Introduction

I

He has been dead more than twelve years, and what he was and did and said may be not much more than a word to many who have grown up during that time. But he was an outstanding person, able, much loved, of unique achievements, the most "variously distinguished" of the Archbishops of Canterbury since Anselm. He had troops of friends (not mere acquaintances) of every nation and class and denomination. He spent himself for individuals, with a constant awareness of each person's difference, and many would have gladly given all that they had, their very lives, if they could do him service. Of his many and great achievements the central one, perhaps, was what journalists described in the words: "He put Christianity on the map"; or as Dr. Matthews has expressed it: "He spread a comprehension of the meaning of Christianity among persons who were bewildered by the conflicting voices of our time."

His own life and work were rooted in a profound sense of vocation. He wrote that God's will is not only the source of world order but also determines the special place within that order of every finite mind and its appropriate contribution to the life of the whole. It means, if I may put it in my own unsophisticated way, that I have a place in God's heart, and a place to occupy on God's throne (Rev. iii, 21) that no other can fill, and therefore a contribution that no one else can make to the working out of His purpose: it is part of what it means to call Him, "Father". Temple pointed out that vocation is, of its very nature, individual, so that to each individual his own vocation is peculiar. God's will or purpose, which determines my vocation, determines also the world order in which all events take place, so that it must be possible in principle for a man to discover his vocation by considering with sufficient thoroughness his own nature and circumstances.

Sometimes, however, he discovers the direction of his vocation by a conscious communion with God, by the guidance of an Inner Light, as it is experienced and seriously practised, for example, by Christians in the Society of Friends. But, characteristically, the Archbishop added that vocation "may also be found by the ordinary exercise of a mind which has in prayer committed itself to the divine

guidance." Such confident living after careful prayer was characteristic of Temple's life and a fundamental factor in his faith. He believed that when a decision had to be taken one should say one's prayers, putting before God all the aspects of the matter so far as one understood them, and then, with all the common sense and insight at one's command, one should make up one's mind and act on it; and never waste time afterwards in vain regrets, or wondering if one had really chosen the right course, or murmuring "If only . . ."

He said that God has no need that we should tell Him of our wants or desires. He knows what is good for us better than we do ourselves, and it is always His will to give it. We must not in prayer have any thought of suggesting to God what was already in His mind—still less of changing His mind or purpose. But because the worst of all diseases of the soul is detachment from God, the first requirement in prayer is that we trust Him for all blessing, and the next, because He wishes to detach our faith in Him from all trust in our own judgment, is that we should persevere in prayer in spite of disappointment; so that, as our wills become identified with the will of God, we are praying for what He desires to give and waits to give until we recognize Him as its source so that our reception of it will strengthen our faith and not encourage our neglect of Him. The essential act of prayer is not the bending of God's will to ours—of course not—but the bending of our will to His.

At various times and in different ways and connections, he was often saying that the great aim of all true religion is to transfer the centre of interest and concern from self to God. It is right to say that man's chief end is to glorify God and—as an incidental by-product of that—to enjoy Him for ever. It would be entirely wrong and irreligious to make a man's religion the centre of his concern: the enjoyment he gets from going to church (or even the spiritual profit) or singing hymns or listening to anthems or even from contemplating Christ's Passion or meditating before the Blessed Sacrament, while committing to the circumference of his attention that reasonable service which is the offering of himself and his life to the doing of God's will and the setting forward of His Kingdom. The Lord's dictum was that whoever wants to save his soul will lose it, but whoever is willing to lose his soul "*for My sake*" shall save it. Many of us, Catholics and Protestants alike, need this warning of Temple's: "It is the old paradox. You cannot have salvation so long as you want it. Only when God has so drawn you into the embrace of His love and into obedience to His will that in devotion to Him you cease to care about yourself, can your self be saved."

It has been said that Temple was by temperament conservative

and traditionalist, but I have found no reason to agree with that judgment except, perhaps, in his naïve acceptance of the view that the author of St. John's Gospel was an "eye-witness," and his identification of the words of the Johannine Christ with the actual teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Generally, there was in his thinking a notable balance between traditionalism and independence, the former stemming from his sensitive awareness of the value of fellowship, the latter expressing his profound conviction of Christ's careful respect for each individual soul and its value and freedom. Consider, first, what he believed about fellowship. Rightly or wrongly, perhaps with a certain use of rose-tinted spectacles, he saw in the Church of England a comprehensiveness (what her critics sometimes call compromise), and he valued it. He is, indeed, the outstanding illustration of what the Anglican temper and tradition produce when they are fully understood and trusted and practised. And he never fell into the besetting sin of the parson, which is dogmatism. And one fruit of all this was a profound belief in and an unfailing practice of toleration. He once wrote an Introduction to a pacifist pamphlet *because* the author had said that he disagreed with the Archbishop. And he began an official charge to the clergy and laity of the diocese of York by saying that some of them would disagree with what he was going to say—but what is the use of pooling our thoughts if we all agree to begin with? Not too many bishops begin their charges in that way.

