

made before our eyes, it is made with special reference to ourselves. In Christ's presence we are not the spectators of love only, we are its objects. Christ exhibits towards men, He exhibits towards us, that wonderful goodness which Paul describes. When we think what our life has been, and what has been His attitude to us from first to last, do we not say, 'Our Lord suffers long, and is kind; He is not easily provoked; He does not impute to us our evil. Where we are concerned,

where God's interest in us is concerned, He bears all things, He believes all things, He hopes all things, He endures all things?' These are the thoughts, or rather these are the experiences, out of which love is born in our hearts. We love, because He first loved us. All the time it is His love which must inspire ours. 'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.'

## Theology and History.

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At the last Congress of Historians, held in Berlin, the demand for the secularization of historical research found expression. In the name of Science it was urged that the solution of the problems of history would be hastened by the elimination of the factor, God. In his Rectoral Address,<sup>1</sup> Professor Erich Schaefer, of Kiel, essays to answer the question suggested by the utterances of some of the Berlin *savants*: 'Is it possible to understand history without God?' The secularization of history would mean, as he rightly perceives, the opening of a great gulf between theology and history. For it is on the manifestations of God in history, and especially on the historical revelation of God in Christ, that the vitality of theology depends.

The gravity of the issues raised by the claim advanced in the interests of the science of history is manifest. Of this fact Professor Schaefer's timely and impressive address will convince all its readers; it will also, we venture to think, prove that the claim cannot be allowed, and that the reasons for its rejection are scientific. Into its terse sentences so much thought is packed that it is difficult to summarize the argument without doing injustice to it. An attempt will, however, be made to indicate the strategic points in this powerful apologetic.

Many so-called theologies, we are reminded at the outset, are not theology at all. Theology proper is more than the conviction that theology

is necessary, and more than the wish for a theology. The desire for a theology may be awakened by studying states of consciousness and by reflecting on the judgments of conscience. But as theology cannot be reduced to metaphysical speculation which infers the existence of the Absolute from a contemplation of the world-process, so neither can theology be discovered by searching in the depths of one's own soul for the mystical connexion of the individual life with an incomprehensible, vaguely defined Universal Life. Theology finds evidences of the action of the Living God in the objective domain of history; that is to say, in history which is definitely and indissolubly linked with the course of Nature. Theology finds that God is a reality in the region where reality is accessible to all. Not that God is brought in as a last resort and postulated as an explanation when finite causes are insufficient, but that historical study confronts us with facts and series of facts, of whose origin, course, and effects thought can give no rational account apart from God.

Nevertheless, Professor Schaefer is not surprised that in scientific circles there has arisen a demand for the secularization of history. As a scientific theologian he remembers that the thought of God has sometimes acted as a restraint on the legitimate inquiries of the scientific historian. Men's own share in the direction of the course of events may be underestimated or neglected, when undue prominence is given to the Divine factor. For example, the theory of the verbal inspiration of Holy Scriptures exerted a detrimental influence on the study of the Bible as literature. In fairness

<sup>1</sup> *Theologie und Geschichte*. Rede beim Antritt des Rektorats der Königlichen Christian-Albrechts-Universität, gehalten von Professor Erich Schaefer, 1909. Kiel: Lipsius und Tischer.

to those whose demand he is opposing, Professor Schaefer also frankly acknowledges that much progress may be made in historical research on purely secular lines. But he insists that the scientific historian encounters phenomena from the consideration of which, if he is true to his own principles, the thought of God cannot be excluded. On the other hand, the first duty of the scientific theologian is neither to formulate a 'view of the world' in which all things in heaven and in earth shall have a place, nor to search the universe to discover if anywhere there be footprints of God. Attention ought, first of all, to be fixed on those definite historical events which compel the earnest student to come to some decision regarding God. The light thus gained will help him in his further endeavour to understand the world of reality, as a whole and in all its parts.

The central event in history is the appearance of Jesus Christ. Theologians cannot, like Mommsen, pass by in silence the origin of Christianity and its immediate effect upon the world. Some try to include Christ in the category of humanity. He is represented as a man distinguished by His religious bearing; what He has accomplished in history is said to be due to the attractive power of His moral personality. (Yet there are those who would substitute 'repellent' for 'attractive.') According to this view, Jesus is a creative genius in the sphere of religious life; and if this be a correct presentation of the historic Jesus, His personality can be explained without saying that God was in Him.

What then does historic science say of Him? It reminds us—and with propriety—that for our knowledge of Him we depend almost entirely upon writings which resemble confessions of faith in Him. Professor Schaefer replies—and with equal propriety—that it is a perversion of the historic truth to speak as though the Evangelists built castles in the air. Prejudice has no right to raise a mist which distorts the historic figure. 'The New Testament writers, without exception, regard themselves as bound by their faith to steadfast, objective facts of history. . . . Just because they know how great, how bold, how hitherto unheard of is their faith, and just because they are conscious of their responsibility as they hand it down by tradition, they lay the whole emphasis on the facts comprised in the more or less complete historical material which warrants and determines their attitude towards Christ.'

