The Immortality of Man

By Jacques Maritain

I

LET us think of the human being, not in an abstract and general way, but in the most concrete possible, the most *personal* fashion. Let us think of this certain old man we have known for years in the country, —this old farmer with his wrinkled face, his keen eyes which have beheld so many harvests and so many earthly horizons, his long habits of patience and suffering, courage, poverty and noble labor, a man perhaps like those parents of a great living American statesman whose photographs appeared some months ago in a particularly moving copy of a weekly magazine. Or let us think of this certain boy or this girl who are our relatives or our friends, whose everyday life we well know, and whose loved appearance, whose soft or husky voice is enough to rejoice our hearts. Let us remember—remember in our heart—a single gesture of the hand, or the smile in the eyes of one we love. What treasures on earth, what masterpieces of art or of science, could pay for the treasures of life, feeling, freedom and memory, of which this gesture, this smile is the fugitive expression? We perceive intuitively, in an indescribable not inescapable flash, that nothing in the world is more precious than one single human being. I am well aware how many difficult questions come to mind at the same time and I shall come back to these difficulties, but for the present I wish only to keep in mind this simple and decisive intuition, by means of which the incomparable value of the human person is revealed to us. Moreover, St. Thomas Aquinas warns us that the Person is what is noblest and most perfect in the whole of nature.

Nothing, however, nothing in the world is more squandered, more wasted than a human being. Nothing is spent with so prodigally, so heedlessly, as though a man were a bit of small change in the hand of careless Nature. Surely it is a crime to throw away human lives more

cruelly and contemptuously than the lives of cattle, to submit them to the merciless will-to-power of totalitarian states or of insatiate conquerors. The present-day transportations of populations, concentration camps, wars of enslavement, are signs of a criminal contempt for mankind unheard of until now. Surely it is shameful as well to contemplate throughout the world the debasing standards of life imposed on so many human beings in their slums of distress and starvation. As Burke wrote a century and a half ago, "the blood of man should never be shed but to redeem the blood of man. It is well shed for our family, for our friends, for our God, for our country, for our kind. The rest is vanity; the rest is crime." Yet since the blood of man is well shed for our family, for our friends, for our country, for our kind, for our God, this very fact shows that many things are indeed worth a man's sacrifice of his earthly life. What things? Things of a truly human and divine value, things that involve and preserve that justice, that freedom, that sacred respect for truth and for the dignity of the spirit without which human existence becomes unlivable; things that a man may and should love more than his own flesh and blood, just because they pertain to the great task of redeeming the blood of man.

But what I should like to emphasize is the fact that in the obscure workings of the human species, in that immense net-work of solidarity each mesh of which is made of human effort and human risk, and advances in its small way the progression of the whole, there is an infinity of things, often of little things, for which men expose themselves to danger and self-sacrifice. Often the reasons for such lavish courage are not love or pure generosity, but only natural energy, or temerity, or longing for glory, or pleasure in confronting new difficulties, or desire for risk and adventure. All these, however, are carried away in that flood of superabundance and self-giving which springs from the sources of being, and which brings mankind towards its fulfillment. A scientist risks his life for a new discovery in the realm of matter, a pioneer to establish a new settlement, an aviator to improve our means of communication, a miner to extract coal from the earth, a pearl-fisher to filch from the ocean an ornament for the beauty of some unknown woman, a traveler to contemplate new landscapes, a mountain climber to conquer a bit of earth. What comparison is there between the result to be obtained, be it mo-

mentous or slight, and the price of human life which is thus wagered, the value of that being, full of promise, endowed with so many gifts and whom many hearts may love? Well, at each corner of human activity death lies in ambush. Every day we trust our life and the lives of our beloved to the unknown driver of a subway-train, of a plane, of a bus, or a taxi. Where there is no risk, there is no life. A wisdom or a civilization based on the avoidance of risk, by virtue of a misinterpretation of the value of the human being, would run the greatest of all risks, that of cowardice and of deadly stupidity. That perpetual risk which man takes is the very condition of his life. That squandering of the human being is a law of nature; it is also the proof of the confidence, the trust, and the elementary love we everyday give to the divine principle from which we proceed, and the very law of which is superabundance and generosity.

