VI

SALVATION, PLOTINIAN AND CHRISTIAN[1]

PLOTINIAN studies are certainly at the moment in a lively and flourishing condition. Not only is very solid work being done on the foundations, the text of the *Enneads*, but there is a great deal of active investigation going on of the relationship of the thought of Plotinus to that of his predecessors and successors and of the ideas current in the world in which he lived. And, which is encouraging to those who care about Plotinus, books are appearing which treat his thought as something alive, of significance to us to-day and deserving serious philosophical and theological consideration, and not as something of purely historical interest.

In France, in particular, there has recently appeared a pair of books which should do a great deal to make Plotinus appear alive and relevant, at least to Christians. They are *La Procession Plotinienne* and *La Purification Plotinienne*[2] by the distinguished Plotinian scholar Jean Trouillard. They are, first and foremost, an extremely scholarly and well-documented interpretation of the thought of Plotinus which has led me, at any rate, to revise my views on a number of important points. But they also contain the beginning (M. Trouillard is the first to insist that it is only the beginning) of a really serious confrontation of the philosophy of Plotinus with Christian theology which is likely to be fruitful both for the understanding of Plotinus by Christians and for the progress of Christian theology itself. This paper is an attempt to carry this comparison or confrontation of Plotinus and Christianity a little further, on lines suggested to me by Trouillard. I shall do my best to make it a real comparison and not a piece of Christian polemic against Plotinus; though of course, as a Catholic student of Plotinus I have definite convictions about the matters to be

[1] A paper read to the Plotinus Society, Oxford on 23rd November 1956.
[2] Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1955.

discussed and do not wish to make a hypocritical pretence of a detachment which I am far from feeling. But I think that a polemical approach in discussions of this kind is as undesirable and futile as the sort of empty concordism which tries to make out that everybody is really saying the same thing; and it also seems to me important to make clear that Catholic theology is not the sort of tidy, finished affair with a text-book answer to every question which it is sometimes thought to be by those who have no first-hand experience of discussions among serious Catholic theologians. Many of the questions which arise in a confrontation of the philosophy of Plotinus with the Christian doctrine of salvation seem to me to be relevant to debates among Catholic theologians which are very much in progress, and to try to give them the sort of summary text-book answer which an overworked seminary professor might give would be fair neither to Plotinus nor to Catholic theology.

One of Trouillard's most useful achievements has been to clear up some serious misunderstandings into which Christian writers have fallen about the way in which the soul arrives at union with the One or Good. This he has done especially in the section of chap. vii of *La Purification Plotinienne* entitled *Liberté plotinienne et surnaturel chrétien*,[3] though there is a good deal else in his books and articles which helps towards the same clarification. The usual, and quite misleading, description of this part of Plotinus's thought current among Christians — which I used to accept myself and have, I am afraid, done something to propagate — is something like this. The soul, having been projected or emanated from the One by a necessary and automatic downward process, finds its way back to the final union under its own power. The Good is the object which it desires to possess, the goal of its *eros*. But there is no gracious reaching out or self-giving of the Good to the soul, no divine *agape*. There is of course some justification for this in ways of speaking used both by Plotinus and by Christian writers who have come, directly or indirectly, under his influence. But Trouillard has shown, better than anyone else so far, how extremely inadequate and misleading this presentation of Plotinus's thought is. It is not easy to summarise his nuanced and carefully documented exposition;

[3] Pp.122-32.

but he seems to me to have established the following points: that the production of Intellect from the One and Soul from Intellect, the whole generation of the levels of being from their source, is conceived by Plotinus as transcending our customary opposition of necessity and freedom. There is no question of choice, certainly; we are far above the level at which choice operates; and the procession cannot be conceived as not happening. But the One's giving of existence is completely free, an expression of absolute spontaneity and not any sort of naturalistic automatism. And what the One gives is first and foremost a power of return. Trouillard deals excellently with the double rhythm of procession in Plotinus; he shows that it is the second element, the return in contemplation, rather than the first, the outgoing as an unformed potentiality, which establishes each reality in its proper being. It is a checked return, in which the impulse to go back to the source is balanced by an impulse of self-affirmation as other than the source (this latter Plotinus sometimes[4] seems to regard as illegitimate, a sort of basic original sin of the whole of derived reality). But it carries in it the possibility of a further advance, which leads back from Soul to Intellect and from Intellect to union with the One. In the whole process the impulse, whether to self-constitution in contemplation or to self-transcendence in love, comes from above; the illumination and the passionate desire are *given*. As Plotinus says in a chapter which is one of the best expressions of this part of his thought,[5] 'The soul loves the Good because it has been moved by Him to love from the beginning'.

