

CRITICAL NOTES

WHAT IS A DEMOCRACY?

ACCORDING to a prominent daily newspaper in the Middle West, a reverend professor, in a college under Christian auspices, has gravely and publicly proposed to amend the Lord's Prayer by substituting for "thy kingdom come" the words "thy democracy come." Devout Christians will probably resent this proposal to transform the Lord's Kingdom and to mutilate the Lord's Prayer. Instead of giving tongue to this resentment, it may be worth while for Christians to consider what is involved in the proposed transformation. If accomplished, would it involve any fundamental change in our Lord's kingdom? Is this proposal only a bit of popular clap-trap? In order intelligently and correctly to answer these questions, we must determine what a democracy is; and in what respects it differs from a kingdom.

The oft-quoted saying of President Lincoln at Gettysburg by many is regarded as a brief, but well-nigh perfect, definition of democracy. It is a government of the people, for the people, by the people. This definition needs to be defined. The phrase "government of the people" is ambiguous. It may mean a government over the people. It may mean government on the part of the people. This second possible meaning is substantially that of the phrase "government by the people." We may, therefore, accept the former of the two meanings as the correct one, and describe a democracy as a government over all the people, for the benefit of all the people, by the people themselves. The word "all" is purposely left out of the last clause because a government by all the people in any extensive and complex community is impracticable if not absurd. "The people" regarded as rulers must be limited. Immature children, mental and moral imbeciles, criminals, tramps, persistent idlers of every class, must be excluded from the exercise of governmental functions. The people who really exercise these functions must be limited to the intelligent, industrious, and moral men; and, if any one chooses so to believe and say, to women who possess these characteristics.

Let us, then, admit that the only practicable democracy is a government in which the ruling functions are exer-

cised by intelligent, moral, and industrious men and women who contribute by their mental and manual labor, and by their accumulated wealth, to the good order of society and to the welfare of all the people. These constitute the only rational *demos*, to whom alone can authority to rule be safely and wisely committed.

It is also evident that even in such a democracy all the functions of government cannot be exercised by all the individuals who compose the *demos*. These functions must be distributed: to a few more, to the many less. If the *demos* were on an island, separated from the rest of the world; if it were composed of a few men and women of about the same measure of intelligence, experience, morality, industry, and physical strength, it might be practicable to confer on each and all, all ruling functions. Even under these very exceptional conditions, such an attempt to secure a pure democracy might be found by no means to be the best government which the islanders could devise. Expand this *demos* to any considerable extent; bring in others less developed in physical, mental, and moral powers, and the exercise of all governmental functions by all the individuals of the *demos* would be impracticable; or, if for a time found to be practicable, would be unjust: unjust, because of the unequal abilities of the individuals; impracticable, because of the numbers involved, and because of the number and diversity of the governmental functions to be performed. It may be admitted that the primary power of government, expressed in voting, may be placed, in these usually expanded conditions, in the hands of the *demos*, each individual having one vote. But the secondary powers or functions must be exercised by comparatively a few, who derive their just authority to act as rulers from the many. Thus democracy becomes necessarily a combination of democracy and oligarchy.

For an extended discussion of this subject, reference is here made to an English book on this subject by W. H. Mallock, entitled "Limits of Pure Democracy" (1918), to which the present writer acknowledges his great indebtedness.

In actual practice it makes little difference how this combination of democracy and oligarchy is developed or proportioned. It began in the family. The father was an autocrat ruling, according to his own will, his wife and children. It may be admitted that the wife, even from

the beginning, influenced her husband's opinions and to some extent determined his conduct. As soon as the sons became men the father's autocracy became an oligarchy. Clans and tribes emerged from families. The chief of the tribe derived his right to the exercise of governmental functions over all from his own inherited and acquired mental and physical power, and from the consent of the heads of families who constituted in those times and communities the real *demos*. Contiguous tribes were merged into a nation or state usually by conquest; or, at times, by the agreement of the tribal chiefs. In the former case we have what may be regarded or called an autocratic king or emperor; in the latter, a constitutional ruler. In either case there is an oligarchy sustained by a *demos*; because no single ruler, autocratic or constitutional, can impose his will, and exercise the functions of government, unless his decrees are sustained by the *demos*, and executed by subordinates appointed either by the people or by himself.

