

mentally pedagogical. On both scores it is a recovery too of a certain sense of man, of a real Christian humanism. Liturgy is properly educative only so far as we let it be significant; Christianity itself is our training to be with God only so far as we take in its 'doctrine' in the context of its cultural tradition.

We have pushed a little deeper in one or two places than Fr Küng does in his book, but it is always the same changing sensibility of the living Church we have been probing. That *something* is happening is much less open to dispute than what it is exactly. It is our contention, however, that Fr Küng's sensitivity to this change—his feelers—are essentially trustworthy and clarifying, and that the change itself, while indeed calling for a certain reform, is fundamentally only our becoming more responsive, in the concrete, to great areas and dimensions we have too long neglected of that great re-formation of mankind by the philanthropic design of God.

The Beginnings of Wisdom¹

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Two things prompted me to think a little more closely about the relation between fear and Christian belief; one was reading a book by Pfister on *Christianity and Fear*² and the other was a growing concern with the extent to which fear seems to rule the lives of many Christians and provides an apparent contradiction of the love and freedom which are formally acknowledged as the keystones of Christianity. I have taken this opportunity to offer you the result of some reflection on the subject in the hope that in discussion we may gain some further insight into the meaning of the psalmist's words:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
a good understanding have all those who practise it.

(Ps. III. 10).

¹A talk first given to the Southampton circle of the Newman Association.

²O. Pfister, *Christianity & Fear*, London 1948 (trans.).

Cruden's *concordance* gives some six columns of references involving fear in the Old Testament and the New Testament (between 500 and 600 references). 'Love' has about the same number but then something like one column (90/100 references) of the fear references are 'Fear not' references which alters the balance a little. This comment is not idle pedantry. I make it to give some substance to the idea that fear is a topic which is important enough to merit very frequent references in scripture, and therefore important for us to understand.

What I want to do first is to consider the psychological nature of fear, to give us a starting point for considering its theological significance. It is generally agreed among psychologists (and general agreement among psychologists is the exception rather than the rule) that fear is an unlearnt, inborn response, an emotional response which can be seen in the newborn baby in a primitive form. Loss of support and loud noises will both elicit in a small baby a pattern of startle which remains identifiable throughout life, and also make the baby cry. It has further been argued that we must make a distinction even in the first year of life between learnt and unlearnt fear response. The unlearnt fear response is seen in many species of animal besides man, and occurs in the face of a range of stimuli which may increase with the age of the animal but which have clearly defineable characteristics. The response at the behavioural level may take the form of freezing, startle, or flight, the species and age of the animal and the nature of the situation together determining the precise character of the response. In terms descriptive of experience this aspect of fear is an element in awe, astonishment and reverence, while it finds its direct expression in shock and terror. In its milder forms it may be experienced as a profound form of uneasiness and disquiet but these feelings may be more common in what has been described as 'learnt fear'. This second idea is not as easy as might at first appear.

It seems that although there is this very primitive immediate fear response, there is also a sense in which learnt fear is under the control of pre-determined growth processes; the learning is not random but follows a predictable pattern. Further it is alleviated by circumstances which themselves require very little learning to become established and which are, at least in the early life of the organism, predictable. This may seem confusing but an oversimplification will not really help us much towards a proper understanding.

The learnt fear response gives rise to what has I think been effectively described as anticipatory fear. Such anticipatory fear gives rise to an avoidance response whereby the organism tries to avert the anticipated

hurt or pain. Now such anticipatory fear is experienced as dread, anxiety, once again uneasiness (when this has a forward-looking quality) and at the same time is an element in excitement, in challenge seen in a difficult task. In much that is effortful but hazardous it is necessarily present, just as it is in undertakings that involve the overt risk of failure. In some cases too small an element makes the person careless, in others too large an element cripples his capacity for effective action. Thus anticipatory fear may be clearly recognisable as such or as an incidental element in the undertaking. Fully realized fear leads usually to avoidance, while a recognised element of fear usually results in caution. But in mild doses it can be an actual element in the incentive, the pleasure of the 'switchback' at a fair being a classic example.

