

CHAPTER THREE

Christianity

THE easiest way to effect a transition from Greek wisdom to Christian doctrine is to notice the essential affinities of Christianity with both the Platonic and the Aristotelian elements in Greek thought. We shall do this, of course, only on points relevant to the problem being considered. But, first, we must recognize alternative ways of viewing the transition itself. If we accept Christianity as a revealed religion, we must accept its teaching as divine wisdom which historically supervenes upon the unaided human wisdom of the Greeks. By divine wisdom here is meant, not God's infinite knowledge, but the wisdom which men are able to receive from God through the medium of sacred sources — knowledge of God and Providence unattainable by the activity of human powers. It is at once obvious that there can be no inconsistency or conflict between the wisdom of revealed truth and the knowledge which men possess as the result of their own efforts, since these efforts are conditioned by a nature which is itself of divine origin. In this acceptance of Christianity, it is both proper and necessary that Christian doctrine should assimilate whatever is true and sound in Greek thought [34]. Scripture, in other words, must be read and interpreted in the light of all human knowledge. If, on the other hand, we do not participate in this faith, Christianity must nevertheless be regarded as a body of teaching which has the unquestionable marks of great human wisdom. The tokens are so clear that there is no reason to be patient or

tolerant of those who, lacking faith, commit the brazen folly of dismissing Christianity as totally devoid of wisdom because, in the superiority of their unbelief, they presume to detect superstitions. In this second acceptation, Christian doctrine can be found incompatible with other human knowledge; it is like any other partisan in a dialectical opposition. To write a dialectical account of the Christian position with respect to poetry and politics, we are required, it may be thought, to view Christianity merely as one of many opponents joined in the issue. But this would be to ignore a higher principle of dialectic which demands that we regard Christianity precisely as it offers itself to us, namely, as a revealed religion. Otherwise dialectic is merely polemical and not a technique of understanding.

The affinity with Plato is closer. Platonic insights are nearer to the spirit of Christianity, its heart rather than its mind. From the outset Christian thought found Platonic language miraculously suited to its message. The miracle of this harmony is so astounding that the pagan philosopher becomes, at least prophetically, a Christian [34a]. Christian doctrine struggled long to assimilate Aristotle; perhaps the difficulty made the prize more valuable when it was achieved. At different periods in its long history, Christianity has been partial and emphatic in its devotion to Plato or to Aristotle, but it has seldom lost sight of their duality, and then not for long. Better than saying that Christianity struggled to assimilate Aristotle is to say that, in spirit Platonic, but on many intellectual points informed by Aristotle, Christianity strove to comprehend its own unity. To the extent that it succeeded, a higher point was reached in the dialectic between Plato and Aristotle than they themselves attained.

The affinity with Plato will be seen by those who find implicit in the New Testament that Christ banishes all but Himself as teacher in His Kingdom, as Plato banished all but himself, the philosopher king, from his Republic. As Plato sought to make all men philosophers and objected to the poets as rivals and as obstacles to his attempt — the poets dangerously seductive because they insinuated the spiritual and the rational for the immature, where the immature live, in the sensible world; so Christ lived to make men Christian by imitation of His way of life, itself a miraculous imitation, in this world, of Divinity.

The Church that is founded upon Christ must object to all other imitations, to all other spectacles. The poet is a rival of the priest in Christianity as he is a rival of the philosopher in the Republic [35].

There is also the asceticism which in varying degrees is to be found in Plato and in Christian teaching. The antagonism of the flesh and the spirit is no less in Plato than in St. Paul. As Plato finds no good in the emotions so long as they answer to the senses and motivate the body, and offers, since they exist and cannot be blindly denied, philosophy as the only right way of sublimating them; so St. Paul denounces the passions as bondage to the things of this world, and offers love through faith and hope in Christ as the only path to the Kingdom of God. In neither case are the passions as such denied; in both they must die to be replaced by a spiritual love. The opposition between the emotions and the reason gives way to the more profound opposition between two loves, two opposed directions which can be given all the passions, unified under the concept of desire: the love of this world and the love of God. The arts by their very nature would seem to arouse the emotions in the wrong direction, to foster love for the things of this world. It was inevitable that primitive Christianity should see the matter this way; to see it any other way is more difficult and requires a sophistication that is slowly won against the charge that the original position, in its clarity and simplicity, is avoided only by specious subtlety. Primitive Christianity did not compromise.

It may be objected that Christian asceticism in denouncing the flesh means sex, in considering the passions, stresses carnal concupiscence above all others; whereas, in contrast, the Greek discussion of these problems has no such bias, pity and fear being as frequently named as anger and love. While this is true for Aristotle, it is not so for Plato, and the *rapprochement* of Plato and Christianity is freshly confirmed. The *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* are valuable evidence on the point. It must not be thought, however, that Plato is exclusively concerned with sexual emotion in his attention to the passions; nor is Christianity, of course; carnal concupiscence is only one of the sins of intemperance. Nevertheless, it is historically true that with Christianity the depravity of sex becomes increasingly

the evil which is intended by attacks upon the arts, and particularly the theatre, as inducing moral laxity and corruption. This point must not be dismissed as one of the prejudices of Christianity. The centrality of love among the passions, its protean manifestation in all forms of desire and aversion, is a Christian insight that independently belongs to Plato and to Freud [36]. One is surprised, therefore, to find that Plato, in charging the dramatists with corrupting the youth, did not single out sexual depravity; on the contrary, he seems to be more concerned about fear and anger. One is not surprised, however, to find that in the later centuries of Christianity when the theatre primarily, but literature in other forms as well, was attacked, the charge that it was a cause of immorality and laxity in public manners usually, if not always, meant sexual immorality and laxity in the conventions of sexual behavior. The other major charges which are brought against the arts during the Christian era, blasphemy and sedition, Plato anticipated, the former quite explicitly, the latter by imputation. It is only recently that poetry, in the form of the dime novel and the motion picture, has been accused of causing crime; but this new complaint carries with it less moral indignation than the contemporary form of the traditional Christian attack which expresses itself in terms of decency.

