

ARTICLE V.

CHRIST AND PHILOSOPHY.¹

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THE indefiniteness of the recognition of Christ in the field of Philosophy² has been remarkable. This should not be estimated as a critical disparagement of Christ's teaching. Counter tendencies have been more or less prejudicial. On the one hand the representatives of Christianity, anxious to show the logic of their position, have made theology at once systematic and dogmatic, the exacting nature of the discussions involving, of course, while yet overpassing, genuine philosophy. On the other hand the tendency to be exact was matched by the development of freedom, unrestricted freedom, of mysticism which was rather imaginative than rational, losing its import as philosophic in the clouds of creative supposition. Mysticism has led to the depreciation of Religion as mere matter of feeling, as having to do with non-realities. "Confusion worse confounded." The fiction of the critic may surpass the fiction of the devotee.

Here then we have had two opposite developments, both tending to bring reproach. Is truth thereby dethroned? Have we not rather a higher truth, a union in the opposites? Does not the resulting contention arouse us to search more earnestly?

¹This paper was prepared for the annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association at Yale University, December 27-29, 1909.

²For a recent discussion of Philosophy as related to science and to the powers of the mind, see the address on Philosophy by President Nicholas Murray Butler, published by Columbia University.

Surely to the scholarly vision there is evident a basal rationality in religious life, may we not say a veritable

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION?

Notwithstanding the zeal, even superstition, which would insist, 'Hands off, religious truth is too sacred for profane babbling,' gradually the claims of reason have been asserted, indeed have been established, the human unit becoming conscious of itself as a religious entity. Here unmistakably we reach the highest stage of man's progression. The clarifying of consciousness, the rationalizing of divine impulses, — does there not lie herein the crowning achievement, the consummation, of our modern progress? Of course, in all time there has been a rational increment, although devotion's zeal has tended to outrun intelligence. Yet, even among the Greeks the reasoned development was subordinate, subconscious. Their inspirations were poetic, artistic, indefinitely philosophical. During the following centuries the indefinite becomes definite, as we have seen hyperdefinite — indeed even in the field of philosophy, when so-called Dogmatism prevails in Germany.

This environing predicament aroused the critical mind of Immanuel Kant. He leaves us his epoch-making work, "Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason." Following the inspiration of Kant's achievement came Fichte, Germany's most renowned educator, founder and architect of the Imperial University in Germany's capital city, whose centenary¹ the

¹The Philosophical Society of Berlin, the coming autumn, will honor the celebrated philosopher Fichte by the dedication of a monument to his memory. No other philosopher in the fatherland of modern thinking has appealed so strongly to the western world. The present writer is a member of the Berlin Philosophical Society and of the Fichte Committee. He is receiving and transmitting contributions for the Centenary. The American Philosophical As-

grateful Fatherland is preparing to celebrate. For no one contributed more than Fichte to make Germany's capital city the Mecca for Philosophical students. But while Fichte was a worshiper of freedom he insisted that all revelation must conform to the dictates of the rational.

In the course of the following generation Hegel launches an authoritative disquisition, and the "Philosophy of Religion" is born. Hegel was also Rector of the Berlin University. Not only does Hegel recognize the reasoned inspiration that is in true religion, but he proceeds to prove that religion's philosophy is practical, imperative, one with the philosophy of history. A little later President Walker of Harvard testifies¹ that there is abundant room for Faith under sanctions of the rational life.

Thus unmistakably philosophy has invaded, has validated, the claims of religious truth. Indeed within the past generation Professor Caird, Master of Balliol College at Oxford, has given us a masterly work on Religion and Evolution. Here he shows conclusively that science at her highest and best is a virtual handmaid in religious progress. And even Spencer, the apostle of agnosticism, acknowledges that there is a verity at the basis of our advance in methods of devotion.² The recent work by Professor Höffding, of the University of Copenhagen, on the now recognized Philosophy of Religion is only a specimen of the numerous works of the present day, which bear witness that our higher institutions, our ablest scholars, find a veritable philosophy in man's highest, his re-
sociation and our leading educational institutions are honoring themselves by appearing on the list of those who honor Fichte and the Imperial University which he developed.

¹ President James Walker, Reason, Faith, and Duty.