Now as to the terminal point of fear, as in many young animals, so with babies and small children—the mother or some adult who is known and trusted provides the learnt but predictable assuager of fear. Bowlby takes Harlow's term and says that for the young child the mother is its haven of refuge.³ Bowlby further argues that this is more evident in anticipatory fear in which the mother is actively sought to protect the child from the experience of fear and the dreaded event or state. This also means that loss of the mother may itself greatly increase anxiety since the terminal point for the experience of fear is unavailable. Now with increasing maturity, independence and mobility the child learns other ways of coping with anticipatory fear, but it remains true throughout life that the presence and attention of loved people reduces fear and its correlatives, anxiety and dread. Even the knowledge of the sympathy and support of other people can offset the fear engendered by a difficult or dangerous situation. The knowledge of the loss of such sympathy can itself give rise to a state of fear and seems indeed to be one of the critical elements in the anxiety which is a feature of all neurotic disorders. Such sympathy and support we can see as one of the critical manifestations of love. Whatever else we may want to say about love, it is profoundly true that

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.

(Jn. 4. 18).

The verse goes on, as you probably remember

For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.

which goes to the heart of the matter, that in a reciprocal love relation-

³J. Bowlby, 'Ethology and the development of object relations' in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 1960, vol. 41, p. 313.

ship fear has no place because the anxiety and dread which arise as anticipation of loss or rejection are absent.

Now you may be thinking that even perfect love does not remove the fear of physical hurt and pain, of failure and disappointment. But these are certainly mitigated in the presence and knowledge of love, and may be accepted in a context of love in a way that is impossible outside that context. Love often confers a willingness to suffer that others may be spared suffering

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

(Jn. 15. 13).

Anticipatory fear leads here not to avoidance and resistance but is accepted as an element in a task to be accomplished. It becomes not the guiding principle of conduct but the accepted consequence of a course of action dictated by other values. And it is the secondary elements of anticipatory fear (the disappearance of the terminal point) which are notably absent.

So much for the nature of fear. Now perhaps it may be useful to consider Pfister's book. He is, as far as I can gather, a Christian in the Calvinist tradition, but a reformed and enlightened Calvinism; he was given a doctorate in divinity for the book so presumably his views are acceptable to at least one school of theology; he appears to have considerable experience as a psycho-therapist, particularly in pastoral psychology. The most outstanding thing about him is that he is a very shocked man. Looking at the history of Christianity he sees it as a record of bloodshed and terror only becoming humane in the light of atheistic rationalism. However little we may like this, the evidence is incontrovertible. Christians of all shades of creed have tortured, persecuted and martyred one another for close on two thousand years. When not thus occupied they have indulged in Holy Wars, in which the massacre of innocents has been a frequent feature (although to be fair they avoided this for several centuries). When not thus entertaining themselves abroad, according to Pfister they have been dreaming up a reign of theological terror, with hellfire and damnation to frighten people with. The record in fact is not attractive. Pfister maintains that it is too easy to explain all this in terms of the 'barbarous times' in which these events occurred. Christianity has offered people a God of wrath rather than a God of love, and a morality based on fear of a vengeful judge. As one might anticipate he is particularly concerned with the history of the Roman Catholic Church, with practices and doctrines seeming to him to mis-

interpret most completely the message of love which he sees as basically Christian. He suggests that the successive Protestant groups which have broken away from the Church and each other have been moved essentially by an impulse to reinstate the doctrine of God's love. With a commendable honesty he explores the way in which in so many of the reforming Churches the impulse has been very soon overlaid by puritanism and the tendency to persecute the deviant and dissenter, and thus return to that rule by fear which they were founded to end.

He does say that his knowledge of Catholicism comes from six or seven Catholics he has analysed, books, observation and conversation with peasants; on this basis he has drawn a picture of a church which he says is often characterised by great charitable enterprises, but which terrorises its children and simpler adherents with gruesome pictures, grisly relics, threats of hell or purgatory, a picture of a vengeful judging God and an emphasis on the 'beyond' which makes concern with human suffering negligible because all will be compensated in the hereafter. The fear induced by such catechetical and pastoral methods is reinforced by an insistence on what he thinks of as quite unrealistic moral purity (particularly in sexual morality) which gives rise to pervasive feelings of guilt. The Church in his view then offers remedies for this fear of an essentially irrational type. Devotion to our Lady is reinforced by the fear of God from whom she protects us. But more especially he regards many quasi-devotional practices as having magical properties to ward off the induced fear; medals, candles, statues, wafers, holy water, and so forth, all have this function of propitiation (a view which to some extent coincides with that suggested by Freud in *The Future of an Illusion*). The mass he thinks of as a repetitive prayer (like the rosary) designed to lull the mind into quiescence.