The place at which Christianity diverges from Plato and approaches Aristotle in its basic insight is, curiously enough, in the doctrine of original sin. Plato, in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, certainly tends to ignore the imperfection and the weakness of men; he concedes that men are corruptible — otherwise poetry would be harmless — but he does not acknowledge that they are naturally corrupt [37]. Aristotle's conception of men as rational animals is equally insistent upon their animality and their rationality; he approaches moral and political problems in terms of the inescapable paradox of a being both rational and animal, and in whom the rationality is usually too weak and the animality too strong. It is this very insight, as we have seen, that leads him to take a different view of poetry, and to treat it as a paradoxical good, essentially relative to man's paradoxical and imperfect nature. The Christian doctrine of original sin asserts the same psychological truth, although its theological explanation was not known by Aristotle. To say that men are

born corrupt because in bondage to the passions, is to say that men are born with insufficient rational power, its insufficiency being measured by the force of the passions with which it must cope [38].

In this world few men are saints. The problem of the arts in a Christian commonwealth must be understood in the light of this fact. It is only the saint who is the perfect follower of Christ the teacher, as it is only the philosopher who could live in Plato's Republic. But just as Aristotle formulated the political problem in terms of men of different kinds, so Christianity must be concerned, not only with the saints, but with the lives of all. The arts have little value for the philosopher and the saint. They are untouched by the urgency of the needs which the arts fulfill. The question for Christianity, then, is whether the church can minister to the needs that arise from human corruption, whether the priest, unaided by the poet, can save men from themselves, if they are not saints. This opens into the broader problem of the relation between Church and State in making good men of the citizens of a Christian commonwealth: the role of law and secular expedients, including the arts and all other public diversions, on the one hand; the role of the sacraments, ritual, and all other religious observances, on the other. Even if the ideal discipline of the burden of concupiscence is that which *should* be achieved by the parent and the priest who, by the grace of God, makes a sensitive adaptation to the individual soul of the way of Christ, there remains the question: what *should* be the position of the state if, and to the extent that, the ideal fails to be realized?

Relative to our purposes, this must suffice as an introduction to the way in which Christianity alters the problem of poetry and politics [39]. The terms in which the dialectic of Plato and Aristotle will be restated are clear. But before we proceed to the historical account, there are two points in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine which must be noted. The first merely indicates one Christian ground for the rejection of the arts. He regrets the large part that literature played in his early education because, to use Virgil's *Aeneid* as an example, he spent his time weeping for Dido instead of for himself, who had not yet found the way to live.¹ Literature attached his emotions to the

¹ *Confessions*, I, 13.

wrong objects. The second point is profoundly Christian and, for those who will understand it, becomes a comment on the history of the Christian attack upon the arts which we are about to review. St. Augustine recalls that as a child he was frequently rebuked and punished for his devotion to play. 'He does not deny that excess of play or indulgence in amusements is wrong, but he adds: "Our sole delight was play; and for this we were punished by those who yet themselves were doing the like. But elder folks' idleness is called 'business'; that of boys, being really the same, is punished by these elders; and none commiserates either boys or men."² He who condemns play and amusement as wanton idleness should look first to his own occupation to see whether it is really any better than play or idleness, as judged by the highest standard of a Christian life, the standard of saintliness. The distance between saint and sinner is great. Forgetting this, it is easy to pluck the mote out of our neighbor's eye, easy to cast the first stone. Remembering it, we can better follow the changing historical expression of the Christian attitude toward amusements from the early Fathers to St. Thomas Aquinas, not chronologically, but in an order which completes the circle of analysis and finds the most philosophical Christianity no less Christian than its primitive beginning.

The Fathers of the early Church were opposed to the Roman comedies of their time and to the great public spectacles of the Empire, the gladiatorial games and the circuses. Holy Scripture is silent on the point, but as Bishop Bossuet later explained in answer to Father Caffaro, the absence of explicit condemnation of the stage, spectacles, and other public amusements must be understood in terms of their absence from the life of the times.³ Nevertheless, the passage in St. Matthew 12:36 in which Christ says "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment" is taken, not only by Bossuet, but by the early Fathers, as a generic condemnation for all idle diversions. It is the idleness of amusement which is essential to its sinfulness, although in addition it usually has many accidental features of grossness and vulgarity

² *Confessions*, I, 9.

³ *Maximes et Réflexions sur la Comédie*, Paris, 1694; edition by Eugene Belin, Paris, 1881.

which are disapproved. This point of idleness, which can be interpreted to mean total irrelevance to the duties and practices of a Christian life, is reminiscent of Plato's question about the utility of the poets in a well-ordered state. To the early Fathers, the play-house and the arena seemed entirely lacking in any positive benefits to man and were heavily seductive with the lure of this world, shamelessly obscene, dedicated to the passions, places of dionysiac frenzy rather than of Christian worship. The language of such writers as Tertullian, who devoted an entire treatise to the condemnation of spectacles, is clear and uncompromising, but it is the language of intemperate invective, rather than restrained analysis. I quote from these early writers merely to indicate the temper of Christianity in its formative period.

Thus Tertullian says to the heathens: "We keep off from your public shows because we can't understand the warrant of the original. There's superstition and idolatry in the case. And we dislike the entertainment because we dislike the reason of its institution; besides we have nothing to do with the frenzies of the race track, the lewdness of the play house, or the barbarities of the bear garden."⁴ It is no defense of these institutions to say that they give pleasure and delight. What greater pleasure can there be for a Christian, he asks, than to scorn being pleased? And if a Christian cannot wait for the delight that will properly be his, let him make war upon the pagan deities, "batter the principalities and powers, and force the devils to resign. These are the delights, these are the noble entertainments of Christians; and besides the advantage of the quality, they are always at hand and cost us nothing."⁵ Clement of Alexandria similarly answers those who hold that "these diversions are taken to unbend the mind and refresh nature a little" by saying that "the spaces between business should not be filled up with such rubbish."⁶ St. Cyprian, asking what business a Christian has at such places as these, answers in a more positive vein: "Would a Christian be agreeably refreshed? Let him read the Scriptures. Here the entertainment will suit his character, and be big enough for his quality." It is interesting to note the Platonic language of Lactantius: "A well-worked poem is a powerful piece of im-

⁴ *Apology*, XXXVIII, 4-5. ⁵ *Of Spectacles*, XXIX.