² See article "Herbert Spencer, the Apostle of Agnosticism," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. lxii. (1905) pp. 304-322.

ligious, development. We may mark readily the steps in this progression. Let us consider then specially the relation of Christ to what had gone before,

CHRISTIANITY AND THE ETHNIC RELIGIONS.

We are able to trace the evolution of man, the rational religious animal, in its cosmic as well as racial aspects. It takes all the world and all historic time to make clear to us the ascending of the human to the Divine, the growth and realization of man's theistic possibilities. Only when we are able to marshal the nations do we get a complete sequence. In ancient Egypt we find taural worship. Fear inspires devotion. The most powerful is most divine. Future life though of inferior order is important, more important mayhap than the present. Penalties must be paid. The quoting of rubrics may nevertheless secure deliverance.

In China the exactions of law appear perfectly inexorable. Religion is expounded by mathematical formulæ. There is an absolute rule of impersonal reason. External, rather than internal, formalism becomes extreme. With minimum regard for a future life there is no church apart from the state.

In Greece we have worship of intellect rather than of power, but intellect personified, a wild development of personification. Unnumbered attributes of man and of nature become personalities. They fill the sea, the earth, the sky. The beautiful outshines the good. The highest gods have defective morality. The future world Hades is an obscure region, dubiously desirable.

In Judea the wilderness of personification becomes unified. Monotheism develops. The one God is a king. There is an eternal royal rule. It involves the immortality of a regimen rather than of the individual. Righteousness is demanded

from the mountain top by divine law. It is prevailingly an external kingship, an extrinsic morality, the glory of Mount Zion a visual beauty. But Judah's prophets sing of a perfect era. By sacrifice of animal life, penalties may be removed.

Following these developments comes Christ. He is proclaimed as God's Son. God is revealed as a father. The human family are his children. There is indeed a kingdom, a heavenly kingdom. But it is within. Deed, word, and thought are to be one. Christ is not merely a proclamation; he is an example. He objectifies the truth. The essential is not simply formal: it is intrinsic, spiritual. It may come as a kingship of God in this present time. God as love may dwell in us. His will, his kingdom, is to prevail among men. While God in Christ reveals a sword against iniquity, Christ comes rather to fulfil than to demolish. The prophets and lawgivers of the past were his predecessors. There is to be a transcending development. The least of seeds may become unspeakably great. Glory in a manger is to fill the skies. Let us observe the detail of this process.

CHRIST AND THEISM.

Christ clarifies for us the ideation of God. Through purity of heart God becomes visible. It is not the eye but the spirit that beholds. The Lord of all the earth is not simply power corporeal. As omnipotent he is sovereign of the unsearchable. His Knowledge, his Sovereignty, is not confined. He is at once omnipotent and omnipresent. Every potency of personality inheres in the unconditioned source of personality. As eternal reason he is absolutely perfect. Everywhere potent, he clothes the flowers of the field. Dwelling in us, we with Christ become princes. The church is a queen. Mount Zion as simply earthly may be overlooked, cast into the sea. While lord of

mountains, rightly seen the highest God is round about his people. Blessed are the eyes that have the vision supernal. Yea, blessed even those that mourn. Men becoming sons, one with the Father, are commissioned to ask. The infinite Father accomplishes. We have but to speak. Reward awaits. Becoming perfect, we become identified, hidden, with Christ in God. The prophets who sang of the mountains round about Jerusalem gave us in allegory the glory of Zion whose beauty of situation is merely reflected in things terrestrial.

These premonitions of the glory of God and his kingdom were not confined to Israel. The philosophic spirit of Paul could discern in Greek achievement the antecedent of the Christ God.¹ The Stoics, who had broken with mythology, were right in the claim that the true God is not confined to temples, but is all-pervading. He dwells in spiritual temples and is ready to save men who are his image. While the Stoics took exception to the multitudinous personalities of Greek religion, they failed to perpetuate the best attainment in genuine theistic intellection. The divine unification, the perfect, the Good of Plato and the transcendent unique personification of the one God of Aristotle were too lofty to abide in the thoughts of common men.