The development of modern democracies, so called, consists largely in the enlargement of the *demos* by extending to more of the people the right to vote; and by the transfer of autocratic powers from a single person to a number of persons, who really constitute an oligarchy. Thus, in great states, the real distinction between a constitutional empire, a kingdom, a republic, or a democracy, disappears. The so-called British Empire, the Kingdom of Great Britain, the French Republic, and the United States of North America are all based on the consent of the *demos*. They are all ruled by comparatively a few men. They are all expressions of democracies combined with oligarchies. Even the Referendum and the Initiative are only devices to enlarge somewhat the legislative functions of the *demos*. Most of the legislative functions, and all of the judicial and executive functions of government, must continue to be exercised by the few.

We find the same mixture of democracy and oligarchy when the theories of the socialists, even on a small scale, are reduced to practice. The socialists tell us that a democracy is a government in which every man shall have an equal voice in the affairs of his country in virtue of his manhood alone. If this doctrine were effectively applied, the government so constituted would be determined and controlled by the abilities and votes of men and women below the average man or woman. This conclusion is re-

puddiated by many socialists who would exclude from the *demos* citizens very low in the scale of morals and intelligence. The socialists claim that these are few in numbers and are negligible in practice. Even if this claim is admitted; if an average somewhat higher than the ability of the lower section could be reached; if this higher average could attain to the intelligence of the average man and woman of the *demos* taken in its entirety as defined by the socialists, a government thus constituted would not be a sane or safe democracy, pure and simple. The reason is apparent. Either the votes of any number of average men, or of men below the average, would counteract the votes of any smaller number of superior, wiser, and better men, which would not be good for all the people of the country; or the smaller number of superior men would effectively control the votes of the larger number of their inferiors.

An illustration of this second alternative, indeed of both, may be found in our own country during what is called the Reconstruction Period. In the Southern States the *demos* was increased by the introduction of all grown negro men. For a time, in regions not governed by the Federal army, there was more or less anarchy. But soon an oligarchy of white men was formed, resulting in the exclusion, or the control, of many negro votes. This oligarchy preferred to be governed by bayonets in the hands of intelligent white men rather than by ballots in the hands of ignorant negroes. A more recent illustration is afforded on a more extended scale in Russia. The revolution which overthrew the Czar and his Bureaucracy did not at first cause a complete break-up of the governmental organization. The Duma was in session. The heads of the great departments of the government were in office. The army was organized and fairly well disciplined. Unfortunately there was at Petrograd a socialistic organization, dominated by a few men, at heart oligarchs, who were in sympathy with the extreme forms of German and other socialisms. These Russian socialists, thus animated, organized a second revolt both among citizens and soldiers. They proposed a democracy pure and simple. The outcome has been an autocratic oligarchy. So far it has issued in anarchy, except as it has been controlled by the German Government. The real Russian *demos* has had neither the opportunity nor the ability to manifest its power.

When the smaller socialistic bodies are examined, Trade

Unions and the like, we find a similar set of conditions. While, nominally, these organizations are pure democracies, in fact the power of the many, with at least their implied consent, is exercised by the few. The few influence and often control the votes of the many. Sometimes the oligarchy thus emerging becomes an oligarch who plays the part of an autocratic king. His will is law. His fellow democrats accept it as such.

We may now consider the proposed substitution of a divine democracy for a divine kingdom. The important questions are: What substantial change would be effected? What gain would be secured by the substitution if it could be effected?

It must be understood that the present discussion proceeds from a standpoint presumably very different from that of the reverend professor who has boldly and publicly advocated the substitution. He would most probably rule out the use of the word "divine." He would probably assert that Jesus was only a man, though a very great and a very good man; that his kingdom, or God's kingdom on earth, when it came, would be a human kingdom, his democracy only a human democracy. Be this as it may, the present writer regards God's government on earth, over which his Only Begotten and Well Beloved Son is directly the Supreme Ruler, as a divine government, whether called an empire, a kingdom, or a democracy; and it is now proposed to show that, like all other governments known to men, it is a combination of democracy and oligarchy.