⁶ *The Paedagogue*, III, 11.

posture; it masters the fancy, and hurries it nobody knows whither";⁷ "our minds should be quiet and composed, and not overrun with amusements. Besides a habit of pleasure is an ensnaring circumstance. 'Tis apt to make us forget God and grow cool in the offices of virtue."⁸

In similar manner write St. Chrysostom, St. Jerome and St. Augustine. St. Chrysostom makes the point, which has echoed many times since, that it is no defense to say that there are many instances in which the play-house has done no harm. If the virtue of those who say this is impenetrable and out of reach, are all people thus fortified? To go to the theatre, even though you yourself are protected from its hurt, is to condone an institution that has done mischief to many. The weak have miscarried upon your precedent. And he concludes: "Virtuous as you are, I doubt not you would have been much better, had you kept away."⁹ There appears to be no ground to justify a Christian in seeking such diversions. As St. Jerome says: "Some are delighted with the satisfactions of this world, some with the circus, and some with the theatre. But the Psalmist commands every good man to delight himself in the Lord."¹⁰ We must, therefore, as Christians "decline the theatres and all other dangerous diversions which stain the innocence of the soul, and slip into the will through the senses."¹¹ To those who charged Christianity with attempting to deprive society of amusements, St. Augustine replied: "Their complaint as if the times were less happy since the appearance of Christianity is very unreasonable. Let them read their own philosophers: there they will find those very things censured which they now are so uneasy to part with. This remark must shut up their mouths and convince them of the excellency of our religion. For pray what satisfactions have they lost? None that I know of, excepting some licentious ones, which they abused to the dishonour of their Creator. But it may be the times are bad because the theatres are tumbling almost everywhere—the theatres, those cages of uncleanness, and public schools of debauchery"¹² [40]. Compared to these sentiments of early Christianity, Plato's exclusion of the dramatists was both polite and tentative.

⁷ *Divine Institutions*, VI, 21. ⁸ *Divine Institutions*, VI, 20.

⁹ *Homily to the People of Antioch*. ¹⁰ *On Psalms*, XXXII, 1.

¹¹ *Commentary on Ezekiel*, VI, 20. ¹² *The Harmony of the Gospels*, I, 33.

The problem of the arts in the life of man is for Christianity chiefly the problem of the theatre and similar places of public amusement, such as the circus and the arena. It must not be supposed that the Christian attack is limited to a period, such as that of the later Roman empire, when the art of the theatre was debased and the popular spectacles were scandalously vulgar and brutal; nor must it be supposed that the attack is to be explained away in terms of the excessive zeal of proselytizing Christianity in its early days. It occurs again and again, the more startling in its essential sameness against the background of political and social differences, changes in the institution of the church, changes in the character of the art that is condemned; thus, the attack upon the Elizabethan dramatists, the onslaught on the Restoration comedy in England and on the French theatre in the same period, the recent movement to reform the motion picture. In every instance, the popularity of the amusement, as well as the improprieties with which it is charged, is a condition of its being attacked. But in the later centuries, the practical objective is seldom the total destruction of the theatre as in early Christianity; usually the more moderate ends of reform are sought, whether these are to be achieved by a politically imposed censorship or by quickening the conscience of the people to a change of taste which will make the artists follow or lose their audiences. Because of the striking analogy they bear to the contemporary movement to reform the movies, in which the Christian churches are leaders, we shall find it instructive to review the attacks made by the English divine, Jeremy Collier,¹³ and the French bishop, Jacques-Benigne Bossuet, both in the 17th century.

The object of Collier's attack was the flourishing comedy of the Restoration period.¹⁴ The popular theme of comedy was *l'amour*; it made fun of the dullness and sobriety of matrimony by magnifying the sport and cleverness of the adulterer and the rake; in title, in language, in situation, it transgressed the common decencies, or rather the decencies of the common people

¹³ A member of the Church of England, not a Puritan.

¹⁴ For the immediate background of this episode I have depended largely on Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch's *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration*, New York, 1924; for the more remote background, upon J. E. Spingarn's *History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*, New York, 1899.

who, in large part Puritan, looked with horror upon the life of the Stuart court and the fashionable set [40a]. Although the Restoration comedy was in a sense popular, we must remember that the audience to which it appealed was highly selected: the gentry and the nobles, the court-followers who exaggerated the gaiety of the Restoration to efface the memory of the sober Puritan commonwealth. The comedy could hardly have been shocking to an audience thus composed; it could not have corrupted their morals if the corrupt morals of this social set were, as it is usually supposed, an importation which Charles brought back from his exile at the French court. The dramatists claimed, in defending themselves, that they had to cater to the taste of their audience; any play which failed to exhibit the *drôlerie* of the engaging but licentious fop failed to succeed in a theatre patronized predominantly by the upper classes, a society of fops and dandies. That the influence upon the theatre of the standards of its patrons, is great, may be seen in the shift which took place with the accession of William and Mary: the inoffensive sentimental comedy, dull in its purity, took the place of the brilliant but bawdy Restoration play, as the sober influence of the house of Orange altered the manners of society. The question of cause and effect must be phrased by the dilemma: does the drama cause the characteristics of the social life of the times, or does it merely reflect the manners, as well as the taste, of those whose attendance and applause support it? Collier's attack upon the stage was, however, not checked by doubts or difficulties concerning the causal nexus. It was an attack upon corruption, in society and in the play-house. It sought to reform both society and the theatre. It did not stop to ask about cause and effect; it was fanatical rather than analytical or inquiring; and since it was easier and less dangerous to attack the stage than the court, the playwrights rather than their patrons, Collier wrote his *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*.¹⁵ This diatribe is more famous than is warranted by its effectiveness in bringing about reform; but as the repository of a typical modern discussion of poetry and politics, its fame is justified. It leans upon classical arguments and breathes Christian sentiments, but it has neither the clarity of the one nor the force of the other. We shall find it a source-

¹⁵ London, 1688.

book for many of the misleading points and ill-founded contentions that are current today.

Jeremy Collier was not original, even so far as the tradition of English criticism goes. He accepted its prevailing canons. Much of what he said had been anticipated in the discussion of Elizabethan literature and its theatre. Although Elizabeth held a traditional attitude toward the stage, that plays in themselves are not evil, but, on the contrary, entirely justifiable "for honest recreation's sake," Prynne and Gosson, among many others, attacked the play-house and reinforced the efforts of the city council to keep this institution out of the city of London.¹⁶ These pamphleteers established a precedent for Collier, but it is not from them that he acquired the critical dogmas upon which he rested his case. It is rather in Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, which attempted to answer Gosson and the others who had heaped abuse upon literature and the stage, that we find the sources from which Collier borrowed. Sir Philip's contemporary, Sir Roger Ascham, tutor to the Queen, had denounced the popular romances and tales as immoral, particularly the *Morte d'Arthur* of Mallory, "the whole pleasure of which book standeth in two special points, in open manslaughter and bold baudry."¹⁷ Sidney insisted that it is the business of poetry to teach morals, and that its opponents failed to distinguish between the proper nature of poetry and the abuses of it "which naughty play-makers and stage-keepers have justly made odious." The primary function of imaginative literature is not to amuse but to form the moral character and to guide men to right action, and this is better done by poetry than by philosophy or history. Poetry is better than any other expression of practical wisdom because, arousing the emotions in connection with good ends, it moves men to action; the philosophers, since they scorn delight, must be content to be ineffectual, but poetry, employing delight, "doth draw the mind more effectually than any other art doth." Plato, says Sidney, like St. Paul, did not condemn poetry but the abuse of it. Sidney is the first of a long line of apologists for Plato, including Jowett in our day, who would rather construe Plato's doctrine as not seriously intending

¹⁶ Vd. V. C. Gildersleeve, *Government Regulation of the Elizabethan Drama*, New York, 1908. Also Spingarn, *op. cit.*, Part III, Ch. 2.