It is a depressing picture, but one which I think we must face squarely. We must ask ourselves whether in practice our catechetical methods have not been such as to promote anticipatory fear, to emphasise the importance of sin too young, and to place a wrong doctrinal emphasis on Christ simply as the Judge of the world. The minds of children are tender, in the sense that their powers of independent reasoning are too weak to offset the emphasised perils and terrors of sin and damnation in a way that an adult might. Certainly we must I think in all honesty admit that there is much rank superstition in the magical properties attributed to objects of piety and to what St Teresa has called 'foolish devotions'. They bear the hall marks of the propitiatory practices seen in many primitive religions as a means of averting the wrath of the gods. Un-

healthy fear gives rise to unhealthy remedies which surely are less the beginning of wisdom than the abandonment of reason in a welter of emotion. We need I think to ask some heart-searching questions about the way in which we pass on the Christian message to children and to people whose educational opportunities have been limited by social inequality. 'Fear not, for I bring you tidings of great joy' might be a good motto for all who teach and preach in the Church.

The other general question of the emphasis on the 'beyond' and the lack of real concern with human misery is more complex—we live in an age which struggles actively with this question, and Christian history is marked by the sharp opposition of the great and often heroic struggle to better the lot of the poor and the suffering, and the contrary tendency to withdraw from the world and concentrate on the hereafter. The struggle goes on, but within the Church today we have already witnessed the immense revival of concern with the state of the world, and the renewal of our obligation to concern ourselves deeply in charity and justice with all mankind. Such concern with the distress and fear which poverty, disease and social inequality arouse in so many millions of people is required by that love for one another which Christ spoke of as the new commandment; while we may often forget it both collectively and singly I think it is clear that we cannot and indeed have not denied it.

Thus far I think Pfister's thesis is worth our attention because it shows how far Christianity has in its worst moments increased the fear in the world, or at any rate not served to mitigate it much. But what I am convinced is inadequate is his theological conclusion. It certainly does not allow us to understand how fear of the Lord could be the beginning of wisdom. He argues that the message of Christianity is essentially a message of love rather than fear, that God loves us rather than judges us, that God could not have demanded Christ's death as the price of our redemption, rather that Christ's mission was to tell us of the love of God, and that we need not fear him but need only accept that freely offered divine love in order to be saved. The dialogue is between God and man directly and individually. Such a view is widely held among evangelical Christians whose idea of Christ's redemptive action is different from our own. Yet the book poses a real problem and if we find Pfister's conclusion unacceptable, what have we to offer in its place?

The answer I think is clear enough in Christian (and specifically Catholic) liturgy in a way that it is not in extra-liturgical devotion. The tragedy is that the inaccessibility of the liturgy to so many hundreds of

thousands of Catholics (millions in fact) should have made a false emphasis so widespread. The popular mariology with which we are so familiar goes side by side with a tendency to misunderstand the doctrine of our salvation in Christ. Mary protects us, but God judges us. Again a weakening of interest in the theology of the Trinity and a consequent lack of understanding of this may have made the problem more acute.

We need at this point to return to our analysis of fear; so long as we think of this as essentially anticipatory we shall not understand how it can be reconciled with the idea of a loving God. But we have to remember that there is also the unlearnt fear response. In popular and not very reflective treatments of the Old and New Testament we are often told that the God of the Old Testament is the God of wrath and the God of the New Testament is the God of love. This is not only simple-minded, it is demonstrably false and actively misleading.

What we can see very clearly in the Old Testament theology is not only an active fear of the numinous power of God, but the loving care with which God is seen to protect man from the aboriginal terror of direct confrontation with that numinous godhead. It is no accident that the man who put out his hand to steady the ark of the covenant dropped dead. Mankind in his fallen state would be consumed and destroyed by a direct theophany. This is likewise the proper meaning of the injunction of God in the Mount Sinai theophany to keep the people away from the mountain; not because God was vengeful but precisely because he was loving. Remember that they could not bear to look on the face of Moses after that encounter with God; how much less could they have survived the naked presence of God. The elaborate purification ceremonies and protective clothing worn by the high priest when he was to enter the Holy of Holies again emphasise the great danger attendant on the encounter with God. This fear is not an anticipatory fear of the retribution God might exact for sin, but the direct fear, the terror of the holiness of God which by its very nature must destroy that which is fallen and evil.