It would, indeed, be most presumptuous for any man to predict what are to be the details of Christ's Kingdom when it is established in its final and glorious condition on earth. All intelligent and devout Christians believe that then, as now, and as it ever has been since God's people on earth were organized into an outward and visible body, Christ will be its autocratic King, save as his autocracy is derived from his Father, the Eternal and Infinite God. This delegated autocracy he claimed. All power in heaven and on earth is his by divine right. We may reasonably infer from the history of the past that many governmental functions will be committed to subordinate officers; that his final and glorious Kingdom will be a combination of oligarchy and democracy. As intimated above, there is no disposition on the part of the present writer to dogmatize as to this. The records of the past at least suggest it.

Certainly from the days of Abraham, all down the ages, the Lord has been the autocratic King of His People, whether called out, from among the Gentiles or descended from the Father of the Faithful. Yet from the beginning, heads of families, elders, judges, priests, and kings, according to the Lord's appointment and with the consent of the people, exercised governmental functions. When the bounds of Judaism were enlarged; when the Congregation of the Lord, which under the New Testament we call the Church, started on its world-wide, Christ-given, mission; amid all its vicissitudes and corruptions, as well as when purest and most faithful, the same combination of oligarchy and democracy appears. Christ still rules over the Congregation of the Lord, the Church. His revealed will is its law. Yet he rules on earth by means of subordinates whose authority is, indeed, derived from him; but which is and must be sustained, under present conditions, by the Christian *demos* or people who elect them, and who regard them as divinely appointed.

The Roman Church, among all the Churches, most resembles an empire. In its government the democratic element is apparently insignificant; yet the presence and power of this element are essential to its existence as an empire. The oligarchic element is more conspicuous. The Pope, though regarded as the vicegerent of the Lord, would be impotent without his subordinate officers, appointed directly or indirectly by himself.

Evidently the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches are both democratic and oligarchic in their respective forms of government. This is true in the case of the Congregational churches, supposed by many to be pure democracies. Their congregational assemblies, in which every communicant in good and regular standing has one vote and so appears to have equal power with each of his brethren, are to a considerable extent controlled by their elders and deacons, to say nothing of other members of unusual ability and wealth whose influence controls the votes of many. It is of course inevitable that the general policies of the Congregational churches are determined by delegated bodies.

It thus appears that church government takes on the various forms in which civil government appears. All of these forms are combinations of democracy and oligarchy in varying proportions. As democracies, the power of gov-

ernment inheres primarily in a *demos*, composed of men and women who make an intelligent and credible confession of faith in Jesus, the Christ, as Saviour and Lord; and who by their service and money agree to execute his Great Commission. As oligarchies, certain of these confessors, delegated directly or indirectly by the *demos*, in some churches few in number, direct the work committed to his people by Christ their King.

We may therefore conclude that the reverend professor's proposal to transform the Lord's Kingdom into a democracy pure and simple, is a silly attempt to rob our Saviour of his divine right to be the God-appointed King of his people, having authority to announce to them facts which are real, to give them doctrines which they must believe, laws which they must obey, ordinances which they must observe, and a glorious destiny which they are to enjoy. If such a proposal could be realized, it would turn the church into a mere human, voluntary, go-as-you-please society, having the right to believe, to confess, and to do what it pleased. It would compel in every case a minority, however large and intelligent, to submit to a majority, however small, unintelligent, and disloyal. The only alternative left to the minority would be to secede and to form another so-called church; which, in turn, as a pure democracy, would run a similar course. The final outcome would be neither a kingdom, nor a democracy, nor an oligarchy. Rather it would be, as civil government now is in Russia, a religious anarchy, having Despair as its god; rather than a divine government over a free and consenting people, sustained amid all the vicissitudes of earthly life by a great and blessed Hope.

