lay an understandable desire to control nature which could be achieved only if science was divorced from theology and metaphysics, principally Aristotelian metaphysics. But whatever its origins, its result was to drive purpose and ultimately intelligent design too out of nature, and to encourage what I like to call naturalistic thinking—by naturalistic thinking I mean the habit of supposing that the naturalistic explanation accounts for everything, that "nature" is all that there is, that nature in no way points beyond itself. In a world increasingly dominated by science and scientific concepts this habit inevitably spread to other realms of thought, notably to psychology, political theory, and history.

It could never have proceeded to such sceptical lengths, however, if it had not soon become intertwined in people's minds with a sceptical conception of knowledge. "The foundation of morality," Thomas Henry Huxley wrote in 1889, "is to have done, once for all, with lying; to give up pretending to believe that for which there is no evidence, and repeating unintelligible propositions about things beyond the possibilities of knowledge."[8] Huxley's statement epitomizes the empirical theory of knowledge which descended from John Locke through David Hume and the Positivists, and which by Huxley's day had become an inveterate habit of thinking among educated people. Extreme empiricism limited knowledge to ideas derived from sense impressions, *i. e.,* the physical world, and checked by experiment; everything else was set down as opinion or misguided "enthusiasm." It demanded sensible evidence for everything, and Hume, for example, showed how there was no reliable evidence for miracles or even the engineer-God whose existence most of the early mechanists inferred from the wonderful order of nature. Historically, this empiricism represented an attempt by men of peace and common sense to reach firm ground in a world of conflicting philosophies and orthodoxies. But it also registered a profound shift of interest from metaphysics to physics, from "vain" speculation to knowledge that could be useful to man in this world. In Locke's phrase, "we shall not have much reason to complain of the narrowness of our minds, if we will but employ them about what may be of use to us; for of that they are very capable."[9] The ultimate effect of this kind of thinking was to promote religious agnosticism, for it denied the human mind access to that "vast ocean of Being" upon which all true religion depends. In Huxley's day, it should be noted, agnosticism was reinforced by still another conception of knowledge which was born of the growing historical consciousness of the nineteenth century. Truth, it was being said, is relative to a particular time, place, and social

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[8] Thomas Henry Huxley, *Essays upon Some Controverted Questions* (New York, 1892), p. 183.

[9] John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, bk. I, chap. I.

group, and Ernest Troeltsch, among others, was rightly worried about the problem which this historical relativism posed for religion.

Perhaps, though, the principal factor in the rise of scepticism lies deeper still, in the new vision of time which fired Francis Bacon's imagination and which is already so pronounced in the great quarrel between the "Ancients" and the "Moderns" at the end of the seventeenth century. In Carl Becker's description, this vision, at least as the Enlightenment understood it, was dedicated to the following propositions (significantly, Becker calls it "the religion of the Enlightenment"): "(1) man is not natively depraved; (2) the end of life is life itself, the good life on earth . . . ; (3) man is capable, guided solely by the light of reason and experience, of perfecting the good life on earth."[10] This was substantially a vision of power, born in an age when new vistas of power were opening up to western Europeans through geographical and economic expansion and with the development of modern science.

On the surface the "Kingdom of Man," as Bacon called it, does not appear to be unreligious, and, indeed, the social gospellers of the nineteenth century seized on it as the ideal expression of Christian love on earth. But look a little beneath the surface and I think you will see that at essential points it outflanked the religious position. The principal end of mankind was said to be "happiness," and in few of the many books written on that subject in the eighteenth century was anything said about misfortune, suffering, or tragedy as part of the permanent datum of things here on earth. Moreover, the means to the end was "change from without" rather than "change from within." It was assumed that man did not need to be changed inside, that new and better methods of knowledge and education, better laws and better political and economic institutions—in a word, social engineering—were the thing. Thus, the active virtues were rated above the passive and contemplative, and philosophy itself, in proportion as it became imbued with this vision, devoted itself to instigating social change, to getting things done, as opposed to reflecting upon the meaning of what had been done (as in the "philosophy" of the Enlightenment, which revolted against the metaphysical systems of the seventeenth century as well as the Middle Ages; and Karl Marx, who revolted against the essentially contemplative philosophy of Hegel). Perhaps the most important thing about it was its focus on society—in Koestler's phrase, the horizontal "Man-Society" relationship as opposed to the vertical "Man-Universe" relationship.[11] The article "Philosopher" in the great *Encyclopedia* of the eighteenth century expresses this relationship neatly. "Civil society is, so to speak, a divinity for him [the philosopher] on earth; he burns incense to it, he honors it by probity, by an exact attention to his duties, and by a sincere desire not to be a useless or embarrassing member

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[10] Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven, 1932), pp. 102-103. I have omitted Becker's fourth proposition.
[11] For these categories, and also for the categories "change from within" and "change from without," see Koestler's essay *The Yogi and the Commissar*.

of it."[12] The vision of the Kingdom of Man was in reality a substitute faith which a religious man could hold, at least in its entirety, only at his peril.

So much for the reasons why, as Edward Gibbon once put it, "in modern times a latent and even involuntary scepticism adheres to the most pious dispositions."[13] Principally for these reasons the sceptical tradition had reached a high water mark in the "infidel half century," as George Bernard Shaw called the age of Darwin. But already the tide had begun to recede somewhat, and it is a matter of record—allusion has already been made to some of the documentary evidence, and that is all we can do here—that it has continued to recede down to our own times. Basil Willey speaks of a "counter-drift toward religion."[14] This is undoubtedly too strong, and even Willey qualifies his statement by remarking that it has not occurred on any general scale. As I see it, what has been happening more and more in recent years is that the will to doubt has become intermixed in people's minds with a new will to believe—I mean, of course, "believe" in a religious way. There are good psychological, philosophical, and existential reasons why this should be so. William James once wrote to an English rationalist friend of his: "Your bogey is superstition, my bogey is desiccation . . . In my essay [he refers to his famous essay on "The Will to Believe," delivered in 1896] the evil shape was a vision of 'Science' in the form of abstraction, priggishness and sawdust, lording it over all. Take the sterilist scientific prig and cad you know, compare him with the richest religious intellect you know, and you would not, any more than I would, give the former the exclusive right of way."[15] The interesting thing about this statement is that it repeats, in its essential thought, what Mme de Staël, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and other romantics had said a hundred years earlier about the "cold doctrine" of the Enlightenment. In both ages there have been people who expressed fear lest the empirical theory of knowledge lead to "desiccation" of the human heart and imagination.