We cannot, then, see the difference between Plotinus and Christianity as a crude opposition between a doctrine of *eros* and a doctrine of *agape*. What difference does, then, remain as far as the doctrine of grace is concerned? At first sight, a great deal. In Plotinus's universe the relationship between God and the soul is not the personal and dramatic one which exists for the Christian. The action of the One is impersonal, indifferent and universal. There is no giving of grace over and above the original creative impulse which, however, is not a thing of the past but something always continuing. There seems no room for special providences

[4] III, vii, 11. III, viii, 8.
[5] VI, vii, 31.

and graces, personal encounters and real dialogues between God and the soul of the sort of which Christian experience and literature is full. Above all, there seems no room for that most dramatic, personal and particular of God's interventions, the Incarnation, on which all others in Christian belief depend. The conception of sin, too, appears to be quite different. As Trouillard puts it (in the section of chap. xi of *La Purification* entitled *Faute plotinienne et péché chrétien*[6] 'Le péché selon le christianisme est d'abord révolte de l'esprit; le péché de l'ange précède et provoque celui de l'homme; et le péché de l'homme est toujours en son fond orgueil et défi. La faute selon Plotin, au contraire, est faiblesse de l'âme . . . Elle ne dresse pas l'être devant Dieu et ne gâte pas l'intime de l'âme. Aussi le mal peut-il être réparé sans lutte ni pardon, sans repentir ni expiation, par simple changement de plan. Pas de drame du péché. Cultive la sagesse et fais ce que tu voudras. A la notion chrétienne de *rédemption* s'oppose l'idée néoplatonicienne de *purification*.' This seems to me well said (though I sometimes feel a slight uncertainty, the reasons for which I cannot at present formulate properly, as to whether Trouillard is not for once making the opposition between the two ways of thinking too sharp and absolute). And it seems to me to point to a deeper incompatibility which we shall have to discuss shortly. But before doing so let us see if we can do anything to soften the sharpness of the contrast just drawn between the impersonal and undramatic Plotinian and the personal and dramatic Christian doctrine of grace. I should like to quote two excellent passages from Trouillard which seem to me to do a good deal, not to bridge, but to narrow the gap between the two ways of thinking. The first is on the Christian conception of the supernatural.[7] 'Le surnaturel n'est pas essentiellement l'histoire discontinue des interventions toutes contingentes de Dieu dans le monde. Il ne demande pas qu'on renonce à toute tenue intellectuelle, qu'on perde son esprit pour sauver son âme. Ce serait confondre grâce et arbitraire. La liberté et liberalité divine s'expriment par un ordre supérieur, en lequel tout est intégré, même l'assomption d'une nature humaine par le Verbe, même le péché. Ou plutôt la communication que Dieu fait de lui-même, et la consecration qu'il

[6] P. 202.
[7] P. 125.

accorde à l'univers, par la grâce d'union personelle conférée au Christ, et par celle de divinisation proposée à tous les esprits, est bien la clef de voûte de la création tout entière . . .' The second deals with the 'impersonality' of the thought of Plotinus. 'Cela (the principle of "initiative from above" already discussed) ne suffit pas évidemment à nous faire rejoindre la grâce chrétienne. Mais il ne faut pas interpréter tous les *silences* comme des *négations*. Les dominantes de la synthèse plotinienne ne sont pas celles du christianisme, mais on doit se demander en chaque cas ce que cela signifie. La réserve que Plotin garde toujours quand il parle de L'Un n'a pas pour raison l'éloignement de Dieu, bien au contraire, mais le vulgarité de tout langage, le sentiment qu'il n'y a pas de vie religieuse véritable sans voeu de pauvreté intellectuelle (ἄφελε πάντα V. iii, 17, 37). Il redoute surtout l'anthropomorphisme, l'écran que certaine diffusion ou certaines effusions peuvent opposer à l'union divine, alors que nous serions peut-être disposés à concéder quelque chose à ces procédés, pour accentuer davantage entre nous et Dieu les rapports de personne à personne. Le caractère "pneumatique" du christianisme s'est peut-être développé de nos jours aux dépens de son "noétisme", plus apparent chez saint Thomas ou chez Malebranche, par exemple.' To these quotations I should like to add some observations of my own. The first is that it seems to me desirable that Christian theologians (and especially, though not only, orthodox Protestant theologians) should pay more attention to the idea of creation as, in a wide but, I think, legitimate sense of the word, a grace; the idea, that is, of our nature and our natural powers as a free and, obviously, unmerited gift of God, dependent on his continual free giving for their existence, and, presumably, given with a view to his further gifts and final purpose for man. No Christian can deny this; but some theologians tend to slip into a way of talking about man's nature and natural powers as something quite separate and disconnected from the life of grace, almost, sometimes, as if nature had nothing very much to do with God. If this is rectified, as it ought to be, it seems to me likely that the gap between Christian and Plotinian ways of thinking will appear narrower. (Perhaps this is only another way of putting what Trouillard says about the Christian conception of the supernatural in my quotation above). My second observation