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THE THEORY OF A FINITE AND DEVELOPING DEITY

THE object of my article in the April number of *The American Journal of Theology*, 1918, was to elicit discussion among theologians of Bergson's proposal (if he did propose it) that God by nature is a Becoming. Of course, I should not have discussed the subject at all if the proposal had not attracted me, but I am far from supposing that it has been thoroughly explored or is in a condition to be definitely accepted or rejected. And, however flat-

tering it may be, I am not at all inclined to accept Dr. Gruber's opinion (in the article to which I wish to call a moment's attention) that "from the viewpoint of such as may accept unchallenged its [the proposal's] underlying premises, it would seem that its conclusions should leave the matter of God's supposedly necessary limitations no longer an open question."

The article under review is that written by the Rev. L. F. Gruber, D.D., of St. Paul, and published in the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA for October, 1918, under the title, "The Theory of a Finite and Developing Deity Examined." Dr. Gruber is quite right in saying that "it is precisely in the premises that we must differ from its [the theory's] advocates." He should therefore have devoted his attention to those premises; but this he does not do at all. His final outcome is merely this, that upon his premises, the premises of an *a priori* philosophy, and by the methods of deductive logic, the theory in question must be rejected, and the static view of God maintained. We admit this without question, and so would all others who may advocate the new theory. Our principal objection is to that very philosophy and to its premises. It is of such things that James is writing, in the passage I quoted from him, when he says: "What is deduction of these metaphysical attributes but a shuffling and matching of pedantic dictionary adjectives, aloof from morals, aloof from human needs, something that might be worked out from the mere word 'God' by one of those logical machines of wood and brass which recent ingenuity has contrived, as well as by a man of flesh and blood? They have the trail of the serpent over them." Orthodox theologians should take this sentence to heart and open their eyes to the fact that the revolt against their theology is not against trifles or details, but against the very substance of it.

To cite a single example, out of many possible ones, we read (p. 490): "somewhere there must also be an *unchanging*," a statement for which no proof is offered save a parenthetical clause on the following page, "as indeed the very word *change* would seem to imply." Then, of course, our contention falls, for we have suggested that perhaps God Himself, the Ultimate, is constantly in process of development. But are we to be refuted, after all the study and discussion of such a volume as the "Creative Evolution," by a sentence which without argument

assumes the point the writer wishes to prove? That word *assume*, Dr. Gruber does not seem to understand, for he charges modern science, after all the labor which has led to the organization of the generalization of energy and the unity of force, with *assuming* "a unified force as the impelling cause" of the world (p. 480)! The experiential philosophy assumes nothing except the possibility of man's arriving at truth.

I am not sure but that Dr. Gruber may be right in limiting Wundt's principle of the increase of spiritual strength to finite spiritual energy, though he does not cite anything from Wundt upon the point, but brings in one of his own principles to justify himself, "surely an infinite spiritual entity could not become more infinite" (p. 490). But the suggestion is no less worth thinking of, that, as man's spiritual energy evidently tends to increase, so it *may be* with all spiritual energy. That point deserves attention.

I am surprised that Dr. Gruber did not make more out of the difficulty I myself raised, that a developing God must have once been nothing. To be sure, that is the Hegelian position, which makes "pure being" equal to "nothing." Hegel gets the phenomenal world out of that starting point, but I confess, experientialists cannot. Whether my answers to the difficulty amount to anything or not, I should be glad to have them discussed, particularly my suggestion that we may rest satisfied with the proposition "that God exists and is progressing" (p. 290).

Let me not fail, in closing, to recognize the ability and thoroughness, after its own method, of Dr. Gruber's article. It has reminded me of Jonathan Edwards.

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THE object of the writer's article in the October number of the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA was not so much to answer Dr. Foster, or any other individual exponent of the theory of a finite and developing Deity, as it was to discuss that theory itself and to show that it is philosophically untenable. Hence the article's form and method of treatment. To this fact, therefore, must be attributed the several misunderstandings and misapplications on the part of Dr. Foster. However, in setting forth that theory, as was only proper,

in terms used by its exponents, Dr. Foster's illuminating article demanded special attention. And, indeed, while my comment (p. 490, and quoted by Dr. Foster) on the defense of the theory by its exponents, from their own viewpoint, was meant to apply to the *accumulated* defense, it would surely not apply less to Dr. Foster's excellent article than to any other.