In Alexandria, following the logic of Aristotle, Philo declares that the *Logos*, or eternal Reason, is the divine in the world-process. This became a connecting link with Christ, who was characterized, identified, as the working divine power in the world. While, however, in Alexandria the union of Greek thinking with the teachings of Christ made commendable progress, the completed conciliation of philosophy with Christian

¹ See Paul's address to the philosophers of Athens on the *Areopagus* (Acts xvii. 18-31); also Professor Samuel Harris, *The Philosophical Basis of Theism*.

theism begins with Descartes. His claim, nevertheless, that the absolute *substantia*, or reality, was God met with much opposition. Spinoza, who follows, finds it necessary to minimize man in the glorification of a God substance, mathematically exact but dubiously personal. The truth that man as well as God may be free begins to manifest itself, to develop, in the mind of Leibnitz.

Following him, Kant declares the truths that man has a consciousness of moral freedom and that a perfect God is postulated by a happy perfected humanity.¹ It was Hegel, however, who gradually paved the way for harmonization of Theism in Christianity and Philosophy. In his philosophy of logic Hegel maintains that every object of knowledge has a threefold aspect, thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, namely, a conditioned, an unconditioned, and a union. He insists upon this triune aspect also in our theistic intellection, God as evident in matter, God as spirit, and God as uniting the two (the synthesis), God the Father.

PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

The old Sophistic notion of Ethics as simply the customary has not yet entirely disappeared. Evolved custom still claims a scientific valuation. Socrates, who opposed the Sophists, insisted upon a right reason as foundation of morals. He declared a principle at basis of right conduct, and has been well honored as the father of genuine moral philosophy. In Aristotle ethics takes a thoroughly systematic form. While, however, he established the facts of moral life on a strong foundation, he fails entirely to bring ethics within the category of religion. This gulf is bridged by Judaism, where the moral code is interpreted as an immediate command of God.

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Practischen Vernunft*.

In Christianity, finally, the entire life is brought under the sovereignty of religion, the moral being acceptable only as obedience to divine will.¹ Man's will is to become God's will. Here develops the intrinsic character of Christ's ethics. The ethical unit is free. Perfection of development is to be outcome of unhindered choosing. Free choice to be perfectly masterly must be perfectly rational.

Under this philosophy of Christian ethics, Man as causal becomes the architect of his destiny. He builds not only freely, he builds for all time. Part of an exact system of law and penalty, he has limited knowledge. By doing the right, however, he perfects himself. By making God's will his will, man triumphs. The doing and the vision develop together. Thinking more important than external act, the intention becomes the all-essential. Whatever our imperfection, we may avoid the possible dangers of perfected liberty by our realization of the divine will. Hence our restricted intellection may find in God's will all the potences of rationality and safety. The paternal God effectuates the divine, the perfect life of the child. While we are restrained in choices of evil, we are enlightened in our choices of good, our freedom becoming perfectly rationalized, perfectly safe. Such is the consummation of Christian ethics.

And this accords with the latest and best philosophy. Freedom, however, inscrutable in its essence, commands recognition. A mere science of ethics develops, perhaps we may say under necessity, a philosophy of the moral life. More and more there is call for a complete synthesis of conduct. Man's life at the highest and best comes into communication with the absolutely free rather than with absolute compulsion. The agnosticism which would set aside the ultimates in religion

¹ *Dorner, Christian Ethics.*

may be willing to recognize an "absolute Ethics." At the same time our best thinkers in the field of philosophy insist that religion emphatically demands the highest, the perfect life. Morality and religion are practically as well as theoretically inseparable. In the arena of ethics Christianity and philosophy clasp hands.

POLITICS AND SOCIALISM.

We are accustomed to separate the civil and the religious, church and state. And yet we cherish fondly the declaration, "Vox populi vox Dei" — a declaration that needs to be rationalized. Evidently it cannot grow wild. When have we a people whose voice is the voice of God? We soldiers used to sing, "God is marching on." And yet when we drove Stonewall Jackson from his camp and found he had given religious tracts to his men, we could not explain the case.¹ We have the question before us to-day, "In the Philippines is self-government justified?" — a problem all the more profound because we cannot separate national policy from religion.