has to do with the Incarnation. It seems to me that there is something wrong with the thinking of any Christian who requires that a religious philosophy in order to satisfy him should make the Incarnation appear as something probable, the sort of way in which God could reasonably be expected to behave. The sense of the Incarnation as something utterly unexpected and paradoxical, something which we could not possibly have conceived if it had not happened, seems to me an essential part of Christian faith in the Incarnate Word — this is not of course incompatible with seeing it, once we have accepted it by faith, as the central point of a 'higher order in which all is integrated', as 'the keystone of the vault of all creation', as Trouillard puts it. A religious philosophy which humanises and anthropomorphises our idea of God, reduces, it seems to me, unduly the essential shock of the Incarnation. A philosophy like that of Plotinus (or St Thomas Aquinas) which insists that God infinitely transcends any conception we can form of him, that the negative approach gets us nearer to the truth about him than the positive, intensifies the shock in what I think is a very salutary way. The third point which I want to make is by way of historical clarification. We can oppose, if we like, the 'impersonal' Plotinian and the 'personal' Christian ways of thinking about the relations of God with man. But we must not generalise this into an opposition on this point between Christianity and Hellenism, or Christianity and Platonism, or even Christianity and Neoplatonism. Porphyry talks about God's spiritual gifts and personal attention to the individual, in a way which would seem quite acceptable to the ordinary Christian, when he is giving his teaching on prayer in the *Ad Marcellam*;[8] and he applies the same sort of language to Plotinus himself in the Life,[9] where he goes so far as to speak of the *Enneads* having been written under special divine inspiration. And it does not seem to me that Porphyry in this is out of tune with Plato, with the piety of the Laws or the prayer of Socrates at the end of the Phaedrus, or with Greek religious thought and language in general. Plotinus's 'impersonal' way of writing (not so 'impersonal', perhaps, after all in some of his

[8] xii, p. 282 (Nauck).
[9] Chap. xxiii, where he is interpreting the oracle of Apollo given to Amelius after the death of Plotinus.

descriptions of the mystical union, VI, vii, 35 or VI, ix, 11) about the relations between God and the soul seems to me to be very much his own, and I should agree with Trouillard about the reasons which probably led him to adopt it.

The deepest differences between the Plotinian and the Christian conceptions of salvation seem to me to depend on different ways of thinking about the true nature of man. For Plotinus, as Bréhier says[10] 'notre salut n'est pas à faire, il est éternellement fait'. Our true self is stable, eternal and divine; passion and sin and suffering cannot touch it. What we speak of in Christian language as 'salvation' in Plotinus means waking up to what we truly already are, getting back to our true and higher selves by a process of purification — an enterprise which Plotinus seems to think is only possible for a very select few whose original endowment from the higher principles is exceptionally good. It is important to understand that this stable and eternal higher self in Plotinus is not, strictly speaking, our archetype in Intellect but our higher soul.[11] The transcendence of Intellect over our true self has been well brought out by Trouillard in a recent article:[12] it becomes particularly clear in Plotinus's later writings, especially in the great treatise *On the Knowing Hypostases*.[13] We can bring a good deal that Plotinus says about the relations of Intellect and soul in this treatise into some sort of connexion with the Christian doctrine of the illumination of the soul by the Divine Word without much difficulty or serious distortion. But this does not affect the contrast here being drawn between Christian and Plotinian doctrine, for it is the higher soul which is in Plotinus everlastingly 'saved', impassible and impeccable, and its dependence on higher principles for its existence and illumination does not detract in his way of thinking from its divine stability.