¹⁷ *The Scholemaster*, written between 1563 and 1568.

to "expel poetry from human life" than to resist it as such [41]. Sidney holds, as Jowett later said, that Plato is only protesting against the degeneracy of the poets in his own day "as we might protest against the want of serious purpose in modern poetry, against the unseemliness and extravagance of some of our novelists." But shall the abuse of a thing make the right thing odious? Quite the contrary; by arguing against the abuse, poetry is the more commended for its proper values. Sidney thus set the style of defending literature from the attack of moralists by surrendering literature to them as an instrument of moral teaching. Thus, Ben Jonson, in his dedication of *Volpone*, a story which would be today on the list of the proscribed, at least verbally accepts the obligation by admitting that it is the "office of the comic poet to imitate justice and instruct to life." And later, Thomas Rymer rules out delight or amusement as an end of poetry; it does delight but only in order to teach; the best poet is he who has done most to make men virtuous.¹⁸

This apology for poetry becomes a dangerous weapon in the hands of its critics. It disposes of Plato's objection, only by acknowledging the point that is most questionable, namely, that poetry has no other political function than that of moral instruction; it fails to understand the nature of poetry as amusement, and the utility of amusement as recreation [42]. Should it be shown at any time that the poets are poor as moral teachers, no plea is left for them. It is in this way that Collier uses the traditional English theory of poetry against the theatre of his day. All the poets, however, did not accept that theory. Dryden, in his preface to *The Mock Astrologer*, explicitly repudiates the obligation of the dramatist to point a moral. The chief end of comedy, he says, "is divertisement and delight: and that so much, that it is disputed, I think, by Heinsius, before Horace's *Art of Poetry*, whether instruction be any part of its employment. At least I am sure it can be but its secondary end: for the business of the poet is to make you laugh" [43]. The successful playwrights for the most part concurred in their practice; they earned their living by giving amusement to an audience; if they agreed to the doctrine of poetry as moral in-

¹⁸ *The Tragedies of the Last Age, Considered and Examined by the Practice of the Ancients and by the Common Sense of All Ages*, London, 1678.

struction, they did so only verbally and did not let it alter their technique. Even when their agreement is accompanied by honest intentions, it is difficult, as Mr. Krutch points out in the case of Thomas Shadwell, to imagine anyone's moral standards being raised by the plays they wrote.¹⁹ The degree to which mere amusement is deprecated and deplored is amazingly extreme; the poet ought never acknowledge that his only purpose is to entertain, says Shadwell, for "it makes him of as little use to mankind as a fiddler or dancing master."²⁰

This theory of poetry is, however, mainly sponsored by men who are not themselves successful playwrights. Its critical dogmas are well summarized by Mr. Krutch: "1. The fundamental purpose of literature is to teach morality. 2. It is the duty of the tragic, and perhaps the comic poet, to distribute poetic justice. 3. Decorum demands that types be presented in accordance with their typical rather than their occasional characteristics. 4. Obscenity is a fault of taste."²¹ It is upon these dogmas that Jeremy Collier relies in attacking the theatre, rather than upon the Church Fathers from whom he quotes profusely.²² Thus, Collier's opening passage: "The business of plays is to recommend virtue and discountenance vice; to show the uncertainty of human greatness, the sudden turns of Fate, and the unhappy conclusions of violence and injustice."²³ He quotes M. Rapin, one of the leading critical writers of his day, as saying that "delight is the end that poetry aims at, but not the principal one. For poetry being an art, ought to be profitable by the quality of its own nature, and by the essential subordination that all arts should have to polity, whose end in general is the public good."²⁴ To which Collier adds: "Thus we see how these great masters qualify diversion, and tie it up to provisoes and

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 20, 41-42, 76-77.

²⁰ Quoted from his Preface to *The Humorists* by Mr. Krutch, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 71, by permission of The Columbia University Press.

²² J. W. Krutch, *op. cit.*, 107-108.

²³ *Op. cit.*, 4th edition, London, 1699, p. 1.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 157. The quotation is from *Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie*, translated by T. Rymer, 1673. Whether Monsieur Rapin is a good Aristotelian or a platonizing one can be judged from the next sentence: "This is the judgment of Aristotle and of Horace his chief interpreter." See also Rapin's *Comparison of Plato and Aristotle*, translated from the French, 1673.

conditions. Indeed, to make delight the main business of comedy is an unreasonable and dangerous principle: it opens the way to all licentiousness and confounds the distinction between mirth and madness. For if diversion is the chief end, it must be had at any price."²⁵

What is important for us in this dependence of Collier upon M. Rapin and other critics of the time, is the supposition which then prevailed that their theory of poetry was an expression of the sense of antiquity. It is not surprising to find Plato quoted as an authority, however much distorted; but on the face of it, one is amazed to discover Aristotle cited in complete concurrence [44]. Here, then, in Collier appears a synthesis of Greek and Christian points of view which, upon closer examination, turns out to be a confusion of each in itself and with each other. Collier is so typical of our current discussion of the same problems, in which these confusions are perpetuated, that it is worth our while to examine his critical tenets.

It is held, first, that drama should instruct by showing things as they *should* be, thus setting the standard of morals to be followed. Aristotle can be made the authority for this point only by ignoring the whole of his principle which included the imitation of things as they are or as they are said to be by men. But even if drama did conform to this dictate, an unwarranted assumption is made if it be supposed that by so doing the drama will succeed as moral instruction.