The new idea of nature suggested by quantum and relativity physics has also provided fuel for the will to believe; or at least it has done so in certain quarters. I think I can best show the connection which some people have professed to see between the new idea of nature and the will to believe by citing two remarkable statements, one by a scientist and the other by a philosopher and historian. It will perhaps be said, Sir Arthur Eddington once wrote, "that religion first became possible for a reasonable scientific man about the year 1927."[16] (His reference was to the overthrow of strict causality in Hei-

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[12] *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des Sciences, des Arts, et des Métiers* (Geneva, 1778), vol. XXV, pp. 667-69. My translation.
[13] This remark is from the famous fifteenth chapter on "The Progress of the Christian Religion" in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*
[14] In *Christianity Past and Present* (Cambridge, England, 1952), p. 7.
[15] Quoted in Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James* (Cambridge, 1948), p. 215.
[16] Sir Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (New York, 1928), p. 350.

senberg's principle of indeterminacy or uncertainty in nature). "Modern scientific leaders," observed R. G. Collingwood, "talk about God in a way that would have scandalized most scientists of fifty years ago."[17] What lies behind these two statements is a conviction, now fairly widespread, that it is not possible to construct a mechanical model of nature. Matter, it appears, is energy and not inert atoms acted upon by mechanical forces; the behaviour of individual electrons cannot be certainly predicted; space and time are relative to the observer, etc. In other words, there is more to nature than science used to think. Ergo, perhaps nature is, after all, an "organism" with a creative purpose, or a symbol of a wider reality, or a thought in the mind of God, or something like. At any rate, so we are told by the likes of Alfred North Whitehead, Eddington, and Sir James Jeans.

But at bottom, of course, the new will to believe traces to an existential situation. I need not belabor the point since it is so very obvious. The Kingdom of Man which the eighteenth century promised by the twenty-first century at the very latest does not seem to be materializing, just the reverse, in fact, if the Spenglers and Orwells are to be believed. The twentieth century, especially in western Europe, has had a great shock. All the external machinery of which western man had such great expectations has turned against him, just as Matthew Arnold and Samuel Butler predicted that it might. Another way of saying the same thing is that it is now understood, after two world holocausts and the recrudescence of barbarism in Nazi Germany and elsewhere, that machines can be used by men to evil as well as good purpose. It is also widely understood that evil is not simply the result of bad social conditions but that it is, to quote C. E. M. Joad, "endemic in the heart of man."[18] These revelations have knocked the props out from under that substitute faith which, as I suggested, had become the working philosophy of a great many modern people. As a result there was bound to be much longing for a faith, and the way would seem to have been opened for a fresh exploration of that inner world where preeminently man meets the gods.

But western man—I speak generally, of course—had learned not to believe in the gods. And so we are back again to the problem posed at the beginning of this lecture. The Delattres and Hydies—or generically, modern man—are on the horns of a dilemma. They long to believe, they even will to believe, but what to believe in is a problem for them. Two traditions, the sceptical tradition and the Judaeo-Christian tradition, pull them in opposite directions and even checkmate each other. What if anything can be done about this situation?

There are, it seems to me, four logical possibilities and all four have advocates in contemporary thought. The first possibility is that in the realm of religion western man has reached the point of no return. On this view the

17 R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature* (Oxford, 1945), p. 156.
18 C. E. M. Joad, *God and Evil* (New York, 1943), p. 20.

spiritual longing observable in the western world today represents a "failure of nerve." It will pass, or at any rate it ought to pass, for religion clearly belongs to the infantile stage of human evolution, and progress depends upon putting it behind us and growing up. In Sigmund Freud's classic summary, "criticism has nibbled at the authenticity of religious documents, natural science has shown up the errors contained in them, and the comparative method of research has revealed the fatal resemblance between religious ideas revered by us and the mental productions of primitive ages and peoples."[19] The trouble with this statement is that it is a half-truth only. It is correct as far as it goes, but at bottom it constitutes a serious misreading of history. Militant agnosticism of this kind ignores the possibly ontological validity of tradition, specifically the religious tradition, which for all its mistakes and even arrogance may after all be found to have preserved deep insights into the nature of being. It also ignores the evidence in history for the religious nature of man. I know that I am on debatable ground here, but I am impressed, as I believe most students of history must be impressed, by the sprouting up in the modern world of new religious or pseudo-religious cults to take the place of the old cults. It is as if there were something in man's nature which makes him ceaselessly seek objects of devotion outside himself, objects which, moreover, are located in a metaphysical order of some kind. It might be argued pragmatically that in the long run failure to find such objects stunts the imagination and reduces the vital powers and thus affects adversely the history of civilization.

The second possibility is a return to the religion of grandmother. Arnold Toynbee aptly calls this way "archaism," and it is exhibited at the present time in the new supernaturalism, in the theologies known as neo-Thomism and neo-orthodoxy. These theologies are not without wisdom, but it is extremely doubtful whether they speak effectively to the condition of modern man. If the sceptics underestimate the value of religious tradition, the neo-supernaturalists overlook the necessity of change. They speak as though it were possible for people to go back to a view of the universe which originated and flourished in climates very different from our own, and to accept that view upon authorities which modern man cannot accept. As we have seen, Julien Delattre resisted Father Millet's persuasions on this score. They speak, moreover, as though the sceptical traditions were easily circumvented, as though it did not raise genuine problems about nature, knowledge, and time. As Toynbee says, "Archaistic religious movements are intellectually indefensible because the antecedent Rationalism that has driven a traditional religous faith off the field does not in reality just come and go like the fog .. Souls that have once had the experience of intellectual enlightenment can never thereafter find spiritual salvation by committing intellectual suicide; and, though the quest of recapturing their lost faith is in itself both intellectually and morally legitimate, agnostics who embark on this

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[19] Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (London, 1928), pp. 67-8.

quest will not find themselves able to worship God again in spirit and in truth if they seek to open for themselves a homeward spiritual path by deliberately closing their mind's critical eye. . . ."[20]

Unfortunately, Toynbee has no alternative to suggest, except to "cling and wait." This, however, is a third possibility, and it too is a fairly common attitude today, to be found, for instance, in persons as unlike as Toynbee and Koestler, Simone Weil and Karl Barth. I have already cited the passage from *The Age of Longing* in which Julien Delattre argues the need for the emergence of a new transcendental faith which would reestablish relations between western man and the universe.