Now we face a paradox. On the one hand nothing in the world is more precious than one single human person. On the other hand nothing in the world is more squandered, more exposed to all kinds of dangers than the human being,—and this condition must be. What is the meaning of this paradox? It is perfectly clear. We have here a sign that man knows very well that death is not an end, but a beginning. He knows very well, in the secret depths of his own being, that he can run all risks, spend his life, and scatter his possessions here below, because he is immortal. The chant of the Christian liturgy before the body of the deceased is significant: Life is changed, life is not taken away.

II

As I have just noted, there is in men a natural, an instinctive knowledge of his immortality. This knowledge is not inscribed in man's intelligence, rather it is inscribed in his ontological structure; it is not rooted in the principles of reasoning, but in our very substance. The intelligence may become aware of this knowledge in an indirect way, and through some reflection, some turning back of thought upon the recesses of human subjectivity. The intelligence may also ignore this instinctive knowledge, and remain unaware of it, for our intelligence is naturally turned or diverted towards the being of external things. It

may even deny the soul and immortality, by virtue of any set whatsoever of ideas and reasonings; yet, when the intellect of a man denies immortality, this man continues living, despite his rational convictions, on the basis of an unconscious and, so to speak, biological assumption of this very immortality, though rationally denied. Although such discrepancies are not infrequent among us, introducing many troubles, deviations or weaknesses into our behavior, they cannot disturb or annihilate the basic prerequisites of that behavior.

The instinctive knowledge of which I speak is a common and obscure knowledge. When a man is not an "intellectual" man, that is to say, when his intelligence, rarely busy with ideas, science and philosophy, follows for guidance only the natural tendencies of our species, this instinctive knowledge naturally reverberates in his mind. He does not doubt that another life will come after the present one. The possibility of doubt and error about what is most natural in the basic strata of human existence is the price paid for the progress of our species toward its rational fulfillment. Sometimes it is a very high price! The only solution, however, is not to try some sort of return to purely instinctive life, as D. H. Lawrence and many others have dreamed it. This regression, moreover, is quite impossible, and could only lead, not to nature, but to a perversion of civilized life. The only solution worthy of man is not a backward flight towards instinct, but a flight ahead towards reason, towards a reason which at last is well-equipped and knows the truth.

Of man's instinctive belief in his immortality, which is not a conceptual or philosophical knowledge, but a lived and practiced one, we have a striking sign in the behavior of primitive men. No matter how far back we look into the past, we always find the trace of funeral rites, of an extraordinary care about the dead and their life beyond the grave. What we know concerning the beliefs of primitive men shows us that their belief in immortality might assume the strangest and most aberrant forms. Sometimes, as in the old Chinese superstitions, the dead were terribly feared, and the living man was to take every precaution against their mischievousness. In any case, the ideas, the reasons and explanations by means of which primitive men sought to justify their belief and

to imagine the survival of the dead seem to us very queer, often absurd. This oddness and absurdity of primitive mythologies, which Frazer emphasized with the naiveté of the civilized man—are easily explainable. On the one hand the mental climate of the primitive man is not the climate of reason, but that of imagination; the intelligence of primitive men,—a very acute and awakened one, vitally immersed in nature,—functions in a kind of dusk where the imagination rules. Their conceptions are regulated by the law of images. When this point is well understood, the myths of primitive men appear less absurd, much wiser even than some anthropologists believe. On the other hand, as regards belief in immortality, the conceptions of primitive man are not the result of any rational inquiry. On the contrary they only translate, according to the ebb and flow of the imaginative thought, a substantial—not intellectual—persuasion given him by nature. The more irrational and queer his myths of the soul and its survival appear, the more strikingly they give testimony to the fact that his certitude of survival is rooted in underground strata more profound and immovable, though less perfect and fertile, than the arable soil of reason.