Nevertheless, does not Christianity bring the solution? Self-interest is not the *summum bonum*. It is rather the not-self, self-sacrifice, that is to prevail. Certainly that is the principle Christ illustrated for us. Every man must take his cross. Here, however, how much we need wisdom. Evidently the cross is forerunner of the crown. It is truest love that sacrifices, and love is organic — attractions, impulsions, adherences, "The Union forever." But more and more what call for rationality. Blessed indeed the truth that love tends to unite. But as well evil may develop attractions. How easily self-interest prevails. Socialism calls for respect because there is union of heart and hand. At the same time

¹See Horace Bushnell, *Moral Uses of Dark Things*.

we execrate the mob because it is organic. Let socialism become perfectly righteous and it becomes completely free. But strikes claim socialistic right to freedom. Let the golden rule prevail, and the rights of capital and labor will find their righteous adjustment.

We call God our Father, and pray, "Thy Kingdom come." But is not the heavenly Kingdom all-inclusive? Is not the service of the state duty, sacred duty? Does not Christ's religion call for perfect politics? Unfailing righteousness in the body politic will absorb and hence overcome tendencies to anarchy. President Cleveland never honored himself more than when he as national ruler dominated the Chicago strike. Socialistic and labor rights must develop in terms of the higher unity, and the state is to become a kingdom of righteousness. Under highest Christian civilization the free and the righteous, church and state are harmonized. The voice of the people becomes veritably the voice of God.

PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION.

But if we are to involve an all-pervading philosophy, reach a perfect regimen, the popular voice must verily be in harmony with the highest. The command "Be perfect" suggests the question, What is perfection? Our modern Psychology, the synthetic of the soul, must come to our aid. Science which involves the processes of the understanding does not enable us to attain ultimates, to reach the limits of time or space, or to complete the analysis of a material object. It is our reason that has to do with what is beyond, with the unconditioned. Reason enables self-consciousness to determine the self as primal, primal object of intellection. Here dawns the intelligence that self is not matter but spirit. Indeed spirit becomes more fully known than matter.

Reason recognizes not only the absolute universality of cause and time and space, but as well the fact of freedom. Our unity with the eternal may thus develop in consciousness. The purification of spiritual vision enables us to see the completely causal God, God as our Father. We behold what the world by sentient vision cannot reach. Here, therefore, Psychology fully verifies the teaching of Christ.

If then we would make the voice of the people sane and safe, veritably the voice divine, there must be development, education. In a general way this fact has been acknowledged. Christian civilization has established schools, colleges, universities. Now it is noteworthy that what is first in importance is the last to be appreciated, highest values latest seen. Difficulties in development of church and state have engendered reprehension of religion. Nevertheless it is man as the religious unit that we are bound to educate.¹ Already the essentials of religion are generally recognized. Rival sects are teaching religion freely. In essentials there is very nearly unity. If at the present time there is a freeness that is not perfectly rationalized, progress toward the one truth is certainly commendable; and Christ's truth verifies itself. There is no real conflict between genuine faith and genuine free choosing.

Thus accordingly, under proper education, we have these highest powers of man determined better and better, trained with judicious care, satisfied increasingly. In due time the teaching of religion in the schools will reach acquiescence, and the voice of the people will as consequence involve step by step the voice of God.

¹ For an authoritative statement of the import of man's religious faculties in genuine culture at the present day, see Professor H. H. Horne, *Psychological Principles of Education*, p. 335.

ART AS CHRISTOCENTRIC.

Let us now interpret, summarize this progress, this growth Godward. Not rejecting science we must supplement it. While no doubt it is better to trust than to know, there is a philosophy in our faith. The highest realities are spiritual. We idealize, symbolize, what our sense-knowledge cannot reach. To realize his ideals of the absolute, man becomes an artist. Among the Egyptians the dynamic aspect of the divine makes art colossal. The Greeks build temples for their gods. Symmetry meets necessity. In their sculpture the theistic aspect of humanity is splendidly developed, well nigh perfection of external outline.

In the more romantic ideation of modern times man's achievement of Freedom guides his inspiration. The cathedral, with its lofty heavenward ascent, crowned by many spires and flying buttresses, these bearing (it may be) sculptured saints, becomes the sanctuary for songs of deliverance. Music takes its transcendent development. Painting as well reaches its zenith. The source of inspiration is the true light. Raphael's Madonnas and Handel's Messiah demonstrate for us that their transcending artistic triumph is Christocentric.