> "Who is going to invent it?" asked Hydie.
> "There is the rub. Religions are not invented; they materialise. . . ."
> "And all we can do is to wait for it to happen?"
> "Oh, one can always go on fiddling with programmes and platforms. But it comes to the same thing."[21]

Theologically, this "waiting" is construed as the dependence of "gravity" (*i.e.,* the sin that holds man to the earth) upon grace. Modern man cannot simply will a return to religion, says Simone Weil; he can only wait for belief to percolate down through his scepticism. In other words, it is modern man's fate to live in a state of religious indecision and waiting, which will be relieved, if we are to believe Toynbee, only after a "painful period of probation" and when the Holy Spirit listeth and not before.[22]

There is still a fourth possibility, however, which Toynbee does not develop but which deserves to be developed. This is an attitude which attempts to combine religion and scepticism; a *via media,* so to speak, which steers a course between the two traditions. Such an attitude would hardly land the homeless in a new age of certainty, but it would provide them perhaps with some temporary shelter from the elements and give them something to do while they were waiting.

Looking back over western man's spiritual odyssey since the seventeenth century there would appear to be two chief stumbling blocks to the creative flow of religious life. One comes from the side of traditional religion, the other from the side of scepticism. On the one side traditional religion—I mean the religion of the churches, the orthodoxies—claimed to know *too much.* Largely on the authority of an external revelation it claimed to know, in detail, God's attributes, how his will was done, why the world was created and how it would end, the decisive events of history, etc. Simultaneously, the sceptical tradition

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[20] Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History,* vol. IX (London and New York, 1954), p. 631.
[21] Koestler, *The Age of Longing,* p. 137.
[22] Toynbee's discussion of waiting comes at the end of his section on "The Spiritual Odyssey of the Western World" (*A Study of History,* vol. IX, pp. 635-37). For Simone Weil's conception of *"attente,"* see her books entitled *Waiting on God* and *Gravity and Grace.*

claimed to know *too little* about what Herbert Spencer called the "Unknowable." It began, as we have seen, with a great profession of unknowing which simply did not permit human access to metaphysical planes of reality. Between these two extremes there could be no meeting ground at all, as the great "warfare between science and theology" in the nineteenth century clearly showed. But suppose we were to admit frankly, with the sceptics, that what the theologies say about God and the world is myth, image, symbol, that is to say, that it is neither the literal nor the whole truth, not the thing-in-itself, but a poor human attempt to express the inexpressible. Suppose we were also to hold, however, as our existential situation might now prompt us to hold, that these myths and symbols are not merely human projections, not illusions, but reflections of mankind's deepest psychic experience. Might these twin admissions not open the gates and portals to a kind of religion which would satisfy twentieth-century man's spiritual longing without at the same time necessitating the surrender of his critical faculties: a religion which avoided both theological overstatements and sceptical aridity; a religion based upon psychological experience but which made a bridge from psychology to metaphysics; in a word, an *experiential* religion.

There has been a groping toward this kind of religion in recent years. One calls to mind, for example, Professor Basil Willey's lectures to the divinity school of the University of Cambridge in which he argued for a Christianity based upon the unshakable foundation of "repentance and rebirth" rather than "assent to doctrines and propositions."[23] Willey claimed descent from such thinkers as Coleridge and Soren Kierkegaard for both of whom, although in very different ways, Christianity signified "life" as opposed to a theory or a concept. He might also have mentioned Coleridge's contemporary, the great German theologian Schleiermacher, who tried to reconstruct Christian theology on an empirical basis, deducing doctrine not from an external revelation nor from metaphysical principles, but from man's emotional needs and feelings. Willey's own contemporary, the psychologist Carl Jung, explores farther than Schleiermacher and finds that religion is experience of a side of life—he calls it the "collective unconscious"—to which the conscious mind does not usually have access. Jung's formulation is particularly helpful in the current religious dilemma. For he speaks as a scientist and yet takes an affirmative attitude toward religion. He not only recognizes the therapeutic value of religion but concedes that in the religious experience man may have contact with a supra-personal and even metaphysical order of reality. But at the same time he doubts that religious dogma ever corresponds to objective facts of the universe. For Jung, as for Coleridge, religion is not so much an idea as an experience which can never be captured successfully or accurately in words; it can only be projected in symbols.

As I have suggested, this kind of experiential religion may be the begin-

23 Willey, *Christianity Past and Present,* p. 143.

ning of an answer to Hydie's desperate plea, "let me believe in something."
Doubtless, in her pessimistic frame of mind she would reiterate that religions
are not invented and that there is nothing for it but to wait. But I am reminded
at this point of something William James once said about waiting. What James
said was, to be sure, in rebuttal of a somewhat different position, that assumed
by the so-called "rugged and manly school of science" which advocated living
in complete suspension of judgment in religious matters, but it applies as well
to the Hydies of the twentieth century as to the W. K. Cliffords of the nine-
teenth. Said James: ". . . this command that we shall put a stopper on our
heart, instincts, and courage, and *wait*—acting of course meanwhile more or
less as if religion were *not* true—till doomsday, or till such time as our intellect
and senses working together may have raked in evidence enough,—this com-
mand, I say, seems to me the queerest idol ever manufactured in the philosophic
cave."[24] No one wishes to be duped, least of all the modern heir of the scepti-
cal tradition. But, as James also remarked, unless people meet the religious hy-
pothesis half-way, they may never make the gods' acquaintance.

I would interpret "half-way" to mean that there are things that the sceptic
can do while he is waiting. He can, for instance, do the very thing that Toynbee
says he cannot do, namely winnow the chaff out of the traditional religions.
This is what the German Protestant theologian Rudolf Bultmann has recently
attempted to do with his program of "demythologization." Bultmann believes
that the old mythological mode of thought which represented God in human
terms, and as interpenetrating nature and history, is "finished"; modern man,
brought up to think of both the world and the human personality as closed
systems of causality, cannot accept or even grasp such a view. He therefore
advocates, to the dismay of Karl Barth and other right-wing critics, the radical
demythologization of Christianity and its reinterpretation in existential rather
than in mythological or historical terms. On this interpretation, the Easter faith
ceases to be a faith in a cosmic or historical event which occurred approximately
two thousand years ago in a mythological universe; it becomes an understand-
ing of man's situation here and now, and indeed at all times and in all places:
man fearful, lost in a world of impermanence and death; man vainly striving
to overcome his forlornness by reliance upon self; and failing in this, finding
his redemption at last in an experience of the saving grace of God.

To sum up, the modern sceptic, whether he takes the demythologizing way
of Bultmann or the mythologizing way of Jung or some other way, *can* take
stock of his religious position in the light of the two traditions of which he is
the heir. This stock-taking involves, above all, the reassessment of his religious
tradition in terms that are meaningful to him, the decoding and rewording of
ancient concepts which in the course of time have all but lost their meaning.

[24] William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New
York, 1905), pp. 29-30.

Probably this is a task primarily for laymen—especially laymen with a pronounced sense of history—rather than clergymen whose vocation commits them to an orthodox position.