How then can we explain the origin of the natural and instinctive knowledge of immortality? Here we must consider that the highest functions of the human mind, particularly the functions of judgment, are performed in the midst of a kind of consciousness which is vital and spontaneous and accompanies every achieved or perfected act of thought. This spontaneous or *concomitant* consciousness is to be carefully distinguished from the consecutive or *explicit* consciousness. The second one presupposes a special reflexive act, by means of which the mind comes back upon itself and produces special reflexive concepts, special reflexive judgments concerning what lies within itself. The concomitant consciousness does not do so. It only expresses the self-interiority, the self-involvement proper to the human mind; it is only the diffuse light of reflexivity—lived and practised, not conceptualized reflexivity—within which every spiritual achievement is accomplished in the human soul. But such a spontaneous consciousness slips back to the very root and principle of our mental operations, attains this root as something unknown in itself, known only—and that is enough, moreover—as transcending all operations and psychic phenomena which pro-

ceed from it. The Self, the supraphenomenal Self, is thus obscurely but certainly attained by the spontaneous consciousness,—in the night as regards every notion and conceptualization, with certainty as regards vital experience. This experience—not conceptually formulated, but practically lived by the intellect—of a supraphenomenal Self is the basic datum, the rock of spontaneous consciousness. Our intelligence knows that before thinking of that, this obscure knowledge is involved in every achieved act of thought, dealing with any matter whatsoever. When philosophical reflection forms and elaborates the idea of the Self, it attains thereby an object which human intelligence already knew — in a merely lived and unexpressed fashion — and now recognizes.

Human intelligence also knows — in the same obscure fashion — that this supra-phenomenal Self, vitally grasped by spontaneous consciousness cannot disappear — precisely because it is grasped as a center which dominates all passing phenomena, the whole succession of temporal images. That is to say, the Self, the knower able to know its own existence, is superior to time. All perceptions and images which succeed one another, composing the fluent show of this world, may vanish, as happens when a man sleeps without dreaming. The Self cannot vanish, because death, as well as sleep, is an event in time, and the Self is above time. This vivid perception, — even if it remains unformulated, in the state of some intellectual feeling rather than of any conceptualized statement, — is, I believe, the very origin of that instinctive knowledge of man's immortality which we are now considering.

Another point must be added, concerning the aspirations proper to the Self rather than the spontaneous consciousness of it. When philosophers look upon this metaphysical reality which is called Personality, they establish that a Person is essentially a spiritual totality, characterized by independence. A Person is a universe to itself, a universe of knowledge, love and freedom, a whole which cannot be subordinated as a part, except with regard to such wholes to which it can be related through the instrumentality of knowledge and of love. Personality is an analogical and transcendental perfection, which is fully realized only in God, the Pure Act. Then philosophers are led to distinguish in the human Person two different types of aspirations. Certain aspirations of the Person are connatural to man. These concern the human Person insofar

as it possesses a determinate specific nature. Other aspirations may be called trans-natural. And these concern the human Person precisely insofar as it is a person and participates in the transcendental perfection of personality. Now, among the aspirations of the Person, the most obvious one is the aspiration towards not-dying. Death, the destruction of Self, is for the human Self not so much a thing to be feared as it is first of all a thing incomprehensible, impossible, an offence, a scandal. Not to be is nonsense for the person. This is so true that although we meet death at every step, although we see our relatives, our friends die, although we attend their burial, still the most difficult thing for us, is to believe in the reality of death. Man sees death; he does not believe in it. Yet the human Person does not escape dying, so it may seem that his aspiration toward immortality is thus deceived. How is this possible? We know very well that an aspiration which expresses only the very structure of a being cannot be deceived. The only way is to distinguish, according to the distinction I indicated a moment ago, what is *connatural* and what is *transnatural* in the aspiration we are dealing with.

To the extent that it relates to the spiritual part of the human whole, to the soul, the aspiration toward not-dying is connatural to man, and cannot be deceived. To the extent that it relates to the whole itself, to the human Person made up of soul and body, this aspiration is a transnatural aspiration. It can be deceived. Yet, even when deceived, it remains within us, appealing to we know not what power, appealing to the very principle of being for we know not what kind of realization beyond death, — beyond the corruption of that body which is an essential part of the human whole and without which the individual soul is not, truly speaking, a Person, — beyond every evidence of the disappearance of the Person scattered amidst the glamourous appearances of Nature and the seasons, — beyond this very world the existence and duration of which is linked with the generation and corruption of material substances and is therefore a denial of the human Person's very claim to immortality.