It is true that my article does not specifically take up, one by one, the expressed and implied premises, upon which the theory of a finite and developing Deity is based. But this is because such treatment would have taken us too far afield, for one article, upon the debatable ground that separates the two great schools of the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* philosophy. And yet those premises are in the main probably none the less covered by my argument, which was meant to be positive and constructive rather than negative and controversial. In the search after truth a proper combination and use must be made of both the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*. That the arguments of my article are valid even in the estimation of Dr. Foster, may be gathered from the fact that he does not answer any one of them; nor does he even set aside the premises as invalid for the arguments. He even admits that, upon the premises, "the theory in question must be rejected, and the static view of God maintained." Then why not show that my premises are false? I must therefore leave to the reader the consideration of the validity of those premises. He will, of course, readily see that the *experiential* philosophy can have little value in such a *transcendental* problem, for human experience could not measure Deity nor otherwise resolve the questions as to His attributes or essence.

As to the implied charge that I have no right to say that modern science "assumes a unified force as the impelling cause" of the universe, I would say that I did not say this of modern science, but of the Bergsonian philosophy of creative evolution as applied to the theory under consideration. Moreover, Dr. Foster also erroneously interprets my statement as referring to the law of conservation of energy, by identifying the "unified force" as cause with that great generalization of modern science as to the aggregate effect. However, even upon the basis of Dr. Foster's misinterpretation of my words, his objection is

groundless. If the law of conservation were really established as absolute, the word *assume* would, of course, not apply. But if that law is not fully established, then it is not improper to say that modern science "assumes" as a great working hypothesis that there is such conservation, and therefore such a law. But Dr. Foster must know that that supposedly absolute law has not yet been fully established. Indeed, some of the world's ablest physicists are among the most modest in their claims for that law. And, for that matter, the latest investigations into the nature of matter and energy no longer permit us to accept unchallenged that great law. If the mass and inertia of the constitutive electrons of so-called matter vary with velocity, as has apparently been established, and if mass is essentially electrical, or nothing but energy (a theory which even Bergson apparently incorporates into his philosophy), then both matter and energy (or better, matter *or* energy as ultimately identical) are variables. Hence it should follow, upon Dr. Foster's own dictum ("the experiential philosophy assumes nothing"), that experiential philosophy could not yet own the law (or theory) of conservation. At any rate, it must be a strange contradiction on the part of an exponent of the theory of a finite and developing Deity also to accept the law of conservation. For, if that law were absolute, then the aggregate of energy in the universe would be a fixed or constant quantity. Hence, upon the basis of this theory of Deity as the "Vital Impulse" conterminous or identical with the universe as energy, God could in no sense ultimately be a developing Being, even though He were finite. On the other hand, the doctrine of a static transcendent God, however immanent He may be in nature, is not in the least affected by the status of the law of conservation.

In such a transcendental problem, reasoning upon accepted fundamentals or ultimates as premises virtually makes impossible any answer that is based upon anything less than fundamentals or ultimates. And, of course, as we have shown in the article (pp. 513, 516), it is impossible to rise above, and even intelligibly to discuss or define, ultimates. Indeed, in establishing a point, or drawing a conclusion, from such an argument, especially a conclusion also generally accepted, the burden of proof is shifted upon those who would give currency to a theory which rests upon premises of a necessarily limited empiricism. To

deny that there are principles and laws of thought that are fundamental in human reasoning, is to do so in the face of the deliverances of universal human consciousness, as well as all ratiocinative experience. Indeed, it is in effect to knock the very pillars from under the temple of human knowledge and to make the same collapse into a heap of ruins of a universal agnosticism. Dr. Foster's suggestive quotation from James affords us a hint in that direction, along which instead one might profess to see the trail of the serpent. But as we are not answering James, further comment is unnecessary.