In studying the historic data, as found, for example, in the Synoptic Gospels, we learn not only what other people said of Christ, but also what He thought of Himself. Men's judgments about Him are historically linked with His judgments about Himself; moreover, the witness of His self-consciousness is confirmed by what we learn of His inner life and His outward demeanour, as well as by what we know of His influence upon others and of His gracious deeds. When this witness is rejected, it is rejected, as Professor Schaefer points out, not on historic, but on dogmatic grounds. 'Christ' stands before us in history with a unique consciousness of power.' He claims to have authority over the human will, and to be able to deliver men from the slavery of self-seeking. The sources of His inner life are found in His unique relationship to God; His humility springs not from His sense of sin, but from His consciousness of exposure to temptation.

Passing to the consideration of the influence of Christ, not only upon His contemporaries, but also upon subsequent generations, Professor Schaefer proceeds to examine the evidence for the historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus. For the purpose of his argument he is content to affirm (1) that historical inquiry into the trustworthiness of the narratives has failed to show that an event, confessedly unprecedented, cannot be included in the world of historic reality; and (2) that no decision can be come to on purely psychological grounds. This is one of those central events in history in regard to which it is impossible to say beforehand that the problems it presents to our mind can be solved without the factor God. No theory has accounted for the Resurrection-faith apart from the Resurrection-fact; the scientific historian can make this affirmation with a good conscience. 'No one can justly maintain that the historic testing of the narratives has led to the relegating of the fact itself to the region of enthusiastic fiction.'

If history is to be interpreted without God, what account can be given of the historic Jesus, of His self-consciousness, of His influence, and, above all, of His resurrection? It is obvious that to secularize history is to prejudice the main question at issue. If natural causation be the all-sufficing explanation, the personality of Jesus must be compressed into the limitations of human

categories. The historian may attempt to do this, but he does not possess, and he cannot therefore furnish, any guarantee that in ruling out the thought of God he has not excluded the *vera causa*. One thing, however, is certain: if the true explanation has been rejected, it is not because the principles of historic science have necessitated the rejection, but because the method of procedure has been dogmatic, albeit negatively dogmatic.

In the latter part of his address Professor Schaefer refers to three different schools in modern theology and to their differing treatment of the historical problems he has been investigating:

1. There are theologians who yield to the demand for the secularization of history, not because they disbelieve in God, but because they hold that history, including Christ, can be explained on principles of natural evolution. They speak of causes immanent in the world, but they are not, of necessity, pantheists. God is regarded as working within the limits prescribed by natural law. But so long as the historic Jesus, although truly man, is acknowledged to be more than man, so long as history bears witness to His redeeming power, so long as His resurrection is historically credible, who shall say that this theory, instead of helping us to understand historic reality, is not offering us mere phantasies, whether attractive or otherwise? Historians and theologians alike who adopt this attitude towards Christ are dogmatists, not scientists. Their dogmatic position is exposed to the assaults of historic science, not to speak of other objections.

2. The secularization of history is not opposed by Kantian theologians who distinguish sharply between theology and science, but contend that history must be studied from a theological as well as from a scientific point of view. It is granted that, under certain conditions, different conclusions may be drawn from the same historical data. For example, the theologian may have reasons for forming an estimate of the personality of Christ, essentially different from the secularizing historian, who cannot but regard Him as a product of natural evolution. Professor Schaefer reminds us that although our physiological heart has two chambers, the 'heart' of man—when the word is used as a synonym for personality—is a unity. Two essentially different answers to historic questions are impossible, when our attitude towards them will affect our entire inner life. From

many quarters objections are raised to-day against this theory, which is that of the older Ritschlian school. Its concessions cannot be justified as the requirements of historical science, and it reverts to the old and useless distinction between knowledge and faith.

3. Another course may be taken by the theologian who has no desire to hinder the historian in the conduct of investigations which may legitimately be undertaken without introducing the thought of God as a factor into the reckoning. When history leaves the study of statistics, chronology, etc., and propounds a naturalistic explanation of all historical phenomena, including Christ, theology has a right to say, as it inspects the products of the historian's loom, that he has been weaving with dogmatic threads. Theology can respect secularized history only when it keeps strictly within its own proper sphere. History need not be unwilling sometimes to say *non liquet*,—to acknowledge that, having granted to scientific criticism of the sources its full rights, justice cannot be done to historical evidence without coming to terms with the thought of God. Theology can then enter by the door left open, its task being to show cause for the recognition of God in history, and to answer questions concerning what God is able and willing to do—questions which even historical science cannot escape.

In concluding, Professor Schaefer declares that his main purpose has been to expose the fallacies which underlie the assumption that historical science builds on the firm ground of reality, whilst theology erects castles in the air. The history of religion—much more the history of Christianity—confronts the student with an alternative that must be faced. Either the science of history must include, as it has often done, theological elements; or, if history be secularized, theology must be regarded as an indispensable supplement to, or complement of, history. To strive to explain the world of historic reality without having recourse to the thought of God is to pass from the domain of science to that of dogma. Theology lives on history; apart from history, theology is psychological, and perhaps metaphysical, phantasy. It is true that religion is life and furnishes theology with subject-matter. But this life does not revolve around man as its centre. The life of religion, on which theology depends, proceeds from God, who has made Himself known in historic facts.