III

I have spoken of the instinctive and natural, lived and practiced belief in man's immortality. Now I should like to pass to philosophical

knowledge, to that kind of knowledge, no longer instinctive and natural, but rational and elaborated, by means of which the human mind can achieve perfectly tested or demonstrated certitudes.

The philosophical knowledge of which I speak is not positivism, because positivism seems to be a despair of philosophy rather than a philosophy; however, the father of all modern positivists, August Comte, felt so strongly the inescapability of the problem of immortality that he tried to answer it according to his possibilities, and granted a maior part, in his positivist religion of Humanity, to what he called the *subjective* immortality, the immortality of everyone, in the memory, thought and love of those who knew him and appreciated him. Naturally, as regards Auguste Comte himself, the immortality he would thus enjoy was to be the eternal gratitude of all mankind. I am very far from despising this subjective immortality. To be preserved within a mind, to endure in minds as something known and told in song and story is an enviable condition for material things, and precisely the kind of immortality they will enjoy. Events in human history groan after their epic and wait for their poet; this world will be immortal in the memories of immortal spirits, and in the stories they will tell one another about it. But if subjective immortality is something, it is precisely because there are immaterial minds which may receive in themselves the images of what is perishable. Subjective immortality would be nothing — or a derision — if objective immortality, genuine immortality did not exist.

The philosophical reasons which testify to immortality may be expounded in the following way. First, human intelligence is able to know whatever participates in being and truth; the whole universe can be inscribed in it; that is to say, the object it knows has been previously deprived, in order to be known, of any conditions of materiality: what is the weight and volume of my idea of man? Does man possess any dimension or perform any transmutation of energy within my mind? Does the sun exert any heating action within my intellect? The objects known by human intelligence, taken not as things existing in themselves, but precisely as objects determining intelligence and united with it, are immaterial.

The second point: just as is the condition of the object, so is the condition of the act which bears on it and is determined or specified by it. The object of human intelligence is as such immaterial; the act of the human intelligence is also immaterial.

The third point: since the act of the intellectual power is immaterial, this power itself is also immaterial. Intelligence is in man an immaterial power. Doubtless it depends on the body, on the conditions of the brain. Its activity can be disturbed or hindered by physical trouble, by an outburst of anger, by a drink, a narcotic. But this dependence is an *extrinsic* one. It exists because our intelligence cannot act without the joint activity of memory and imagination, of internal senses and external senses, all of which are organic powers, residing in some material organ, in some special part of the body. As to intelligence itself, it is not *intrinsically* dependent on the body, since its activity is immaterial; human intelligence does not reside in any special part of the body. It uses the brain, since the organs of the internal senses are in the brain; yet the brain is not the organ of the intelligence, there is no part of the organism whose act is intellectual operation. The intelligence has no organ.

And the final point: since intellectual power is immaterial, its first substantial root, the very substance from which it emanates and which acts through its instrumentality is also immaterial. An immaterial soul must be the first substantial root of an immaterial psychic soul-power. It is conceivable that such an immaterial soul have, besides immaterial faculties, other powers and activities which are organic and material. For this immaterial soul is not only a spirit, but also a spirit made for animating a body, in Aristotelian terms a "substantial form," an *entelechy* which by its union with matter constitutes a particular corporeal substance, the human being. But it would be perfectly inconceivable that a material soul, a soul which informs a body, — as the souls of animals and plants do, according to the biological philosophy of Aristotle, — but which is not a spirit and cannot exist without informing matter, should possess a power or faculty, that is, should act through an instrumentality, which is immaterial, intrinsically independent of any corporeal organ and physical structure.

Thus the human soul is both a soul — that is the first principle of life in a living body — and a spirit, able to exist and to live apart from matter. The human soul has its own immaterial existence and its own immaterial subsistence: and it is by virtue of this immaterial existence and subsistence of the human soul that each element of the human body is human and exists as such. The radical immateriality of the highest operations of the human soul, of intellectual knowledge, of contemplation, of supra-sensuous love and desire and joy, of free will, is an evidence that this soul is spiritual in itself, and cannot cease existing and living. It cannot be corrupted, since it has no matter, it cannot be disintegrated, since it has no substantial parts, it cannot lose its individual unity, since it is self-subsisting, nor its internal energy, since it contains within itself all the sources of its energies. The human soul cannot die. Once existing, it cannot disappear, it will necessarily exist always, endure without end.