The principle of 'poetic justice' must, in the second place, be observed. Stated briefly, it requires that the good man always be shown triumphant, and the bad man always in ultimate defeat. The patent absurdities and confusions of this doctrine are many, but that has not prevented it from persisting to this day, when the movies are called upon to show that crime does not pay or that virtue is always rewarded with success, in order to teach its audience a moral lesson. No more immoral lesson could be taught. The doctrine of poetic justice is the teaching of Satan and the friends of Job. If there is any basic insight which both Greek and Christian share, it is that virtue is a condition of happiness, and not of material success. The teaching implicit in poetic justice, that one should be good only to succeed in the things of this world, is both immoral and untrue. It is simply

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 161.

at variance with the facts of life. Even Addison attacked the nonsense of poetic justice by pointing out that "we find good and evil happen alike to all men on this side of the grave."²⁶ That it pretended to find so iniquitous a doctrine in either Greek or Christian writing, shows how little English poetic theory understood the sources from which it claimed to derive. Plato takes the greatest pains to disprove the sophistical position that justice is thought to be good only because it works in practice, because it is outwardly expedient. In the *Laws*, at the point at which he is outlining what the poets should teach, he insists that the good man should be represented as happy "no matter whether he be great and mighty or small and feeble, rich or poor."²⁷ Happiness is an inward state of the soul, not external success. Aristotle had insisted upon reversal in fortune as an element of tragedy; the hero who is a good man with some outstanding fault ultimately suffers calamity. But this is not intended as a point in moral instruction; it is essential to the technique of achieving a tragic effect [45]. The error of this doctrine of poetic justice, from either a Greek or a Christian point of view, is exceeded only by the stupidity of the supposition that an audience who witnessed a play poetically just in plot, would be morally improved or fortified in virtue. It was pointed out by some in Collier's day, as again more recently in the case of the movies, that the ultimate disposition of poetic justice would not prevent depravities incidental to the plot from influencing an audience to imitate the malice which seemed to succeed for part of the time at least, and to be otherwise attractive.

The exposition of the errors upon which his programme to reform the drama was based would not entirely dismiss Collier, even if analysis had weight with him. It could only challenge his simple assumptions about the way in which the drama might be made a better vehicle of moral instruction. It would not question his assumption that the drama should be such a vehicle and only that, nor would it make him doubt that the drama unpurified was, as a matter of fact, a source of moral corruption. He was a practical man and fanatically devoted to getting something done. Like others of his kind, before and after, he saw the problem narrowly. He may have pretended to be interested in purifying the stage, but his deeper interest was to

²⁶ *Spectator*, #40. ²⁷ *Laws*, 660.

destroy it. He was against all imaginative literature, seeing only evil in it and no good. He had no hesitancy in dismissing Shakespeare as smutty.²⁸ His lack of sensibility is clearly evidenced by the list of plays he cited as atrocious and by the items in them he singled out for rebuke.²⁹ His lack of taste and discernment indicates that he was competent only to express prejudice and not criticism; and, as Mr. Krutch points out, these examples of his prejudices "show that no possible stage could really have pleased him, for he was able to find blasphemy and obscenity in the most innocent phrases."³⁰ What is important for us to observe is the way in which he is able to quote Plato and Aristotle, as well as the Fathers of the Church, to his purpose.³¹ It is no protection against the rhetorical effectiveness of such marshalling of authorities, to replace the citations in their contexts and to discover that when properly understood they are inconsistent with or irrelevant to his point. Collier is a terrifying example of what can happen in the modern period of the European tradition when that tradition becomes intellectually attenuated. In his discussion of the place of poetry in human life Collier represents himself as an heir of Greek and Christian antiquity, but he is so far removed from the sources to which he piously appeals, that one can find in him neither the Greek understanding of the many sides of the political problem which poetry raises nor the Christian conception of a life apart from the things of this world and its seductive ornaments, such as poetry.

The discussion which follows Collier is intellectually on the same plane, but at least it has the virtue of seeing the problem more broadly. Nothing new is added in the way of basic doctrine, although the bulk of books and pamphlets which Collier stimulated is tremendous.³² In this literature of attack and defense there is everywhere discernible the effort to regain the

²⁸ Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 50. ²⁹ J. W. Krutch, *op. cit.*, p. 111 ff.

³⁰ J. W. Krutch, *op. cit.*, p. 120, by permission of The Columbia University Press.

³¹ Collier's subtitle was: "Together with the Sense of Antiquity Upon this Argument." The authorities are classified as heathen philosophers and Christian Fathers; in the former group Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Tully, Tacitus, Plutarch; in the latter group, Tertullian, Minutius Felix, St. Cyprian, St. Chrysostom, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine.

³² J. W. Krutch, *op. cit.*, pg. 264 ff.

wisdom of the ancients, but eighteenth-century efforts in this direction seem to be necessarily attended by the misquotation and misunderstanding of Plato and Aristotle, and a specious use of Scriptural texts as well. The questions which this controversy tried to resolve were chiefly two: (1) Is the theatre a permissible institution? (2) Should it teach morality, or has it any other social function by which it can be justified? Let us examine the answers briefly.

It was generally admitted that there had been abuses of the stage which justified rebuke and reform. The middle classes who were involved in the Societies for the Reformation of Manners which had recently been organized, naturally approved of Collier's attack upon an art that had transgressed the conventions by which they lived. For the most part, this approval was moderate; it looked to an elimination of what had been offensive. But the more extreme question of the defensibility of any stage at all, of the justification of secular literature in the Christian life, was raised by such writers as the Prince de Conti, William Law and Arthur Bedford. Bedford's book was the most extreme. Its contents are indicated by its title: *The Evil and Danger of Stage-Plays: Showing their Natural Tendency to destroy religion and introduce a general corruption of manners; in almost two thousand instances, taken from the plays of the two last years, against all the methods lately used for their reformation.* Bedford was able to find evil everywhere. In a later book he could list 1400 texts of Scripture which had either been ridiculed or exposed by the stage, or were at least opposite to its present practices.³³ The Prince de Conti was more genuinely devout but no less uncompromisingly extreme in his opposition. "A Christian," he wrote, "having renounced the world, its pomp and pleasure, cannot seek pleasure for itself, nor diversion for the sake of diversion."³⁴ Diversion that is not necessary is sinful, and the stage is not necessary. William Law, like the Prince de Conti, echoed the ascetic denials of the patristic church. The choice was not between good plays and bad plays. Law had no interest in reform, since it was not genuinely possible.

³³ *The Evil and Mischief of Stage Playing: a sermon preached in the City of London*, 1730.

³⁴ Quoted by J. W. Krutch, *op. cit.*, p. 133, from *Traité de la Comédie*, published in English in 1711.