The Christian answer to the Plotinian question 'What are we?' is a very different one from that of Plotinus. We can begin to see the difference if we set beside Bréhier's summing up of Plotinus

[10] In the introduction to IV, 8 in his edition, Vol. IV, p. 215. Trouillard quotes and accepts this with a qualification which, though important, does not, I think, weaken, and perhaps strengthens my argument here. (*Purification*, p. 125.)
[11] This at least is his final conclusion, clearly stated in I, i, and V, iii. In some earlier passages (notably IV, iii, 12), only our νοῦς seems to stay 'above' and the whole of soul to some extent 'comes down'.
[12] *La médiation du verbe selon Plotin. Revue philosophique*, January — March 1956.
[13] V, iii.

quoted above a remark of the Christian Platonist Louis Lavelle, for whom 'le moi est le seul realité au monde dont l'essence est de se faire . . . il est un pouvoir d'être plutôt qu'un être même'.[14] In the Christian view of things not only our salvation but our very existence is something provisional, contingent, precarious and incomplete. We have to get ourselves made, to bring, by the power of God, our being and our beatitude to actuality, not just to wake up to the fact that we have it already. Lavelle's remark is strikingly reminiscent of the conception of human nature which is the basis of the mystical theology of St Gregory of Nyssa. St Gregory is the most Plotinian of the Greek Fathers; but at this point he departs radically from Plotinus. Fr J. Daniélou, who has done a great deal to draw attention to this aspect of St Gregory's thought, expresses it well in a passage of the introduction to his new edition of the *Life of Moses*.[15] 'Le problème (that of avoiding introducing into Christianity the doctrine that the soul is divine in essence) serait resolu si la ressemblance de Dieu était pour l'âme non une réalité immanente qu'elle découvre en elle par la conversion, mais le résultat de cette conversion, c'est-à-dire si c'était par le mouvement par lequel l'âme se détourne de ce qui est extérieur pour se tourner vers Dieu que Dieu se communiquait à elle . . . l'être crée est essentiellement mouvement . . . En réalité au point de départ l'homme est moins une nature qu'une "capacité", un "miroir" (δοχεῖον, κάτοπτρον).' On this Gregory founds his doctrine of the soul's beatitude as a ceaseless movement of the ever unfinished creature deeper and deeper into the infinity of God.

When we turn from Gregory to the greatest of Christian Neoplatonists, St Augustine, the point which I am trying to make becomes even clearer. I have already drawn attention elsewhere[16] to the Plotinian echoes to be found in Augustine's accounts of the 'created wisdom' (that is, the spiritual creation, the angelic world) in *Confessions XII* and *De genesi ad litteram I*. Now I should like to emphasise, rather more than I did there, the un-Plotinian element in the same description. Augustine speaks of the 'created wisdom'

[14] *Les puissances de moi* (Paris 1948), p. 12.
[15] Grégoire de Nysse, *Vie de Moise*, Sources Chrétiennes No. I *bis* (Paris, 1955), pp. xx — xxi.
[16] *Spiritual or intelligible matter in Plotinus and St Augustine* in *Augustinus Magister*, Vol. I, pp. 277 – 83. (Paris, 1954.)

in language which is in some ways very like that which Plotinus uses of Intellect or Soul perfectly conformed to Intellect. But he stresses in a way which is quite unlike Plotinus, the fact that it is *created* and has that *mutabilitas*, that instability, which is to his mind the essential characteristic of the creature (as movement is for Gregory of Nyssa) and therefore needs to be held continually in its being and to its high status by the grace of God. A few quotations from the *Confessions* will make this clear. All are taken from Book XII and refer to the spiritual creation. 'Item dixisti mihi voce forti in aurem interiorem quod nec illa creatura tibi coaeterna est, cuius voluptas tu solus es teque perseverantissima castitate hauriens, mutabilitatem suam nusquam et numquam exerit . . . quando tua domus, quae peregrinata non est, quamvis non sit tibi coaeterna, tamen indesinenter et indeficienter tibi cohaerendo nullam patitur vicissitudinem temporum' (chap. xi), 'an illud negatis, sublimem quandam esse creaturam, tam casto amore cohaerentem deo vero et vere aeterno, ut, quamvis ei coaeterna non sit, in nullam tamen temporum varietatem et vicissitudinem ab illo se resolvat et defluat . . . inest ei tamen ipsa mutabilitas, unde tenebresceret et frigesceret, nisi amore grandi tibi cohaerens tamquam semper meridies luceret et ferveret ex te' (chap. xv). I do not think Plotinus ever admits, or could on his own assumptions admit, this sort of intrinsic instability as an essential characteristic of even the highest spiritual being. It is true that, as I have already noted, the frontier of the self seems to shift in his thought between Intellect and higher soul. But when he moves our upper limit down to the level of soul he invests higher soul with that kind of invulnerable stability which at the time when he wrote the great treatises on the soul[17] he was inclined to reserve for Intellect. His conviction never seems to waver that our highest part, our true self, whether it can be properly described as Intellect or as soul conformed to Intellect, remains permanently above, eternally stable and indefectible. For the Christian this eternal stability is something which belongs to God, not to any created spirit, human or angelic. We do not already possess it by nature, but may be given a share in it by the free gift of God. This way of looking at the difference between the two