Each one of us is inhabited. With what wonderful respect we would look upon every human being, if we thought of that invisible Psyche who dwells within him and who causes him to be what he is, and who will endure longer than the world, endure always, after these poor bones are reduced to dust! How can our eyes contemplate any human person without seeking anxiously after the eternal mystery which is living in him? The first Christians kissed the breasts of their children with awe and veneration, thinking of that eternal presence within them. They had some idea, some awareness, less fickle than ours, of the immortality of the human soul.

I have just considered the immortality of the human soul. All the certitudes which the wisdom of philosophers brings forth concerning immortality deal with the immortality of the human *soul*. Because noncessation of being is the natural property of what is spiritual in us. But what of those aspirations of the human Person toward immortality that I emphasized a moment ago? These aspirations concern the very Person, Man himself, the natural whole made of flesh and spirit, — not the human soul alone. About the aspiration of man to the immortality of *man*, not merely of the *human soul,* the philosophical reason has very little to say.

On the one hand, philosophical reason perceives that a separate soul is not a person, although it subsists in itself. It is not a person, because the notion of Person is essentially the notion of a complete and perfect whole. The body integrates the natural human totality, and the soul is only a part. What would be the life of separated souls, if they had to lead a merely natural life? They would live a truly pale life in a pallid paradise, like the Elysian fields of the Ancients, with their pallid asphodels. Separated souls in a merely natural condition would not see God face to face, — which is a supernatural privilege; they would know God through that image of God which is themselves, and they would know themselves in an intuitive manner. They would be dazzled by their own beauty, the beauty of a spiritual substance, and they would know other things in a confused and imperfect way, through the instrumentality of their substance, in the measure in which the other things resemble them. But all this knowledge would remain in a kind of dusk, because of the natural weakness of human intellect. Moreover all the sensible powers of the human soul, sensible memory, imagination, instinct and passion, as well as external senses, remain asleep in a separated soul. In such a way that if there were not a supernatural compensation and supercompensation for such a soul, the happy life it would live, according to its natural condition, would be a half life in happiness.

On the other hand, philosophical reason understands that since the human soul is naturally made to animate a body, a kind of unfulfillment, incompleteness and substantial dissatisfaction must remain in the separated soul, as regards that other half of the human being which the soul, by virtue of its very being, tends to use for its own purpose and operations, while giving it ontological consistence and activity. And in this way philosophical reason wonders whether such a desire for reunion with the body could not some day be fulfilled in the immortal soul? Yes, as regards God's omnipotence, there is no impossibility of some reembodiment of the soul into its flesh and bones, and some restoration of the human integrity. But human reason can only conceive this possibility; it cannot go farther, and therefore, as concerns the supreme aspiration of the human Person toward immortality, toward the immortality of Man, human reason stops, remains silent, and dreams.

IV

This question, however, must be asked: In point of fact, will this aspiration toward the immortality of the human Person remain forever unsatisfied? Such a question transcends the philosophical domain, the domain of human reason. The problem is a religious one, it engages and puts into play the deepest, the most crucial religious conceptions of mankind.

Two great conceptions here confront one another. They represent the two types of religious interpretation of human life which are alone possible. One conception is the Indian conception, the other is the Judeo-Christian one.

The Indian conception surrenders the immortality of the person, and teaches metempsychosis or transmigration. The soul is immortal, but the soul transmigrates. At the death of the body, the soul passes to another body, like a bird to a new cage, a more or less noble, more or less painful new cage, according to the merits or demerits gathered by the soul during its previous life. Thus there is for the same soul a succession of personalities as well as a succession of lives; each of these personalities slips away forever, will never appear again, like outworn coats that a man throws away from season to season. The unlimited flux, the irremediable disappearance of the successive personalities, is the ransom for the immortality of the soul.