The beginning of Wisdom is not fear of God as one who exacts punishment, but rather an appreciation (which after centuries of Christianity we sometimes lack) of the terrible holiness of God, his utter otherness, his power and his glory, from which he for so long lovingly protected his people while they were yet unredeemed. In this sense the knowledge of God, of the power and goodness of God, is something which fools despise, but for the good man 'the knowledge of the Holy One is insight'. In this sense it is the foolhardy man who has no fear. In order to understand the full measure of our redemption in Christ

we need some appreciation of the numinous power of God; some sense of the way in which it must be inherently destructive of any evil in its direct presence.

Yet for the people of Israel there could be no direct approach to God since by the fall even the good man was cut off from God in the inheritance of sin. Hence the longing for God and for the day of salvation, for 'the new heart', was in some sense necessarily denied until Christ redeemed us. God could protect his people but not confront them.

Since Christ was sinless and divine he alone of the human race in his dual nature could be free of this terror of God, could go into the godhead without being consumed. Only at brief moments in his earthly life was the glory of his divinity revealed, and you will recall that in the transfiguration, when God spoke

the disciples fell on their faces, and were filled with awe

But Jesus came and touched them saying 'Rise, and have no fear'.

(Mt. 17. 6-7; Mark says they were 'exceedingly afraid').

It is in Christ that we are protected from this primordial fear. In his passion Christ became the one true sacrifice, a sacrifice which was propitiatory since he took upon himself the burden of our sins, but his sacrifice was perfect and complete because unlike the tainted sacrifices of old, he who was divine entered into God and into his glory by the resurrection, becoming the divinised offering that is given back by God to the people in the sacrificial meal. As hoped for in the type-sacrifices of the Old Testament the people themselves are now in truth divinised by this communion. Since Christ entered into his glory we are saved through our membership of him. It is in Christ that God knows us and in Christ that we know God. Because we participate in Christ's glorified humanity we are in that mystical body protected from the awful holiness of God, as sons and heirs also with Christ we can experience and know the love of God without fear. This is the critical doctrine; in our sacramental union with Christ we know the love of God, a love which is perfect human and divine, a love which should be the criterion by which we live. This is the love which knows no fear within the relationship. But we must remember that Christ in whom the love of God and man was perfect did not escape the knowledge of anticipatory fear. He suffered fear in the foreknowledge of his own suffering and death, although he freely and lovingly accepted that suffering.

The measure of God's love is fully unfolded in his Church which is the visible expression of the call to all men to redemption in Christ. But freedom of choice exists, and it is in this sense that Christ is the judge of

the world. The incarnate Word of God, the light of the world, makes darkness visible; by his presence the world is judged, and when this is fully seen at the end of the last days in which we live, then it will become finally clear whether we are in Christ or not. This means that although the call to salvation is universal, the power of evil is still present in the world and we can choose the darkness. There is in this the possibility of anticipatory fear that we may be found outside Christ, that we may reject his offered love. That is in fact a central theme of orthodoxy in the Catholic Church and will be familiar enough; I develop it here only that we may understand that life in Christ protects us not from awe of the holiness of God but from the primitive terror of that fear. In the love of Christ we are able to encounter the Father and receive the Spirit and this is the terminal point of our fear, this is the security which is the perfect love that casts out fear.

In the same context, in a fully realised Christian life anticipatory fear has very little part to play, except that since we know that we can choose we may fear, or experience a dread of, the alternative that is open to us. In this too there is wisdom, insight and understanding. But we should at least be free of the fear that bedevils so many human relationships, the fear of the withdrawal of love, since though we may cut ourselves off from Christ, Christ himself will not cut us off, for he is 'steadfast in love'. For the same reason we are, in St Paul's words, 'no longer under the law', but free of it, able to live freely in Christ.

Yet somehow Christianity is permeated with fear and this is not the fear of the holiness of God but of retribution for evil. It is a fear which anticipates punishment, in which Christ becomes the object of fear rather than the end of fear. This is something which we should distinguish clearly in our minds from a fear of the evil in the world, a fear of pain or suffering, a fear of suffering in those that we love, a fear of the evil we and they may have to suffer. We should also I think distinguish it from a fear of the difficulties and hazards which we face by living in the world and following our Christian vocation. We pray after all to be delivered from evil; equally we pray for strength, for courage, for perseverance; but such prayers are in the context of love and are in themselves an affirmation of faith and hope, an expression of charity. We cannot expect a life in which fear plays no part, nor a life in which we hazard nothing unless we live in a way which equally gains nothing. But as I suggested earlier, we need to distinguish fear which is recognised and accepted as an aspect of our endeavour, and that which gives rise purely to avoidance behaviour.