Yet the historic churches too can help in this endeavour, principally by assisting the sceptic to develop personal habits and mental attitudes upon which all profound religious life would seem to depend, but which have been lost sight of amidst the complexity and perplexity and noise of modern life: to wit, participation in the great cycle of the religious year; reestablishing a connection with the "world of silence," as Max Picard would say;[25] and recovering the ancient, contemplative attitude toward work and leisure, which still another European Catholic, Josef Pieper, urges us to do.[26] These are things which the modern sceptic *can* do toward satisfying his longing to believe. Whether he *will* do them, in such measure as to make any difference in his personal integration or in the integration of western civilization, is a moot question. The historian cannot say that he will do them. For unlike the scientist or the prophet the historian knows better than to predict what will happen and what will not happen.

Delivered October 25, 1955

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[25] Max Picard, *The World of Silence,* trans. by Stanley Goodman (Chicago, 1952).
[26] Josef Pieper, *Leisure the Basis of Culture,* trans. by Alexander Dru (New York, 1952).

ERASMUS: THE SCHOLAR AND THE WORLD

By Myron P. Gilmore

The debate on the relative merits of the active and the contemplative life has been one of the constant themes of western culture. The contrast between these two ideals has, of course, appeared sporadically and in various forms in other civilizations but from the time when the Greeks first speculated on ethics and politics it has been particularly characteristic of the west. I need only recall the formulations of Aristotle, the writings of Cicero on *otium* and *negotium*, especially the *Somnium Scipionis*, the variations on the classical theme introduced by Christianity and developed by the church fathers, and the continuation of the debate in medieval philosophy and literature.

In the Italian Renaissance this discussion entered a new and more intense phase. The conception of the problem in the early Renaissance may be well illustrated by reference to one of Petrarch's most characteristic compositions, his *Letters to the Ancient Dead* which constitute the last book of the *Epistolae de rebus familiaribus*. These are the letters in which Petrarch imagined that he was writing directly to the admired literary heroes of antiquity, wishing that he had been born in their time, condoling with them on the loss of large portions of their work, speculating on what they would have thought of the historical developments which they did not live to see and which they could neither have predicted nor imagined. In these epistles Petrarch shows the strength of his nostalgia for the ancient world and his desire to come into more immediate contact with it, but at the same time, he reveals his consciousness of the distance which divided his own age from that of Greece and Rome.

Among these letters to ancient authors the two addressed to Cicero indicate something of Petrarch's views on the relative merits of the active and the contemplative life. In 1345 Petrarch had discovered a manuscript of Cicero's letters to Atticus. He had always been an enthusiastic admirer of such of Cicero's moral and political works as were available to him, but he now discovered in reading the letters that many of Cicero's acts were less consistent and less idealistic than he had supposed. The figure whose precepts for the conduct of government he had so highly praised now turned out to have been in action timid and irresolute. Under the impact of this feeling Petrarch addressed Cicero directly:

> I have read your letters through to the end. . . . I have heard you speak on many subjects, and give voice to many laments and waver frequently in your opinions. . . . O you restless and distressed spirit, or, to speak in your own words, you rash and unfortunate old man. . . . Why did you forsake that peaceful ease that befits a man of your years? What false luster of glory involved you, although weighed

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down with years, in the wrangles and frays proper to youth . . . ? What good does it do to instruct others and discourse eternally on the virtues, even in the most eloquent terms, if at the same time one gives a deaf ear to one's own instruction? How much better would it have been for a man of declining years and especially for one devoted to studies . . . to have lived his last days in the quiet of the country, meditating . . . on that everlasting life and not on this fleeting one. How much better would it have been never to have held office, never to have longed for triumphs, never to have boasted of crushing such men as Catiline. But it is vain to talk thus. Farewell forever, my Cicero.[1]

And then follows the significant dating: "Written in the land of the living, on the right bank of the river Adige, in Verona, a city of Transpadane Italy on the sixteenth day before the calends of Quintilis, in the thirteen hundred and forty-fifth year from the birth of that God you never knew."[2] Petrarch in this way makes clear his sense of the gulf that divides the ancient world from the Christian era.

A second letter apologized for the tone of the first, and praised the studies that Cicero had followed in his periods of leisure. In this letter Petrarch hails Cicero as the contemplative man and inquires what he would have thought of the course of Roman history from his time to that of Petrarch could he have seen it. These two letters thus present a contrast between the life of action and the life of reflection. In spite of the fact that they are concerned with the career of a figure in Roman history, there are overtones of the Christian difference between the life of the cloister and the life of tthe world. At the time when Petrarch was addressing Cicero, the impact of reading Cicero's letters inclined Petrarch to a higher evaluation of the contemplative life, but this was not always so. When Cola di Rienzi raised the standard of liberty in Rome and appealed to the examples and tradition of the Republic, he was hailed by Petrarch, and in their correspondence Petrarch pays tribute to civic virtue fully realized in the practice of political life in a free community.[3] In fact there can be found throughout Petrarch's writings, and expressed in various ways, a sense of tension between the ideals of the active and those of the contemplative life.

The subject thus posed by Petrarch became a continuing theme of Renaissance speculation and debate. We find it occupying an important place in the writings of such humanists as Salutati and Bruni, and it reaches a kind of classic

[1] Petrarca, *Le Familiari*, ed. by V. Rossi, 4 vols. (Florence, 1933-1942) IV, 225,227. An English translation has been published by M. E. Cosinza, *Petrarch's Letters to Classical Authors* (Chicago, 1910), pp. 1-4. I have quoted from this translation with adaptations.
[2] *Ibid.*

[3] See *Briefwechsel des Cola di Rienzo*, ed. by K. Burdach and P. Piur (Berlin, 1912), esp. pp. 63-81, Petrarch's letter of 1347.

formulation in Cristoforo Landino's *Camaldulensian Disputations*. These were dialogues written at the court of Lorenzo de' Medici and the protagonists include Lorenzo himself and Leon Battista Alberti, the great architect and sculptor. Scholars who came to Italy from northern Europe carried back with them to the courts and universities of their own countries a lively interest in this debate and it became a theme of academic and literary speculation at the very time when many scholars and men of letters were feeling in their own lives the pressure of making a choice between the market place and the study.