Any imaginative representation of this sinful world—and this must include all poetry, all imaginative literature, as well as the stage—is necessarily sinful. The stage is thus sinful “not as things that may only be the occasion of sin, but such as are in their own nature grossly sinful”; “to talk of the lawfulness and the unlawfulness of the stage is fully as absurd, as contrary to the plain nature of things, as to talk of the unlawfulness and mischief of the service of the church.”³⁵ His argument is clear: the theatre represents the world and is necessarily worldly; worldliness is anti-Christian; therefore the theatre is anti-Christian. It is clear, but not unanswerable. We shall find that an answer can be given which is thoroughly consonant with the spirit of Christianity, even though it modifies somewhat the rigorous asceticism of the early Fathers.

The answer is only in part and not well given by the immediate opponents of Collier and his following. Dryden and Congreve, among the dramatists who had been scourged, contented themselves with defending particular passages against excesses of misinterpretation; but to show that Collier had exaggerated the obscenity and vulgarity which did exist, or had found corruption where none was, fails to meet the attack except obliquely. Nor was it sufficient to show, as did Father Caffaro, whom Motteux quoted in his preface to *Beauty in Distress*, that the Bible does not specifically condemn plays, since it can always be argued that it does so implicitly. If plays teach immorality, they must be utterly condemned by any Christian, and even if they teach morality, they are bad relatively, because Holy Scripture and the Church are better, divinely ordained means to the same end. “That which God hath appointed sufficient means to accomplish, it is unlawful for men to appoint other means to accomplish.”³⁶ John Dennis met the attack directly by dissociating Christianity from undue asceticism and by insisting on the usefulness of the stage and other public diversions.³⁷ Dennis admitted that the contemporary abuses were so great that there was need for amending them. He was willing to praise Collier for the service he may have rendered to reform, but he fought him as a fanatical

³⁵ *The Absolute Unlawfulness of the Stage-Entertainment fully demonstrated*, London, 1726. ³⁶ *The Stage Condemned*, London, 1720.

³⁷ *The Usefulness of the Stage to the Happiness of Mankind, to Government and to Religion*, London, 1698.

enemy of the theatre *in toto*. The theatre is directly useful to the state, and to morality and religion as well. It is a public diversion, in fact the best possible public diversion, and amusement is necessary for the contentment and recreation of the people and, consequently, for the safety of the state. Dennis thus strikes an Aristotelian note which the eighteenth-century opponents of the stage, like Plato and the Fathers of the early Church, had ignored. But he does not fully realize the strength of his position. Although he argues that pleasure is not in itself an evil, that human happiness in this world is not inconsistent with Christian morality, that the drama does not unduly stimulate the passions but, arousing them, also chastises them, he fails to analyze the moral utility of this chastisement which is purgation, he fails to distinguish the pleasures of contemplation from other pleasures, he fails to consider the duality of the political and the Christian life and the problem that is consequent thereon: the domain of Church and State in the affairs of man.

Dennis' argument is the best of its kind at the time. It is repeated in substance in an anonymous tract which increases its rhetorical effectiveness by the citation of authorities.³⁸ The author attempts to show that the charges against the stage are based not on the natural effects of drama itself, but on abuses that are accidental in particular plays. Even St. Chrysostom read Aristophanes, and St. Paul read Epimenides and Menander; they found good where Collier, Ridpath, and their ilk could find only smut. The pulpit and the stage co-operate in teaching morality: the pulpit states the rule, the stage gives the example. Here the anonymous author too readily accepts the obligation of the arts in moral instruction. But he does not rest with this, making the further points that the drama effects purgation of the passions, a good end which the drama serves better than any other means; and that harmless recreation is necessary for human life. The doctrine of the Gospels does not intend to make people unsocial or to deny harmless pleasure; and he quotes St.

³⁸ *The Stage Acquitted, Being a Full Answer to Mr. Collier and Other Enemies of the Drama: With a Vindication of King Charles the Martyr, and the Clergy of the Church of England, From the Abuses of a Scurrilous Book called 'The Stage Condemned,'* London, 1699.

Thomas to the effect that it is the part of a wise man to unbend his mind sometimes by diverting words and actions.

Father Caffaro had also cited the authority of Thomas Aquinas on the point that play-going is a lawful diversion.³⁹ The issue between Plato and Aristotle is thus insinuated within the ranks of Christianity. None of the English writers in the seventeenth or eighteenth century fully realized the dimensions of this controversy. The arguments of Dennis and his anonymous colleague about the political and religious utility of the arts, particularly literature and the theatre, were not answered. But the authority of St. Thomas supporting the position that the drama is neither essentially immoral nor useless, was a challenge that the Christian world could not ignore. It aroused a more learned man than any of the English publicists, the French Bishop Bossuet, who was a preceptor to the Dauphin, son of Louis XIV. Bossuet sought to unite the Platonic and the Christian positions against what thus appeared to be an intellectual rift in Christianity itself. But before we turn to his famous *Maximes et Réflexions sur la Comédie*, published in 1694, we must complete our account of the Collier controversy by noting its sequel in the eighteenth century.

The sequel in fact was the rise of the purified sentimental comedy, in which virtue always led to success, and in which the respectability of middle-class merchants was extolled. How much the change was due to the effectiveness of Collier and his allies and how much it was due to the social shift which occurred with the accession of William and Mary, the rise to importance of the mercantile bourgeoisie, and the efforts of the various societies for the reformation of public manners, is difficult to judge; but it would be an obvious fallacy to attribute the

³⁹ *Lettre d'un théologien illustre par sa qualité et par son mérite, consulté par l'auteur pour savoir si la comédie peut-être permise ou doit être absolument defendue*, prefixed to the *Oeuvres Dramatiques du Boursault*, Paris, 1694. This letter was also prefixed by Mr. Motteux to *Beauty in Distress*, London, 1698, with the note that this discourse of the lawfulness and unlawfulness of plays, by the learned Father Caffaro, Divinity Professor at Paris, had been sent to him by a divine of the Church of England. According to Mr. Krutch, Caffaro had retracted his opinions concerning the theatre in 1694, the same year in which Bishop Bossuet prefixed an answer to his letter in the *Maximes et Réflexions*.