We learn early in life to avoid pain and suffering through anticipatory fear, and while it is possible simply to be in Christ in order to avoid damnation, this is a very thin interpretation of the Christian message. Because behaviour motivated solely by fear will be negative in essence, this will avoid action but not promote it, will stultify thought, and certainly will confer remarkably little freedom. One has only to think of the servant who said 'I was afraid and I went and hid your talent in the ground, here take what is yours' (Mt. 25. 25) to realise that it is an attitude with little future in it.

It is not at all easy to sort out all the elements in the situation which confront the individual Christian precisely because they are so often hopelessly muddled together in his own thinking. It is a very wise man who knows what he is doing and precisely why he is doing it. Before I try finally to say what I think the title Psalm-verse means, there are a number of smaller points I should like to clear out of the way.

There are many things which children find frightening, alarming or repulsive in themselves; through the process of anticipatory fear, situations in which they are exposed to these will themselves come to be disliked and avoided. Now if the religious experience and instruction of children is heavily loaded with revulsion, fear and pain, we may set in motion a vicious circle in which the child initially experiences terror or pain, tries to avoid this and is then forced into re-experiencing them in the face of the threat of worse to come if he does not. What the child knows of love is, to quote Sullivan, 'the reduction of anxiety'—that is it is for them the end or mitigation of fear. Now if we first make the child frightened of God and then tell him God loves him we might as well save our breath, because the words will be an empty form. People and events which expose the child to an increase of fear and anxiety are the precise negation of the love-situation.

Much religious art (though perhaps less so here than say in Switzerland) may be sufficiently gruesome to frighten a child very much, equally he often fears death and dead bodies, bones and so on. The reasons for this are complex and children vary greatly. They dislike the dark, the threat of separation from those they love, they fear pain and those who inflict it. One could go on a lot. Very young children usually find the world very big and alarming and overpowering but equally are not tied to the security of place and appropriateness as older children are. Young children will accept what happens to them quite philosophically if they are with people they know and trust. But older children (over 5 or 6 years) begin to pay considerable attention to people beyond their

immediate family and are more open to information, persuasion and threat though still very dependent and easily moved to fear. It may be very easy to frighten children of this age with hellfire sermons, pictures of people dying horrible deaths, and uplifting stories involving detailed recitation of the sufferings of martyrs; since such fear is entirely gratuitous theologically and often difficult to remove, why anyone should imagine it is the proper thing to do to a child passes my understanding.

I find it easier to understand the motivation of those who burden children with guilt and anxiety in the delusion that they are creating in them a sense of sin, or inculcating moral virtues; these things do have at least some meaning, but if in the process people merely bewilder and frighten the child they lose a lot more than they gain. Equally those who, finding that threats of eternal damnation do not promptly produce moral rectitude in the children, then try to beat it into them, have it seems to me a lot to answer for. They may argue that they are kindly saving the child from a worse fate in the hereafter, just as those who tortured heretics for the same reason managed to justify their own curious notion of love. But suppose to the child it merely appears that if 'they' don't get you now God will get you hereafter, what can one expect except a fearful apprehensive attitude towards God, or a radical withdrawal from the situation in which, with immense relief, the adolescent loses his faith and his anxieties along with it. Now it is possible to argue that along with such 'education' the child is offered through confession and the idea of reparation a way out of his fear-ridden anxious state, and thus experiences the reduction of anxiety within the Church. Many may do so, but it is only too easy to create more anxiety than you are able to reduce in this way. And it is worth bearing in mind that Christ told his disciples to

Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the Kingdom of Heaven. (Mt. 19. 14).

You will remember that he laid his hands on them and blessed them, not a gesture that the child was likely to mistake. To make a child frightened of Christ is precisely to 'hinder' it when it might otherwise come freely to Christ in love and security. Those who expose children to fear in the name of religion take on themselves a terrifying responsibility. Just avoiding this is not enough; children have a great capacity for distortion and vivid imaginations. A positive emphasis on the enduring love of God, and the experience of love in the Christian community are an active assurance against crippling fear. This material expression of love in the Christian community will not perhaps have much impact if it is verbal.

The willingness of the members of such a community to take into its home destitute and deprived children, to help the old, the sick and the unhappy is what the child can see and understand. Equally he will learn the meaning of charity more clearly from taking part in such activities than from dropping pennies into boxes while told not to go near the poor because they are 'dirty'—always provided that he is not asked to see or do more than he can really cope with.