In this continuing discussion the figure of Erasmus came to occupy a central position. In the first place his own life could be regarded as a variation on the theme. He had left the monastery to work as a scholar in the world. In the second place he confronted throughout his long career, at many times and in many different ways, the issue of the duty of the man of letters to the society in which he lived. Did the scholar best serve his high purposes by remaining independent and not involving himself in the councils of courts and kings? Or, on the contrary, did the more educated man have a positive obligation to offer his talents and training to those in authority in church and state? When Erasmus' great friend, Sir Thomas More, entered the service of Henry VIII, Erasmus felt that More had made a mistake and this feeling was confirmed in the last bitter years when More lost his head upon the block. Erasmus' modern biographers have continued to differ in their interpretation of his character. Some have presented him as a timid and neurotic individual who remained above the battle and was afraid to commit himself on the great issues of his age. Others have recognized in Erasmus a man of courage who desperately tried to build a third force between two extremes neither of which he could accept. The issue of how much Erasmus took part in the active political life of his time is a complicated one and one which it is impossible to examine in all its aspects in this brief lecture. I propose, however, this evening to consider three episodes in the career of Erasmus in each of which may be seen a variation of the general problem of the duty of the scholar in the world. These three episodes are: first, Erasmus' decision to leave Rome in 1509 and return to England where Henry VIII had come to the throne; second, the occasion ten years later in 1519 when Erasmus wrote to the Elector Frederick of Saxony urging that he protect Luther; third, I shall consider Erasmus' refusal in 1527 to edit the *De Monarchia* of Dante when he had been requested to do so by the chancellor of the Emperor Charles V. In each of these cases we are fortunate enough to have, if not the words of Erasmus himself, at least the letters directed to him by a contemporary. Consideration of these three incidents may therefore serve to define more generally the characteristics of Erasmus' position throughout his life.

Erasmus came to Italy in 1506 when he was about forty years old, but it was the end of February, 1509, before he achieved what had long been his am-

bition and saw the Eternal City for the first time.[4] His sojourn there lasted until the beginning of July with one interruption for a journey to Naples where he visited the cave of the Cumaean sibyl. Even though his visit was limited to these few months in the spring of 1509 and he never returned, Erasmus had an opportunity to see Rome at a stirring moment in the history of politics and of art. Pope Julius II was approaching the height of his power and the climactic years of his reign. In 1508 the League of Cambrai had been formed by France, the Empire, and the Papacy against the power of Venice, and in May of the very year in which Erasmus came to Rome was fought the Battle of Agnadello. The pope's political ambitions were matched by his determination to reconstruct and enlarge St. Peter's and the Vatican. Bramante had been commissioned to begin work on the new St. Peter's in 1506, and the pope had presided over the laying of the cornerstone in April of that year. At the Vatican Bramante had also designed and was building the Belvedere connected to the old palace by the long wings which framed the courtyards. In the Sistine chapel Michelangelo had begun the painting of the frescoes of the ceiling in 1508 and by the spring of the next year Raphael had already been at work for some months on the Stanza della segnatura. These names suffice to recall what was happening in Rome in the year of Erasmus' visit but how much of all this he actually saw we do not know. No letters written by him at this time have survived and only two written to him. What is known of his daily activities in Rome and his reactions to the contemporary scene must be gathered from references in his later correspondence and in his literary and scholarly works. From these it is clear that he knew many people in the circles of the Vatican.[5] It is entirely possible that he was taken by his friend Inghirami who was one of the papal secretaries to see Raphael at work in the apartments of the Pope. We may permit ourselves to imagine that Erasmus may have exchanged words with the painter or even contributed suggestions to the iconography of the Segnatura as many of the learned members of the papal entourage must have done. Erasmus' own work came to stand for the same mingling of classic and Christian themes, the same balance between reason and faith, philosophy and theology as was proclaimed in the great frescoes of the Disputa and the School of Athens. What more natural than that the painter and the scholar should have conversed about the figures who were to be chosen to represent these subjects. All this is, however, pure speculation. We do know that Erasmus saw the progress which had been made on the foundations of the new church of St. Peter's and he recalls this in his preface to the edition of the New Testament, written in 1516, when he describes how others are contributing gold, ivory and gems to the construction of the church, whereas Erasmus' own contribution is modestly and

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[4] *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. by P. S. Allen, 11 vols. (Oxford, 1906-1947) [hereafter cited as Allen with reference to letters by number, unless pages are otherwise indicated]. See Allen's note, I. p. 452.
[5] See the references in Renaudet, *Erasme et l'Italie* (Geneva, 1954) pp 90-98.

ironically offered as the restitution of the pure text of the *New Testament*.[6] Scattered here and there in his later writings there are a few references to his Roman visit but nothing in Rome seems to have impressed him so deeply as, for example, the spectacle he had seen in Bologna when Julius II made his entry into the city after its conquest.[7]

Erasmus' stay in Rome came to an end when he received letters from his English friends announcing the death of Henry VII and the accession of Henry VIII. In particular the invitation of his old friend Lord Mountjoy urged him to return to England. Here were his cherished friends Thomas More and John Colet and here his interests in Biblical and in Greek studies had been first awakened. Here also the friends of the new learning were struggling to establish its position in the universities. Italy, in spite of the fact that Erasmus had always longed to visit it, had contained some disappointments when viewed at first hand. Erasmus was disturbed at the moral tone of some of the Italian humanists and he had been shocked by the political program and ambitions of the papacy under Julius II. England could be represented as having acquired through its students the best that Italy had to offer. Accordingly he decided to go, but, many years later, he recalled in a letter written to an Italian friend the memory of one of the last days he spent in Rome.

He had gone to pay a call on the Venetian Cardinal, Domenico Grimani, at the Palazzo Venezia, and, in spite of the years that had elapsed, the memory of the scene still comes back to him in 1531. The vividness of the details recalled so long afterwards shows how deeply the event had impressed itself on Erasmus' mind. It was in the afternoon, the period of the Roman siesta, when Erasmus came to the great palace built by Paul II which still stands today looking much as it did when Erasmus saw it. He describes how he left his horse with a servant in the court and, finding nobody about, mounted the stairs alone and proceeded through a series of anterooms until he came to a reception room in which there was a Greek doctor who was in the cardinal's employ. When Erasmus learned from the latter that the cardinal was engaged with friends, he said he would go away and return another time. The doctor, however, inquired his name and insisted on announcing him to the cardinal, who caused him to be admitted immediately and received him with the greatest honor and cordiality. Even in retrospect Erasmus seems overwhelmed with awe at the treatment he was accorded—he, a man of such little account, and Grimani such a great cardinal! Here we see an example of that exaggerated respect for constituted authority which was one of the characteristics of Erasmus' style. On this occasion, however, Erasmus soon lost his self-consciousness in eager discussion with the

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[6] The most convenient edition of this preface is that of H. and A. Holborn, *Ausgewahlte Werke des Erasmus* (Munich, 1933), pp. 137-175.
[7] For other references to Rome, see Renaudet, *op. cit.*, and P. Nolhac, *Erasme en Italie* (Paris, 1888), passim. Erasmus' reaction to Julius II at Bologna is evident in the *Praise of Folly* and in the *Julius Exclusus*, if the latter can be attributed to Erasmus.