From a simple deliverance of consciousness Descartes could prove personal existence: *cogito, ergo sum*. But the validity of even this proof has supposedly been set aside by shutting up consciousness itself within the term *epiphenomenalism*. But such philosophy is really self-destructive. If the truth of the above demonstration of personal existence rested upon a mere epiphenomenon or epiphenomena, then this theory of epiphenomenalism itself must also rest upon mere epiphenomena. Hence the proof above has at least as much validity as the theory that would explain it away. Or, in terms of a mechanistic philosophy, if the proof of personal existence is merely the result of molecular, or perhaps electrical, brain processes, then this theory of mind or consciousness as the result of such brain processes, must itself be the result of these hypothetical brain processes. Or, by the result of some mysterious brain processes the individual personality has come to the conclusion that mind or consciousness is but an epiphenomenon of such brain processes and that at least as a psychical entity he does not exist. A non-existent personality reasoning out its own non-existence! And in a similar manner even as a physical corporeity the individual can prove himself to be a non-reality! In some such *reductio ad absurdum* is apt to end all human ratiocination that rejects fundamental deliverances of consciousness and the resultant principles and laws of thought.

That there must necessarily be some *infinite* self-existent and eternal entity, no exponent of the theory of a finite and developing Deity can disprove or even seriously deny. Its existence is as certain, and even as evident, as that of my own *finite dependent* being. To answer this by labeling it *a priori*, will not disprove the apparently incontrovertible and indeed manifestly necessary *fact* or in any other

way invalidate the argument; nor will it establish the opposite position or contention. This fact of the existence of some necessarily infinite, and of course eternal and self-existent entity, is set forth at some length in the article (pp. 491 ff.).

An infinite entity must necessarily also be unchanging. As to Dr. Foster's contention that I did not prove the existence of an unchanging, I would say that apparently enough is said in my article to shift the burden of proof upon those who hold that even God changes. But surely, not only does the word *change* imply an *unchanging*, but the ultimate necessarily infinite, whether considered as God or not, must, as a totality at least, also necessarily be unchanging, a fact which underlies a large part of my argument. That an infinite cannot develop or be developed should need no further proof than that given on pages 498 ff. Surely nothing external to it could afford a condition for such development, nor could anything inherent in it be a potentiality to make it become more infinite!

The above points bring us to a determination whether God is that infinite and unchanging entity. Of course, as we clearly showed, God confined within or somehow identical with the physical cosmos as His manifestation, would necessarily be a finite Being; and as a finite entity He would be capable of development. Indeed, such a finite God would undoubtedly have to be a developing Being, or a Becoming. But He could surely not be an *eternal* Becoming, unless, as we have shown, that Becoming would end in an absolutely *infinite*. But this would in the nature of the case be impossible, as that would be a displacing of the necessarily preëxisting infinite, as there could be but one infinite of the same kind. Indeed, such a finite God as a Becoming could not be a self-existent and eternal Being, as we have shown (p. 492). And as He must therefore have the ground of His Being elsewhere, where else could He have it than in the necessarily infinite, and therefore eternal entity above noted, either directly or indirectly through some other dependent finite entity? Such a finite and temporal God would thus have to be conceived of as dependent upon some infinite and necessarily self-existent and eternal entity as his supergod, which would be equivalent to saying, the ultimate *real* God. Hence, the error lies in identifying Bergson's finite "Vital Impulse" with

God instead of regarding it as an hypothetical agent or instrument in the Deity's *modus operandi*, according to this philosophy (pp. 493, 499 ff.).

And that self-existent eternal and infinite Deity thus arrived at, must necessarily be an omnipotent and omniscient spiritual *Personality*. Surely, such alone could be an adequate Ground of the universe, which must necessarily be His creation (pp. 492, 504 ff., 524-525; and developed at some length in *Creation Ex Nihilo*, chaps. iii. and viii.). Further development would not be possible here.

The insurmountable difficulty involved in a retroactive application of this theory to God and nature in the past we believe has been amply pointed out on pages 487-488. Indeed, as such application would end us where there could have been neither God nor universe, the untenability of the theory so applied should need no further demonstration. From such an "Hegelism," as the student of Hegel will admit, even Hegel himself could not deliver us any more than he could deliver from nothing and bring into being the universe with its God, as Dr. Foster also acknowledges.

It must not be forgotten that the Bergsonian theory of creative evolution is itself only a good working hypothesis, and that Bergson himself has not yet identified his hypothetical "Vital Impulse" with Deity. Hence the exponent of the theory of a finite and developing Deity cannot safely intrench himself behind that philosopher's great work as an impregnable bulwark for that theory.

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