

When men begin to think with scientific exactness, they find that their thought is inevitably moulded by the ideas and language prevalent in the science of their own day. Now, the early Christians had no other ideas and language in which to seek a scientific exposition of their faith and practice, than those that were furnished by Greek philosophy. Accordingly it was that philosophy that gave a form to the Ethics as well as the Dogmatics of the early church. This is strikingly exhibited in the first formal treatise on Christian Ethics, which has come down to us, the *De Officiis Ministrorum* of St. Ambrose. The very title of the work recalls the *De Officiis* of Cicero, which itself professes to be merely a Roman adaptation of an earlier Greek treatise by the Stoic Panaitios; and Ambrose acknowledges that he follows Cicero's work, not only in its title, but also in its method, adopting the fourfold classification of the virtues, which had become common property among the ancient Pagan moralists. The only distinctive feature of Ambrose's work is that it illustrates the virtues by examples drawn, not from Greek and Roman history, but from the Old and New Testaments. The Christian moralist has evidently failed to mould into Christian form the materials received from his Pagan masters, and unfortunately he determined the traditional treatment of Christian Ethics for ages.

But obviously such a method of treatment is entirely inappropriate. The fact of ethical significance in Christianity is the entrance into human history of a Great Personality who by the creative force of His spiritual nature gives an impetus and direction to the moral life of the world. It seems, therefore, unscientific to construct a scientific theory of the Christian life, except by direct reference to the form which it has received from the personal influence of Christ. If there is any place for a distinctive science of Christian Ethics at all, that place can be vindicated only by starting from the ethical ideal incarnated in Christ, and working out of that a code of morality for the practical guidance of the Christian life. This, in fact, is what must differentiate Christian Ethics from Moral Philosophy. Christian Ethics start from the ideal of Christ as a *datum*—as something granted to begin