alterations entirely to Collier.⁴⁰ The middle classes had other reasons than Collier gave for objecting to the courtly drama of the last years of the Stuart régime. It was too glittering; it represented life as more romantic than it actually was, and thus tended to undermine the sober industry which was essential to the prosperity of trade. When these working middle classes became the patrons of the theatre, the drama was responsive to the tastes and prejudices of its new audience. Plays which would have failed miserably twenty years before became successful pieces. We are not here concerned with the character of this change from the point of view of literary criticism; we are concerned primarily with the fact that the drama continued to be a popular form of public amusement, despite the extremists who could find no justification for it whatsoever; and that the change away from the obscene and the vulgar was accompanied by a similar change in the standards of the dominant social class. Whether this was a shift in fundamental morals or only in superficial manners is a question we shall return to later. Whether the society of England under William and Mary is judged morally less corrupt than under the later Stuarts certainly depends upon which social class one tends to identify with the society as a whole. In any case, Defoe's appeal to the audience of the drama to reform the theatre by reforming its own taste, by making its attendance a mark of approval or disapproval which the dramatists must feel, seems to have been answered. Yet the personnel of the audience had altered, and with it the criteria of impropriety. Steele's theory that the audience regarded dramatic characters as models to be imitated—a point that has recently been revived in connection with motion pictures—and hence, that the drama must show its audience only examples of good men and right actions, is not only in itself questionable, but must be balanced by the point that the theatre, and literature in general, is only a mirror reflecting the already-existing manners and morals of its time.

What is most instructive from our point of view is that the attack upon the theatre and literature which had begun long before Collier in the diatribes of Prynne and Gosson and the censures of Ascham, which had been intensified by the fanatical zeal and rhetorical power of Collier into a great public con-

⁴⁰ Cf. J. W. Krutch, *op. cit.*, Ch. VII; 239; 247-248.

trovery, resulting in the increased use of the legal expedients of censorship, continued in slightly different channels in the subsequent century and down to our own day. William, shortly after coming to the throne, issued orders to the Master of the Revels with respect to the censorship of plays, using Collier's words. In the successive reigns of Queen Anne and George I there were various attempts to strengthen the censorship, culminating in the Licensing Act of 1737; these were not always motivated solely by moral considerations; sedition and treason must also be expunged. Nevertheless, such bills were usually introduced as moral measures to prevent the theatres of London from continuing to corrupt the youth and encourage vice. But though the stage was censored and the character of the drama had manifestly changed, the reformers were not satisfied, and the charges which they made were substantially the same as had been brought at an earlier period. The attack shifted from the stage to the novel. Addison in *The Spectator* looked askance at the fiction of Smollett and Fielding; *Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy* were accused of improprieties and of being corrupting influences. Fielding was not thus to be deterred by the censors of *The Spectator*; he answered more definitely than Dryden and Congreve had answered Collier. He clearly pointed out the superficiality of the sentimental comedy which had developed according to Steele's adaptation of the theory of poetic justice. Virtue is not taught by making it appear successful in the last act.⁴¹

Thus the times change, the occasions of and the participants in the controversy are different, but the arguments *pro* and *con* remain the same. Three centuries of English discussion of the problem of poetry and politics exhibit the multiple repetition of the same opinions [46], usually unsupported by evidence and never clarified by sound analysis, against a background of social movements for the reform of public morals and amusements, on the one hand, and the persistent demonstration of the utility

⁴¹ *Tom Jones*, VIII, 1; see also, V, 1. In the episode of the puppet show (XII, 5), the Master says: "I remember when I first took to the business, there was a great deal of low stuff that did very well to make folks laugh, but was never calculated to improve the morals of young people, which certainly ought to be principally aimed at in every puppet show." Tom answers that the removal of Punch and his merry wife Joan has spoiled the show.

of diversions by popular participation, on the other. The controversy about motion pictures today reiterates the same opinions against the same background. Mr. Krutch's study of Collier, his precursors and followers, provides an abundance of opinions, well tested only in their endurance, for contemporary publicists and reformers who would either attack or defend the movies. If one seeks refinement of analysis or some advance beyond the positions of the ancients, one cannot learn anything from the close study of this perpetual debate. On the contrary, we are impelled to return to the texts of Plato and Aristotle to discover the genuine issues which have been muddled or lost in the modern polemic. We must also be impressed by the irony of each successive generation threatening the utter corruption of society unless its literature is immediately reformed. The prediction is always based upon the same objections to the depravity of the theatre or the novel, and unless society is in each epoch either equally or increasingly corrupt, the threat must lose its sting for those who review such predictions in the light of the facts. This is not an argument against those who hold that both society and literature are corrupt, but against those who do not hesitate to blame the corruption of the former upon the depravity of the latter. It also raises the question whether art and literature can be better than the human nature they are intended to amuse.

This last question returns us to the problem of Christianity's attitude toward amusements and diversions of all sorts. Collier and those who joined with him give poor expressions of the Christian point of view; like so many Anthony Comstocks, with greater or less scholarship, they represent religion and morality in a way that tends to discredit their cause. We must avoid the counter error of scoffing at or dismissing Christianity because of its Colliers and its Comstocks.⁴² It is just as fallacious to refute a doctrine in terms of its unsound expositors as to insist upon the essential evil of the arts because some of them have been abused. We must look to the best statements of the Christian position if we are fairly to understand its attitude toward the arts as amusements. Only then shall we be able to decide whether the ad-

⁴² Vd. Horace Kallen, *Indecency and the Seven Arts*, New York, 1930; Morris Ernst and William Seagle, *To the Pure*, New York, 1928.

vent of Christianity alters the case as Plato and Aristotle left it, whether the place of diverting imitations in a Christian commonwealth is or is not the same as in a Greek state.

Bishop Bossuet's *Maximes et Réflexions sur la Comédie* is not limited to a consideration of the contemporary French theatre of the seventeenth century. It is more generally a Christian Platonic discussion of dramatic literature and theatrical spectacles, and an answer to the Father Caffaro who had cited St. Thomas Aquinas in defense of plays as lawful amusements. The controversy between Bossuet and Aquinas, although the latter is four centuries earlier, can thus be dialectically reconstructed as the argument between Plato and Aristotle reset in a Christian frame.

Bossuet takes the extreme Platonic position [47]. The theatre excites dangerous passions; it would cease to attract an audience unless it did; therefore it should not be reformed but exterminated. It cannot be denied that it is the design of the dramatist to stir the emotions; this is apparent from the nature of his work and the circumstance of its production upon a stage. Bossuet is equally certain that it cannot be denied that the passions are bad, and should not be aroused under any circumstances. The passions lead naturally to sin. Dramatic amusements are, therefore, essentially sinful.⁴³ He points out that among so many serious invectives of the early Fathers against the theatre, one never finds that they chose the expedient of reforming it. They knew too well that it would be "vain to try to reduce the drama against its nature, to the severe rules of virtue."⁴⁴ Moreover, "to charm the senses is a bad way to introduce virtuous sentiments, even if it were possible." It may have been possible for the pagans, whose "virtue was imperfect, gross, worldly, superficial," to insinuate it by the theatre, but the "theatre has neither the authority nor the dignity nor the efficacy to inspire virtues befitting Christians."⁴⁵ Therefore, it must be rejected entirely.