Philosophy shows us likewise that the creative soul of our highest art achievement is this glorious liberty in light celestial. This is not objective perfectness, objective felicity. The eye and the ear simply effectuate subjective realities, subjective vision, enabling glimpses of glory that excelleth, enabling us virtually to spiritualize the outer environment.¹ Man becomes an artist before he is aware of the fact. The mere artificer unconsciously follows æsthetic lines. As the genuine art pro-

¹*Gemeinschaft und Persönlichkeit im Zusammenhange mit den Grundzügen geistigen Lebens*, von Dr. Alfred Wenzel. Philosophische Vorträge herausgegeben von der Philosophischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin. 3 Folge. 7 Heft.

ducer interprets, develops, the higher design, more and more he fascinates us with glimpses of the undiscovered.

And this higher vision applies to ourselves. There is something undiscovered, divine, in us. Aristotle taught that the artist under law of habituation builds within as well as without. Modern philosophy would emphasize the antithesis, namely, the artist makes the subjective objective. Art helps man to evolve his possibilities, his divine possibilities. What a gentle touch of fine art appears in Christ's parables, at once ideal and real. But his consummate art conceals the artistic effect. His figures are transcendently actual. What the artist catches in glimpses Christ saw clearly; beholding the possibilities, the risks of God's wandering children, the Good Shepherd would bring home the lost sheep.

PHILOSOPHY AND LIFE.

"Man has a sense of conduct," said Matthew Arnold. How true that we catch revealings of causes within, of character and the will that makes it. As we behold each other we inevitably interpret. With something of the higher vision we reach the inner temple, attractions that are heavenly, or, it may be, repulsions. Manifestly Christ could read the interiority much more accurately than we. We cannot estimate the limits of his surpassing insight. Perfect deeds accompanied the perfect development. He saw, he knew, what was in man. No one ever beheld man's unmeasured value more clearly, estimated it more highly. If Christ himself had wonderful power over nature, greater works he declared his followers will do. If Christ could overcome death physical, his followers would revive the spiritually dead, speaking "wonderful words of life." Clearly there is intrinsic potency abiding undeveloped in our fellow-men. As we have seen, by doing

we know; furthermore, our practice preaches. As our practice validates the True, we become lights. Never before was there so much call for verifications of religion in the life.

But our free choices will land us in mysticism if they are not safeguarded; and truth, safeguard of genuine liberty, must rise to its own defense; and, moreover, the practical involves the very highest philosophy. The rationality of our faith must ever be verified. The highest mountains are the first to be cloud-capped. Hence the need of rational statements, for a reasoned *credo*. While it is true that Christ never stood higher than at the present time, it is equally true that never before was religion confronted with so many problems. The fight of faith is in the air. Destructive critics are striving for success. But constructive critics are holding the field.¹ There is imperative call for philosophy, for the reasoned foundation.

And the demand is unremitting. As long as the world stands there will be field for discussion. Questions in archæology, as to the works and words of Christ, not to say the teachings of the prophets, will call for critical settlement. And as long as we know in part there will be differing opinions. What call for mental activity, for sincerity and accuracy. No doubt the situation is providential—ever rejuvenated activity and interest, ever increasing evidence of valid foundations. Freedom of discussion may more or less forestall church union. Still the zeal of rivalry may develop its modicum of energy and power in the total Christian community.

There is a unitary in Christ's truth, a center of attraction in the Christ life. There is call as never before for such verities

¹ See articles by a famous critical authority in archæology, Dr. Emil Reich, on the "Bankruptcy of the Higher Criticism," in the *Contemporary Review* for 1905 and 1906. Also article "Evolution and the Miraculous," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. lxx. (1908) pp. 572-585.

as Christ proclaimed. More and more clearly they are proving themselves verities. Amid mysteries where Socrates halted, Christ speaks with authority. Such light, such authority, is the need of the day. Revealer of the divine in humanity, developer of heaven on earth, friend of the needy, teacher at once of the highest and lowest, He is the peerless philosopher.