This tolerant spirit appears in many and various relations. He had contacts with people of all sorts of Christian societies; he was grateful for his own heritage in Anglicanism, but he recognized also God's gifts to His people through other traditions. He encouraged the comparative study of religions, less because of the information it might bring than for the genuine respect it gives for the beliefs of other men. And he emphasized the value of the sort of education which makes men eager to think for themselves and to appreciate the truth in any opinion from which they dissent. Indeed, he once said that we should not feel independently and think in the mass, but think independently and feel in the mass. Toleration is, indeed, a difficult but quite basic Christian virtue. So far is it from implying —as Catholics and Communists believe—that we are indifferent to truth or error, that it means that we shall strive for the truth we have seen, but shall never suppose that there is no truth but what we have seen (this means that there are no infallibilities); we shall believe that fellowship and goodwill are worth more than any triumph of our own opinions, because only in such fellowship can be found the fuller truth than that which the various disputants

possess. It came partly from being a Hegelian and believing in that mysterious method, the Dialectic. He once wrote that he had learned from Edward Caird (the Hegelian Master of Balliol) his habitual tendency to believe that everybody is quite right. Part of his gift as a chairman—it amounted to genius—was that he could listen to two speakers propounding diametrically opposite views, and could make a statement which included what each of them meant. His unself-conscious tolerance was part of his being a Liberal. I use that word advisedly, not forgetting the great disservice that Newman did to the English language—and still more, perhaps, to Christian theology —when he poisoned that grand word for all whom he influenced, and remembering also that, partly as a result of what Newman wrote, in many circles today—theological, philosophical and even political—the word " liberal " is used merely as a term of abuse. But Temple was a Liberal all his life, from the days when Francis Paget, Bishop of Oxford, declined to ordain him because of his *undogmatic* statements on the Virgin Birth and the Empty Tomb, until the last period when, as Archbishop of Canterbury, he wrote of the neo-Scholastics (they were then the " young " neo-Scholastics) at Oxford and elsewhere that " in their eagerness to re-assert the truth and authority of the Bible [they] are ignoring the lesson of the nineteenth century and becoming involved in a position which is either obscurantist or humbug." It is, indeed, a sorry, topsy-turvy state of things when the older men are Liberal and the younger men are Conservative.[1]

It was once said of Temple that the philosophers thought he was a theologian but the theologians thought he was a philosopher. That may have been intended for smart japery, but it can well be accepted as a considered estimate of his approach and method and attitude to the major problems of life and religion. Although few people could have any right to pass judgment on the extent and thoroughness of his scholarship, he was always more a thinker than a scholar; although he had the sort of memory that becomes a legend, he knew that the heart of a man's faith must be his own value-judgments,[2] rather than any traditional definitions—insight rather than memory. From the first of his books to the last he was careful to base his

[1] Plato, at the opening of the tenth book of the Laws, takes for granted the opposite condition.

[2] " He (Christ) asserts the whole principle that religious ordinances are to be used according to the benefit to be derived from them, according to the movement of the free spirit, and not according to the rigid enforcement of regulations." Temple, *The Kingdom of God*. " Let us suppose that we have accepted the Christian view of life on the ground that it commends itself to our hearts and minds and consciences, or, if not to all of these, then to one of them sufficiently for us to take it as the guide and basis of life." (Ibid., p. 6.)

presentation of the Christian case not on the presuppositions of conventional orthodoxy (although he was never one of those who use the word "orthodox" as a term of abuse) but, after the example of Socrates's questions and Plato's dialectic, he used to assume what the non-Christian will accept and then help him to recognize that this involves what Jesus manifests of God. His theology grows in a philosophical soil, although the germ of it is a religious experience which most men have, although many do not recognize that name for it.[3]

William Temple, then, was a Liberal Christian; he inherited his lifelong Liberalism from his great father, for whose intellectual and spiritual achievement and integrity he had a reverence which only stopped short this side of idolatry. Frederick Temple was one of the writers in that notorious composite book, *Essays and Reviews*, which had appeared in the year after *The Origin of Species*. The authors, concerned at "the great amount of reticence in every class of society in regard to religious views," put the Liberal, critical position in a way which outraged many, although most of it seems pretty harmless now. But although no departure from the most scrupulous orthodoxy could ever be proved against Frederick Temple, to the end he was pursued with a McCarthy-like fury by the forces of reaction. Nine years later, when he was nominated Bishop of Exeter, an unholy alliance of angry Catholics and complacent Evangelicals, under the leadership of Dr. Pusey and Lord Shaftesbury (bigotry makes strange bedfellows), used every device, indecent as well as decent, to prevent his consecration. He was charged with being disloyal to Christ; he was invited to try to allay the misgivings of the cowardly and the thoughtless by making statements over and above those which the Law requires. In the interests of *toleration*—and he insisted that toleration must be active as well as passive—he declined to do anything of the sort. The Church of England, Frederick Temple declared, has a more Catholic character than any other body of Christians possesses, just because it allows liberty to its members and officers. But the opposition was not to be put off. Temple's elder sister had to appear in Bow Church, when his election was confirmed, to prove that he had been born in wedlock. The *Odium Theologicum* is "a horrid thing, a very horrid thing."

[3] "There are many men who pay little attention to their religious experience, and in whom (often for that reason) it is rudimentary. . . . But it is doubtful if any man can go through life without ever feeling reverence for something which is morally so high above him as to be out of his reach, or awe before the great Reality on which he is utterly dependent. And it may safely be said that no one escapes, although he may to his own satisfaction explain away, the sense of absolute obligation. All of these are in their true nature religious experiences—the recognition of the Absolute." (*Christus Veritas*, p. 39.)