There are very impressive and definite philosophical arguments against the idea of transmigration. The essential argument is the following: transmigration implies that each soul preserves its own individuality and yet passes from one body to another. But that is possible only if the soul is not substantially one with the body. The negation of the substantial unity of man, and the negation of the fact that soul and personality are inseparably joined — such a soul, such a personality; such a personality, such a soul — these two negations are inevitably involved in the doctrine of transmigration. That is to say, there is transmigration if man is not man; or, as Aristotle said, if the art of the flute-player can descend into the harp and cause the harp to produce the sound of the flute. The basic truth concerning the human being, the substantial unity of man, is incompatible with the idea of transmigration.

But despite the strength of this philosophical evidence, the idea of transmigration remains a temptation for the religious consciousness of mankind. Why this temptation toward metempsychosis? In my opinion this temptation results from the conflict between the idea of the retribution for human acts and the idea of the brevity, distress and foolishness of human life. How is it possible that a man's unhappy life, with all its insignificance, its blundering, and its wretchedness should open suddenly out upon Eternity? How is it possible that an eternal retribution, an eternal and immutable end, may be fixed for us in virtue of some good or bad movements of so weak and queer, so dormant a free will as ours? The disproportion is too great between the End and the Means. I imagine that the mind of India was discouraged and frightened by such an idea, and therefore fell back, so to speak, into the infinity of time, as if a series of new lives offered to the same soul would somehow avail to attenuate the disproportion I just emphasized between the precariousness of the journey and the importance of its end.

Yes, but then there is no longer an end. Time continues always to be Time. The mind finds itself confronted with the horror of an endless series of reincarnations. The very law of transmigration becomes a terrible and intolerable law, of new suffering ceaselessly assumed, new trials, new pain amidst new vanishing and torturing appearances. The idea of Nirvana will then occur as a way of escape. But Nirvana is only a deliverance from Time. As it is conceived by Indian metaphysics (I do not say as it is lived in fact by such or such contemplative soul) Nirvana is only an escape, the self-annihilation of that very transmigration which was to bring about the immortality of the soul, and which now abolishes itself, and along with itself immortality. Transmigration was not a solution, it was an escape, a flight, and from which in turn escape must be sought.

The Judeo-Christian conception is a philosophy of the final end, and the philosophy of the final end is the exact contrary of the philosophy of transmigration. The pursuit of immortality through a horizontal movement all along a time without end, is quite different from, it is the exact opposite of, the vertical fulfillment of immortality by the attainment of an End which is eternal and infinite, just as Nirvana is quite different from, and in a sense is the exact opposite of, the passage

to eternity and the possession of everlasting life. And what makes the Judeo-Christian solution possible is not only a true appreciation of the relationship between time and eternity: Lengthen time as much as you will, add years to years, hoard up lives upon lives, time will ever remain having no common measure with eternity; a thousand transmigrations are as little before eternity as is the short life of this particular poor little child; this short human life is as much before eternity as a thousand transmigrations. But what makes the Judeo-Christian solution possible is also and above all the fact that in it the philosophy of the last End is involved in the whole of the truths and mysteries of divine revelation. Let us understand that God is personal, Life and Truth and Love in Person; let us understand that there is a supernatural order, and that the least degree of grace, that is of participation in the inner life of God himself, is more valuable than all the splendor of this star-strewn universe; let us understand that God has taken flesh in the womb of a virgin of Israel in order to die for mankind and to infuse in us the life of His own blood; let us understand that the free initiatives and resources, the patience and the ingenuity of the mercy of God are exceedingly greater than the weakness or the wickedness of our human free will. Then we understand that that disproportion between the precariousness of the journey and the importance of the end, which I emphasized a moment ago, is in reality counter-balanced, and even exceedingly compensated for, by the generosity and the *humanity,* as St. Paul put it, of our Savior God. Because man does not save himself through his own power. It is God and Christ who save man through the power of the Cross and of divine grace, by the instrumentality of Faith and Charity fructifying in good works.