[17] I V, iii and iv.

kinds of thought[18] does something, I think, to justify the Christian habit of using Plotinian language about the higher states of the self and its relationship to God, without distorting Plotinus's own thought by forcing it into a Christian shape. To the Christian, a very great deal that Plotinus says about Intellect and higher soul seems to be true, but true not about something that we are or have by nature but about something which God has, and is giving us by grace in conforming us to the likeness of his Son, the Uncreated Wisdom whom St Augustine distinguishes so sharply from the 'created wisdom' in the passage in Book XII of the *Confessions* from which I have quoted;[19] a passage which I think is one of the best starting-points for reflexion on the similarities and differences between Christian and Plotinian ways of thinking. It is Christ in Christian thought who corresponds to the 'true man', the 'true self' of Plotinus. This fundamental difference helps to explain, I think, many other differences between Plotinus's outlook on life and that of orthodox Christians. It has a good deal to do with the different conceptions of sin to which Trouillard draws attention: and I think it goes a long way to explain the absence in Plotinus of that humility and that fellow-feeling with the wicked and the weak which Christians profess but do not always practise. It is too superficial a view to see here merely a contrast between a self-complacent and a self-despising type of mind. Both sides can legitimately defend their attitude by an appeal to their respective conceptions of human nature. The Christian believes, as Plotinus does not, that he has nothing of himself, nothing which is not gift and grace of God, and therefore nothing to be proud about ; and, further, that the love of God in which he undeservingly shares goes out to all men, and he cannot share in it without going with it: and this absolute dependence and undeservingness goes back behind original and actual sin to that intrinsic instability of the creature which makes sin in the Christian sense possible. In Christian tradition the Mother of God, who is free by the grace of God from both original and actual sin, is the humblest, not the proudest, of creatures.

[18] A difference which, on the Christian side, does not, of course, result from philosophical reflexion (though it leads to it) but from acceptance of the Jewish-Christian revelation.
[19] XII, xv.

The difference about the nature of man also seems to me closely connected with those differences about the importance of historical events, the relationship of soul and body, the necessity of sacraments and external rites and of community membership, which traditional Christians generally become aware of when they read Plotinus. These differences are real, though Christian writers have often exaggerated and over-simplified them and made the antitheses too sharp. But their implications are too vast for me to discuss them at all adequately at the tail-end of a paper like this. All I can do is to give a few indications. The dependence of our salvation on certain historical events is of course an essential part of the Jewish-Christian revelation. We believe that we are being saved by particular things which the eternal Wisdom of God has done and is doing in this world of time and change. And it seems impossible to combine this with a belief that our true self is eternally sitting in changeless divinity high above the flux of becoming. In saying this I do not at all want to commit myself to agreement with everything that Christians are saying nowadays (the theme has become a very fashionable one) about the opposition between the Hellenic or Platonic and the Jewish-Christian views of time and history and its implications. It would take a book or two, not a paragraph or two, to discuss this with any sort of accuracy or completeness. I can only state my disagreements with some contemporary Christians as briefly and challengingly as possible. I do not believe that we are saved by history. I do not believe that our Christian religion gives us a specially effective means of interpreting the whole of history, a key to unlock God's secrets. I believe that the Christian, like the Platonist, should apprehend the eternal as present here and now, and should not reserve his hope for the end of the historical process. And I believe that the Christian ought to desire as passionately as any Pythagorean or Platonist to be delivered from coming-to-be and passing away, from the cycle of death and generation. St Peter Damian (who certainly was not a Platonist) seems to me to say something essential about the Christian hope in his line.

Hinc perenne tenent esse, nam transire transiit.

I think that the close experience of death may sometimes show the Christian how much he has in common here with Plotinus, how they speak a language and share a hope unintelligible to people

whose hopes and values all belong to the world of time and change.