cardinal on his library which was composed of books in many languages. A cordial conversation followed and the cardinal pressingly invited Erasmus to stay in Rome and enter his service and that of the church. Writing to his friend many years later, Erasmus declared, "If I had happened to know this man earlier, I would never have left the city, since I found him well-disposed to me so far beyond my merits. But I had already determined on going and things had advanced so far that I could hardly have stayed with any integrity. When I had explained that I had been invited by the king of England he ceased to urge me and only prayed me earnestly to believe that what he had promised had come from his heart and that I should not think of him as I did of the crowds of courtiers. He made me promise that I would come to see him again before I left the city. Unhappily I did not return for fear I would change my mind because of the charm the man exerted."[8]

It may well be that we cannot entirely trust Erasmus' account of this conversation written as it was more than twenty years after the event. Certainly if Erasmus represented to the cardinal that the invitation from England had come directly from the new king he was not entirely ingenuous in doing so. Nevertheless it appears clear that the cardinal did press him to stay in Rome and opened vistas of opportunities before him. It is equally clear that Erasmus refused and that in 1531 in the disillusionment of old age and the disturbed times he expressed regret for not having accepted the invitation.

One of the most eminent of modern students of Erasmus has remarked that the date of Erasmus' departure from Rome must be regarded as a fateful day in the history of western culture.[9] Had Erasmus remained we can hardly doubt that he would have risen to an important position in the Roman curia. He might very probably have been among those who decided the fate of Luther in 1520 and 1521. And if the case against Luther had been delegated to Erasmus instead of to a Prierias, who can say whether he would not have urged upon Leo X a course of moderation so that the religious revolution might not have taken place at all or, at the very least, followed a course very different from that which actually did take place. Put this way, it is almost as if Erasmus made a "great refusal" and turned his face at a critical moment against putting his talents at the service of the church. But however fascinating it may be to explore this historical "if," it is difficult to believe that Erasmus faced actually in 1509 any issues involving the obligation of the scholar to service in church or state. Neither the invitation from Cardinal Grimani nor the invitation from England was couched in terms of a service to society. Erasmus wanted freedom for the work he proposed, facilities to work with, and a congenial atmosphere in which to complete the tasks he had mapped out for himself. Although Hen-

[8] Allen, 2465. A selection is translated in Nicholls, *Epistles of Erasmus*, Vol. I (London, 1901), pp. 461-463.
[9] Renaudet, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

ry VIII had earlier been interested in Erasmus and afterwards rewarded him with a purse, Erasmus did not in 1509 return specifically to the service of the English crown. He was still in this period pursuing the ideals that had brought him out of the monastery without finding in his studies any conflict with society or any sense that he ought to put his talents at the disposal of any particular authority. Undoubtedly he was confident that the great work he had undertaken would benefit society as a whole, but perhaps for this very reason he was unwilling to make a commitment to any institution, even the church which might claim to be the most representative of the interests of the whole Christian society. For Erasmus at this stage the scholar could and indeed must fulfil his task in the world as opposed to living in a cloister, but without entangling allegiances.

The next episode in Erasmus' career which I should like to discuss falls almost exactly ten years later, namely, in the spring of 1519. By now Erasmus had become the dominating figure in European letters. The *Adages* had gone through many editions and had become the most commonly used manual of quotations from Greek and Latin literature. The *Praise of Folly* was read and enjoyed by all not only for its satire against the church, against abuses in the monastic orders and against the scholastic philosophy, but also for its deep insights into the behaviour of every social class. Above all the great edition of the *New Testament* in 1516 had established Erasmus as the foremost scholar of his generation. In the history of European literature perhaps only Voltaire can be said to have enjoyed a comparable reputation. Erasmus had correspondents and devoted friends in every country from Poland to Spain and from the Scandinavian peninsula to Rome. Men everywhere looked to him for leadership and an indication of the position that should be taken in the crisis that had been precipitated by Luther's protest and the debates that followed from it.

In this spring of 1519 the fate of Luther and the question whether his doctrine was to be condemned were subjects that commanded the attention of the whole learned world. The Leipzig debate had already made clear some of the implications of Luther's position, and, although he had not yet written the great treatises which were to follow in 1520, the original theses had already been condemned by several authorities and Luther had been invited to come to Rome to retract. Erasmus was widely regarded as having played a large part in the inspiration of Luther and was himself at this moment under attack for orthodoxy by the faculty of theology of the University of Louvain. In these circumstances Erasmus wrote a letter to the Elector Frederick the Wise urging him to take Luther under his protection.[10]

In this letter he states that he does not know Luther personally and he also says—not quite ingenuously—that he has only dipped into Luther's writings. He cannot therefore be suspected of favoring a friend. Yet he points out to

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[10] Allen, 939.

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the Elector that everyone knows the purity of Luther's life and the fact that Luther cannot be suspected of avarice or self-interest. He had taken up his position because of a genuine zeal for the Christian faith. Whoever, says Erasmus, accuses another of heresy ought himself to show morals worthy of a Christian— candor in judgment, charity in admonition, gentleness in correction, leniency in giving sentence. "I write these things the more freely as the judgment in the Lutheran case does not pertain to me. However as it is the part of your Highness to protect the Christian religion by your piety, so it is the part of your prudence to see that no innocent man in your jurisdiction be given up to impiety of others under the pretext of piety. This is the wish of Pope Leo himself to whom nothing is more important than that innocence be protected. What they [*i.e.,* those at the court of Rome] think of Luther I do not know, although certainly I see that his books are eagerly read by the best people, although I have not myself had the time to finish them."[11]

This letter was followed shortly by another written to the Archbishop of Mainz. Here also Erasmus urged that the innocent must not be persecuted and he asserted again the purity of Luther's intention against the motives of many of those who presumed to judge him. He urged the Archbishop to stay his hand and refrain from any step that would be irrevocable.[12]

These letters must be taken to represent a decisive intervention at a critical moment in the history of the Reformation. We cannot know all the motives that inspired the Elector Frederick to take Luther under his protection after the Diet of Worms in 1521, but surely one of the considerations he must have felt most strongly was the fact that the greatest scholar of his generation had advised caution. Frederick must have felt the force of arguments advanced by a man he so much admired. In spite of the hesitations and timidities which we can find in this letter it remains true that Erasmus spoke out clearly when he had a most obvious interest to remain silent because of his own situation. Here is a case where Erasmus, though speaking in the language and style of the scholar, nevertheless feels that his conscience is touched and that he has a duty to speak out. All his subsequent hedgings and the ambiguities of his advice cannot obliterate the fact that in these epistles Erasmus had a perhaps decisive influence on the course of the Reformation. The scholar had entered the world to take a morally responsible position.