I have been speaking up to now of children whose powers of independent judgment are still weak, whose notion of justice is crude and whose ideas of causality are too limited for secondary causality to be at all clearly appreciated. They begin in the years before adolescence to move slowly away from this position but in all but the most intelligent children one gets very little truly abstract thinking before adolescence. Judgment in terms of abstract general principles is something which typically develops in the teens, and with the development of the capacity for more abstract logical thinking makes it possible for the child to examine the roots and validity of the principles he has been offered and the values of the world around him. Conversion and rebellion are both common phenomena in adolescence. He moves towards an age and a maturity in which he can choose the faith he has been given in baptism, or deny it. The child has obviously had abstract ideas for years (virtually since he could talk) but little ability to examine them critically, to move freely around them in a creative way. What we need to ensure is that as the child grows to this maturity he is being offered religious instruction which enables him to use this developing capacity freely and fruitfully in making the faith his own.

You know as well as I do that this is no easy task, it is a difficult and delicate business to get the balance which characterises mature Christianity—ultimately it is the individual who accomplishes this with Christ in the Church, but those about him in his early years and in early adulthood can make this very difficult or well-nigh impossible, just as they can in the right circumstances make this growth an adventure in Christian living.

To conclude, I want to go back again to the title theme and say something of the part played by fear of the Lord in the mature Christian. We need I think to see the early years as a progression towards this. I think that a look at the texts in which this phrase is used may help us somewhat in the task:

Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom and to depart from evil is understanding. (Job 28. 28).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who practise it. (Ps. 111. 10).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Pr. 1. 7).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and knowledge of the Holy One insight. (Pr. 9. 10).

and finally that particularly important passage in Isaiah:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,

The spirit of wisdom and understanding,

The spirit of counsel and might,

The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

and his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. (Is. 11. 1-3).

This is usually considered to be a messianic prophecy which speaks of Christ, which is why I suggested it was a key to our theme. I think it makes it finally clear that we are not dealing here with a fear of retribution based on guilt.

The knowledge and acknowledgement of the holiness of God, of his utter otherness, gives the Christian both a proper awe in the face of God and an insight into the measure of his redemption, which without this cannot I think be at all deeply realised. Christ in his dual nature was a man obedient to the Father—doing the will of his Father, the Holy God, he delighted in this free obedience because he had wisdom and understanding. It is the knowledge of the holiness of God which gives sin and evil its real horror since God is good, and that which is evil is alien from him and offensive to his holiness. The man who is deeply aware of the holiness of God departs from evil because of this. Even if we did not survive to reward or retribution in the hereafter, sin would still be a palpable evil to the man who appreciated this holiness. For the Christian an appreciation of evil in these terms is just as important even if his fear of the Lord may in Christ be a reverence and awe rather than an unreflecting terror. Equally the Christian lives in the knowledge that although Christ has in his death and resurrection conquered death and sin, this is not actually fully realised until the last days end and Christ comes in glory. The struggle is present and the Christian hates sin in others and in himself because it separates him from Christ and because evil is out of Christ. In a sense he looks forward to judgment as the time of clarification, he dreads to be found outside Christ, and a full apprehension of what it means to be outside Christ, cut off from him finally,

is in a sense a fearful knowledge. If he lacks a full understanding of what he may choose to do then he is essentially a foolish man. In this sense the fear of the Lord is understanding. We all acknowledge this daily in our prayer:

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Equally we pray for forgiveness for what we must all accept as our consent to the evil in the world through sin.

All of this is part of the background against which we must all, in love, and without fear, advance the kingdom of God, to make up, as is our privilege, the fullness of Christ. This demands responsibility and the development of our judgment, to know the good, to reject the evil, to interpret for ourselves the good news of the gospel in the world. A certain independence of judgment is demanded in this because an excessive dependence on the judgment of others is so often irresponsible, fearful and resentful. Since we do this in Christ and in the Church we enjoy a freedom to make our morality something more than a negative business of that which we have not done.

Perhaps the final fear from which Christianity releases us is the futility of suffering and the fear and pain which that can bring with it. The evil which we suffer can itself become positive in that we

. . . may share his sufferings and become like him in his death.

(Phil. 3. 10).

We need no longer fear to suffer alone, but that we may obtain resurrection and glory in Christ. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, but

we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. . . and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

(Rom. 5. 2, 5).