Bossuet notes the passage in Aristotle's *Politics* in which it is recommended that children under seven be not permitted to attend the theatre. He remarks: "I do not know why he was not willing to extend further this precaution. Youth, and even

⁴³ *Op. cit.*, (ed. 1881), pp. 25-37. ⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 96. ⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

infancy, remain for a long time with men; or rather, they are never entirely outgrown."⁴⁶ He is fully cognizant of other points in Aristotle's analysis. To the defense that poetry not only arouses the emotions, but also purges them and thus does man a moral service, he replies: "Let us leave to Aristotle this mysterious manner of purifying the passions which neither he nor his interpreters have known how to explain with good reasons."⁴⁷ It is important to observe here that the theory of purgation is dismissed not as incorrect, but as unintelligible. To the objection that amusements are useful and good because they serve the ends of relaxing and recreating the human spirit, he simply replies that there are less elaborate, more modest, more simple, less dangerous, modes of relaxation for a Christian than the theatre and, it goes without saying, similar arts and spectacles.⁴⁸ Plato's discrimination of the refined from the gross forms of enjoyment should be followed. Yet even ancient tragedy, although better and more serious than ours, was condemned by the principles of that philosopher.⁴⁹

He meets Father Caffaro's point that Scripture is silent on the theatre by explaining the generic condemnation that is implied in Christ's proscription of "idle words." "It is to read the Fathers of the Church too negligently," he says, "to think that they blame in the spectacles of their day only the idolatry and the manifest shamelessness. It is to be deaf to the truth not to feel that their reasons carry further. They blame in the plays and in the theatre the inutility, the prodigious dissipation, the trouble and commotion of the mind little befitting a Christian, whose heart should be a sanctuary of peace; they blame there the excitation of the passions, the vanity, the great ornaments which they classify as the pomps which we have abjured by baptism, the desire to see and to be seen, the unhappy meeting of eyes which seek each other, the too great occupation with vain things, the bursts of laughter or the tumults of passions which make one forget the presence of God. . . . Who would dare say that he is at the theatre for the love of God or to please God? . . . If one wishes to penetrate to the principles of their morals, what severe condemnation will not one read there of the spirit which leads one to spectacles?"⁵⁰ The *least* evil that the

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 57. ⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 57. ⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 52. ⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁵⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

Fathers find in the drama is its inutility, which puts it in the class of "idle words" spoken of by Christ.⁵¹

Father Caffaro had argued that in confession he never found the theatre to be a cause of sin. Bossuet charges Caffaro with naïveté in supposing that the only evils which men suffer are those which they feel and confess. One must not believe men on the subject of their evils and dangers, because "their corruption, the error of their wounded imaginations, their *amour-propre*" prevent a clear view of the state of one's soul.⁵² Caffaro had said that thousands of people of eminent virtue and delicate conscience approve of comedy and attend it without trouble. Bossuet answers that these people forget the words of St. Paul: "Wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." "These people forget that even if they are so strong that they have nothing to fear for themselves, they should fear the scandal they give to others, and the harm they do to others by participating in something which may be evil for them."⁵³ Caffaro had pointed out that "one cannot take a step, read a book, enter a church, live in the world, without meeting a thousand things capable of exciting the passions." Bossuet answers: "Without doubt, his conclusion is good; everything is full of danger; one must then increase the number. . . All the objects which present themselves to our eyes can excite our passions; then one should prepare objects exquisitely and with great care in order to excite them and to render them more agreeable by disguising them."⁵⁴ It should be noted that neither Caffaro nor Bossuet distinguish the manner in which natural things excite our passions, with the consequence of relief through natural action, from the way in which imitations excite our passions artificially and artificially relieve them to effect purgation. Yet Bossuet seems to be touching on this point when he observes that art makes the emotions it arouses "more agreeable by disguising them."

Finally, Father Caffaro had called the laws to his help. If comedy, or the theatre in general, were so bad, it would not be tolerated by a Christian commonwealth, but there are, nevertheless, no laws to this effect. He forgets, says Bossuet, that St. Thomas, whom Caffaro quotes on his side, distinguished between the spheres of Church and State, and in the light of this distinc-

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 84. ⁵² *Op. cit.*, p. 43. ⁵³ *Op. cit.*, p. 44. ⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 45.

tion held that human laws, those which are made and enforced by the State, are not intended "to repress all evils, but only those which attack society."⁵⁵ This should not prevent the Church, in the light of Divine Law, from condemning institutions which, whether or not they are socially undesirable, jeopardize the Christian life. Moreover, if the State is not aware of public perils, it is the duty of the Church to instruct it and guide it.

Nevertheless, the authority of St. Thomas on the lawfulness of amusements which are neither good nor evil in themselves, cannot be disregarded. Bossuet attempts to interpret the texts in the writings of Aquinas which bear upon the point, in such a way as to diminish their discrepancy from what he holds to be his own, the patristic, the right, Christian position. He insists that the theatre is intrinsically injurious because it excites the passions, and this excludes it from the class of innocent arts. It would be absurd to say, and St. Thomas would not agree, "that it is not injurious to excite the most dangerous passions, or that they are not excited by the delectable representation of them" which is made upon the stage. "Such absurdities could be most easily disproved by the words of the Saint himself."⁵⁶ Yet after he has finished commenting on the relevant articles in St. Thomas, Bossuet is forced to concede the discrepancy. He frankly says: "After having purged the doctrine of St. Thomas from the excess with which he has been charged" by Caffaro, "it must be admitted finally, with the respect due to so great a man, that he seems a bit removed, I will not say from the basic sentiments, but rather from the expressions of the ancient Fathers on the subject of diversions."⁵⁷ The discrepancy is greater than Bishop Bossuet was willing to admit. We shall find in the writings of St. Thomas the rift which can occur in Christianity because of the difference between Plato and Aristotle.

On one important point St. Thomas differs from both Plato and Aristotle. In Greek political theory there is no limitation upon the state with respect to the education of its citizens. Both Plato and Aristotle argue the superiority of uniform public control of education and moral training to the vagaries of the domestic system in which these matters are left to the judgment of parents and private tutors. Education is the province of the

⁵⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 46. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. 96, A. 2.

⁵⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 69. ⁵⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 84.