The third episode I should like to mention occurs eight years later in 1527. Erasmus was by now disillusioned with Luther and the course of the Reformation. He had written against Luther on the freedom of the will and subsequently become involved in the continuing polemic with the reformers on this subject. In choosing to attack Luther on free will he had chosen a subject which was at the heart of the humanist tradition. Surveying the long history of

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[11] *Ibid.*
[12] Allen, 1033.

the controversy on the part played by the human will in collaboration with the divine will in the process of salvation Erasmus chose to emphasize human potentiality. His work was an expression of man's hope rather than a confession of man's fate and it earned him nothing but opprobrium in the camp of the reformers. At the same time, however, Erasmus continued to be ill regarded in the citadels of orthodoxy. His work had been brought under examination by the ecclesiastical authorities in Spain who considered that he had embarked upon a dangerous course in his edition of the *New Testament* and who also questioned his attitude towards monasticism and towards the sacraments.

During the period of the examination of his works by the Spanish authorities, Erasmus received a letter from the Imperial Chancellor, Gattinara. The latter wrote on March 12, 1527, announcing that he had found a manuscript of Dante's *De Monarchia*. This work had been composed by Dante in the early years of the fourteenth century when Henry VII invaded Italy. The treatise had never been published and Gattinara now wrote to Erasmus to suggest that the subject and title were such as to make it relevant to the imperial cause in the sixteenth century.[13]

Dante's argument was a justification of universal monarchy. He declared that human possibilities could only be realized under conditions of peace, but peace could only be imposed through an Empire. There was a hierarchy of the forms of political life, extending from the individual to the family to the city state and to the nation, but these forms were a product of the natural man and were under the law of nature. A universal empire, however, was made necessary by the fall and man's sinful condition. It was established under the law of God to bring the natural man to a state of greater perfection. Historically, Dante's argument ran, the Romans had rightfully possessed the Empire, and furthermore, it was directly a product of divine institution by God.

Gattinara hoped that the publication of this work by Erasmus would serve the cause of Charles V in a year when his struggle with the Papacy was becoming most intense. This was the period of the most serious opposition between Charles V and Clement VII, an opposition which ended in the terrible sack of Rome. The action by the Chancellor was perhaps not intended only to support the imperial propaganda, but also to bolster the reputation of Erasmus at a moment when he was being attacked by the Spanish monks. Such a request from the Imperial Chancellor was a mark of confidence that could hardly be disregarded even by the most reactionary ecclesiastical authority.

Erasmus, however, did not take up this offer. In the conclusion of his letter the Chancellor had said, "It will be your decision to publish or suppress this treatise," and Erasmus evidently decided on the latter course for there is no other mention in his correspondence of the *De Monarchia* and *editio prin-*

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[13] Allen, 1790.

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ceps did not appear until after Erasmus' death, when it was printed in a collection of treatises on the empire by Oporinus at Basel in 1559.[14] We may take this as yet another example of Erasmus' determination to remain above the battle and not commit himself to the support of any political program, no matter how urgent were the requests addressed to him and how great the benefits he might have derived from acceptance.

In the same year in which Erasmus refused Gattinara's request to publish the *De Monarchia* he wrote a letter defending himself against certain charges made against him in Spain. One of these charges takes us back to the visit to Rome in 1509. It will be remembered that Erasmus had come to Rome in that year in the company of his pupil Alexander Stuart, illegitimate son of King James IV of Scotland. The pupil was recalled to Scotland by his father and before leaving wished to bestow on his teacher some mark of appreciation as a parting gift. He therefore presented to Erasmus some antique gems among which was a ring on which there was an engraving of the Roman boundary god, Terminus, with the motto *"concedo nulli"*—I yield to none. The device and the motto pleased Erasmus who adopted them as his own.[15]

From this time onward Erasmus used this device as a seal. In 1519 Quentin Metsys made a medal at Antwerp with the head of Erasmus and on the reverse, a representation of Terminus with the motto. Erasmus distributed casts of this to various friends and patrons.[16] In 1524 the cast of this medal was sent to Nurnberg to have further reproductions made and the Terminus was changed from a full-face to a profile because of the difficulties of casting which were the subject of lengthy discussion between Erasmus and his friend Pirckheimer.[17] Holbein had done an engraving of the god and the motto for his friend and a wood cut portrait in which Erasmus is represented holding the statue of Terminus.[18] Erasmus was in the habit of using this device as a signature and for the authentication of legal documents. On February 28, 1535, when his right hand was so crippled that he could not hold the pen, he signed in this way a dictated letter to a Polish bishop.[19] He affixed this seal to a donation of 1600 florins as a trust which he delivered to Boniface Amerbach and he used it also on his wills.[20] To his friends as well as to his enemies this was therefore a familiar symbol intimately identified with Erasmus.

Now however in 1527 his Spanish friend Alfonso Valdes wrote that people were saying that the motto, "I yield to none," showed intolerable arrogance

[14] Allen, VI, p. 470, n.
[15] Allen, 1907.
[16] Allen, 1092, 1101, 1119, 1122.
[17] Allen, 1408, 1417, 1452, 1466.
[18] The engraving of the Terminus is reproduced in Allen, VII, p. 230, and the woodcut in Allen, XI, p. 142.
[19] Allen, 3000.
[20] Donation to Amerbach, Allen, 2854; the wills, Allen, VI, appendix, xix and xi, appendix xxv.

on the part of Erasmus and Valdes begged for an explanation which might silence these criticisms.[21]

Erasmus replied[22] that he was astonished that anyone should have accused him of arrogance. Those who knew him well would agree that he was the most humble of men and more accurately described by the motto of Socrates, "I know this one thing—that I know nothing," than by the device "I yield to none." However, entirely apart from its applicability, those who imagine that Erasmus adopted the latter motto for himself are ignorant and foolish. If they knew Roman history and Roman literature they would recognize the passage in Livy in which there is a description of the Roman boundary god. This Terminus represented a sacred limit which was not to be passed and at the remote time when the precincts of the Capitoline were being prepared for the enclosure of the temple of Jupiter, Terminus alone of the gods refused to yield to Jupiter and so came by his motto. It is Terminus himself who says, "I yield to none," and it is as ridiculous to suppose that Erasmus intended these words to be considered as spoken by himself as it would be if he had adopted the seal of a roaring lion with the legend, "Flee from me unless you wish to be eaten." Would anyone then suppose, says Erasmus to his friend, that the words were spoken by Erasmus rather than the lion? Thus it is Terminus and not Erasmus who speaks. Erasmus further explains that when the jewel first came into his possession he was taken with the artistry and the obscurity of the symbol and already then, since he seemed to himself far advanced on the road of life, Terminus came to stand for the boundary of life, that is, the end of life which no man could escape. In reality then, it is death who speaks and the motto, far from being an over-confident assertion of man's capacities, is to be taken as a confession of man's fate. It is a symbol not of what man may accomplish but of the necessary limits which are set to all accomplishment.