But the Judeo-Christian conception is not only a philosophy of the last End; it is also, and by the same stroke, a philosophy of the immortality of Men. It asserts not only the immortality of the Soul, but also the immortality of the human Person, of the whole human subject: because grace perfects Nature and fulfills supereminently the aspirations of Nature, those aspirations of the human person which I have already called *transnatural.* What the sacred writings of the Jews constantly emphasized, what mattered most to them, was not so much the immortality of the soul as the resurrection of the body. It is the resurrection

of the body that St. Paul preached in Athens, to the astonishment of the philosophers. It is the resurrection of the body that we Christians hope for. A resurrection which transcends all the powers of nature, and which is to be accomplished for the elect by virtue of the blood and resurrection of Christ, and by a miracle of justice for those who will have refused up to the end grace and redeeming life.

Such is the answer given not by philosophy alone, but by Faith and Revelation, to the question which we were led to ask a moment ago: in point of fact, will the aspiration of the human Person, of the entire man toward immortality remain forever unsatisfied? — No, this aspiration will not remain unsatisfied, the soul and body will be reunited, this same Person, this identical human Person whom we knew and loved during our evanescent days is actually immortal, this undivided human totality that we designate by a man's name will perish for a while, yes, and will know putrefaction, yet in reality and when all is said and done he will truimph over death and endure without end. And this immortality of Man is inextricably engaged and involved in the drama of the Salvation and Redemption.

V

I have a few words to add in conclusion. I should like to come back to some considerations which I touched on at the beginning of this essay, concerning the value of human life, that value which is greater than anything in the world, except things which are divine or concern what is divine in man, and serve, as Burke said, to redeem the blood of man, — and such things, in truth, are not of the world, although they may be in the world.

Here we face a strange paradox, and that kind of assertion which may be, with the same words but according to diverse meanings, at the same time perfectly true and absolutely false. *Nothing in the world is more precious than human life:* if I think of the perishable life of man, this assertion is absolutely false. A single word is more precious than human life if in uttering this word a man braves a tyrant for the sake of truth or of liberty. *Nothing in the world is more precious than human*

life: if I think of the imperishable life of man, of that life which will consist in seeing God face to face, this same assertion is perfectly true.

Human society can ask human persons to give and sacrifice their lives for it, as in the case of a just war. How is this possible? This is possible because the earthly common good of the earthly community is not a merely earthly good. Even this earthly common good involves supra-human values, for it relates indirectly to the last end of men, to the eternal destiny of the persons who compose society. Human society must tend toward its earthly common good, toward a good and happy common life, in such a way that the pursuit of eternal happiness, — which is more than happiness, for it is beatitude, and God himself, — may be opened and made feasible for each human person in the community. If the common good of human society was only and exclusively a set of temporal advantages or achievements, as the common good of a bee-hive or an ant-hill, surely it would be nonsense for the life of a human person to be sacrificed to it.

As regards human civilizations, or pseudo-civilizations, two mortal errors are to be pointed out in this connection.

A civilization which despises death because it despises the human person and ignores the value of human life, a civilization which squanders the courage of men and wastes their lives for business profits or for satiating covetousness or hate or for the frenzy of domination or for the pagan pride of the state, is not a civilization, but barbarism. Its heroism is heartless bestiality.

But on the other hand a civilization which knows the price of human life but which sets up as its main values the perishable life of man, pleasure, money, selfishness, the possession of acquired commodities, and which therefore fears death as the supreme evil and avoids any risk of self-sacrifice and trembles thinking of death, under the pretext of respecting human life, such a civilization is not a civilization, but degeneration. Its humanism is cowardly delicacy.

True civilization knows the price of human life but makes the imperishable life of man its transcendent supreme value. It does not fear death, it confronts death, it accepts risk, it requires self-sacrifice, but for aims which are worthy of human life, for justice, for truth, for

brotherly love. It does not despise human life and it does not brutally despise death, it welcomes death when death, as pioneers and free men see it, is the accomplishment of the dignity of the human person and a beginning of eternity. Let me recall in this connection the words of the late Greek statesman, Mr. Metaxas, spoken to an American war correspondent. "We Greeks," he said, "being Christians, know that after all death is only an episode." An episode on the road of the immortal life of man. Such is Christian civilization, true civilization. Its heroism is genuine heroism, a heroism integrally human, because divinely grounded in the immortality of man.