As regards the relationship of soul and body, I think the disbelief in a Plotinian higher self made it easy and natural, and in fact pretty well inevitable, for Christians to turn from a more Platonic to a more Aristotelian way of understanding it, to come to see man as a real unity of soul and body. After all, in Plotinus's own psychology, if you take away the higher soul what you are left with is the συναμφότερον, the more or less Aristotelian composite entity: though for the Christian, as I have already said, this poor low unstable composition, without leaving the body or neglecting its obligations here below (and this is not un-Plotinian) may by God's grace develop something like a Plotinian higher self: and this means that the traditional Christian scale of value and importance is not as different from the Platonist as is sometimes assumed. As for sacramentalism, I think that the difference between Plotinus and Catholic Christians on this point is much more due to Plotinus's doctrine of the higher self than to his view of the material universe, which, after all, is for him a sort of great sacrament in the wide sense, a sign and a collection of signs which makes the spiritual world effectively present as far as it can be here below. The ideas of Plotinus have in fact played an important part in the development of the Catholic theology of sacraments and sacred images. But Plotinus himself (and with him Porphyry), seems to have believed that the philosopher was above all that, already at home in the spiritual world and so with no need of material helps or signs. The senior member of the school, Amelius, does not seem to have shared his master's confidence on this point; but we shall never hear Amelius's side of that story.[20]

The difference about the importance of the community has perhaps less to do with the doctrine of the higher self than the others I have noted;[21] all I would suggest is that the Christian sense of the intrinsic instability of the creature, as it has a good deal to do with Christian humility, so may have a good deal to do with our stronger sense of need for others and fellow-feeling with others

[20] Porphyry. *Life*, chap. x, ll. 33 — 6.
[21] The Christian doctrine here springs directly from the Jewish conception of te 'people of God'.

at every stage of our spiritual life. It is, I think this insistence on the necessity of being in some way in community at every stage in our ascent to God, up to and including our goal, which distinguishes the Christian outlook from that of Plotinus. The hermit prays for the whole Church; the most individualist mystic expects to enjoy the Beatific Vision in the company of heaven, the City of God. This insistence on the community at the goal is another reason for the importance of history in the Christian mind. The heavenly citizens have to be assembled, and the assembly is taking place as history goes on; though how it happens, and to whom it happens, is, it seems to me, a secret between God and the souls concerned, and no 'Christian interpretation of history' can enable us to know anything about it. The important part of history for the Christian is that which no historian can study. For Plotinus communities have a part to play in the ascent of the soul, but only, as far as I can see, at the beginning. The political community is important for the exercise of the 'political virtues': and the 'political virtues' or 'citizen virtues' (πολιτικαὶ ἀρεταί) are for Plotinus, as both his life and his writings show,[22] not a stage in our progress that can be skipped; they are the beginning, even if only a beginning, of our being made like God. And Plotinus also has a real and strong feeling for the visible universe as a community of living intelligences; it would hardly be going too far to speak of the 'mystical body of the cosmos' in Plotinus.[23] Their refusal to recognise any community with the gods of the visible universe was one of his strongest reasons for hostility to the Gnostics.[24] Here again, the recognition of this community seems to be an indispensable early stage in the ascent of the soul. But as the soul goes higher up the importance of community seems to diminish. Much of the language which Christians use about the unity-in-diversity of the heavenly city seems to be a transposition of the language which Plotinus uses about the unity-in-diversity of the world of

[22] Cp. *Life*, chap. ix. *On the Virtues*, I, ii, 1.
[23] It would be desirable for Christians to learn something from Plotinus here: and our traditional doctrine of angels would enable us to do so within the limits of orthodox belief. For the doctrine of the part played by the angels in the formation and government of the material universe see Dom Bruno Webb, *Evolution from a Theological Viewpoint*, DOWNSIDE REVIEW, October 1956, pp. 322 – 328 (where important passages from St Gregory, St Augustine and St Thomas are quoted).
[24] Cp. II, ix, 18.

Intellect. But Intellect in Plotinus is not a community of beatified persons; it remains an impersonal universal principle. And union with the One is always μόνου πρὸς μόνον. There is a sense in which this is true for the Christian too; but his thought must always revert to the community in union with God if he is to remain orthodox.

I cannot hope that the account I have tried to give of this vast complex of controversial and difficult questions is really either adequate or complete. But I have tried my best to deform neither the teaching of Plotinus nor that of the Catholic Church. As for choosing between them, everyone must take his own decision as I have taken mine. Which way you decide seems to me to depend on the answers you give (and it is a serious and exacting matter to find them) to two questions: the Plotinian 'What are we?' and the Christian 'Who is Christ?'