These protestations did not convince Erasmus' enemies at the time[23] nor have they convinced all modern students. Professor Wind has advanced the theory that Erasmus believed one thing in 1509 when he adopted the device in a period of great self-confidence and hope, and another thing in 1528 when the Reformation had already existed for ten years and the hopes of the earlier period had faded into disillusionment.[24]

In addition to the evidence cited by Wind for the earlier period there are some indications that his friends continued throughout his life and to the very end to take the motto as spoken by Erasmus himself rather than Terminus. In a letter to his great friend Zasius written in 1523 Erasmus complained that Zasius in the past had sometimes joked about the motto.[25] And in the last year of

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21 Allen, 1907.
22 Allen, 2018.
23 Allen, 2300.
24 See E. Wind, *Journal of the Warburg Institute,* I (1937-38), pp. 66-69.
25 Allen, 1353.

Erasmus' life, Paul Volz writing to condole with him on the attacks of Etienne Dolet said, "You with your Terminus will yield to none," showing that the motto was still taken by some of Erasmus' friends as a gesture of defiance.[26]

The ambiguities which have surrounded the interpretation of this motto can in fact be applied to the consideration of decisions in the life of Erasmus. We have seen that he did not yield to the temptations offered him by Cardinal Grimani in Rome and he afterward, throughout his life, resisted many similar invitations. Neither did he yield to the Chancellor's pressure to give his aid to the political program of Charles V, though he was the greatest propagandist for the efforts of the Emperor to bring peace to the European world. On the other hand, he did yield to the claims of his conscience and intervened against his own interest to protect from persecution a man whom he considered to be innocent.

These incidents may perhaps hardly be taken as altogether representative. Yet they define the boundaries of his compromises. Erasmus has too often been represented as a craven neurotic who for his own safety was afraid to take sides, a man who stood above the battle and adopted a variety of subterfuges to ensure that he should not be involved in it. He was undoubtedly not the stuff of which either revolutionaries or martyrs are made and yet we can trace in his life and thought an adherence to certain ideals with which he never compromised. I should like to suggest that the contribution of Erasmus to one strand of that liberal tradition in honor of which these lectures were established was very great. In an age when commitment is increasingly admired, it has been fashionable to deplore the uncommitted scholar as the man who stands aside from the significant battles in which his generation is engaged. But, in fact, at all times in the history of western thought the world has profited and the liberal tradition has been guided by men who tried to take a balanced view, who tried to defend the center when opposition between the extremes was becoming polarized.

The last stage of Erasmus' life has a kind of symbolic value, defining his position in respect to the religious battles of his life-time. The Reformation had taken a violent form in Basel in 1529 when the people attacked the cathedral and destroyed the images. Catholic worship was prohibited and the forms approved by Oecolampadius and the town council were instituted. In these circumstances Erasmus realized that he could not continue in Basel in spite of his many friends there without compromising his position in the eyes of the Catholic world. Hence he removed to Freiburg in Breisgau where he found a hospitable welcome. In his departure from Basel he was ceremoniously accompanied by the town fathers who gave him their regrets at his departure and their well-wishes for the future. After six years residence in Freiburg he returned to Basel, being forced to leave Freiburg for his health and hoping to find a refuge

[26] Allen, 3069.

LAWRENCE LECTURES

1945   Charles Seymour, "The Problem of International Security: Historical Backgrounds"

1946   Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Jr., "The Pattern of Democratic Change in the United States: Andrew Jackson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt"

1946   Carl J. Friedrich, "The Problem of the Democratization of Germany"

1947   Alpheus Thomas Mason, "Variations on the Liberal Theme"

1948   Perry Miller, "Illiberal Liberals of the Great Awakening"

1949   Conyers Read, "Problems of Present-Day Britain"

1950   Hajo Holborn, "The Reasons for the Failure of the Paris Peace Settlement"

1951   Paul Wallace Gates, "From Individualism to Collectivism in American Land Policy"

1952   Helen Maud Cam, "Representative Institutions in England and Europe in the Fifteenth Century in Relation to Later Developments"

1953   Bernhard Knollenberg, "Causes and Growth of the American Revolution"

1954   John K. Fairbank, "Rebuilding an American Policy Toward China"

1955   Franklin L. Baumer, "Religion and the Sceptical Tradition"

1956   Eric Goldman, "The Third American Revolution: An Interpretation of Recent Decades"

1957   Myron P. Gilmore, "Erasmus: The Scholar and the World"

1958   Henry Steele Commager, "The Search for a Usable Past"

in Burgundy where he was attracted by the wine which he always preferred and which he regarded as necessary for his health. Although he had intended only to pass through Basel to see his old friends and to supervise the printing of the Origen which was under way at Froben's establishment, he found that the atmosphere was much the same as he had always known, and as his health progressively deteriorated, Basel became, without any preparatory decision that it should be so, his last residence. He wrote to friends that he did not wish to die in a city which was officially heretical, but he also wrote that he was not molested by those of differing beliefs.[27] And he so far considered the possibility of his death in Basel that he caused his last will to be authenticated by the magistrates of Basel as well as by the emperor and the pope, a precaution which was necessary because of his illegitimate birth and the likelihood that this would be a source of legal complications unless every contingency had been provided for in advance. His greatest friends and chosen executors were resident in Basel as was his principal heir, Boniface Amerbach. He died in July of 1536 before he had been a resident in Basel for an entire year. Boniface Amerbach has a brief description of his funeral in the letter to John Paumgartner dated February 1, 1537.[28] He describes how Erasmus' body was borne to the cathedral on the shoulders of the students of the university and attended by all the professors. When his monument was erected with the inscription which can still be read celebrating his learning and virtue to posterity, Amerbach caused the Terminus to be represented upon it.

Thus was buried in a Protestant city and by a Protestant minister this Catholic whose works were to be condemned by the Council of Trent, this revolutionary who had now become a conservative. His funeral and his monument in Basel Cathedral are a fitting expression of some of the values for which Erasmus had pleaded throughout a long lifetime. This grave of a Catholic scholar in a Protestant church with the ambiguities of the classical figure of Terminus may stand as a kind of symbol for the fact that Erasmus himself had not yielded either to political advantage or to the extremes of either side, and thaat he stood for that toleration which was aferwards conspicuously realized in the city and the country in which he died and even more comprehensively in the liberal tradition of the whole western world.

Delivered November 6, 1957

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[27] Allen, 3122, 3130.
[28] Allen, 3141.