

*THE PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD OF THE NEW
THEOLOGY.*

IV

MONISM, whatever adjective may be put before it, is the final outcome of the intellectualist method. Intellectualism is nothing if not architectonic. It is impatient with any appearance of incompleteness. The thought that the mind is not able to grip everything presented to it irritates the intellectualist cruelly. Unless he can pigeon-hole every element in the universe he is miserable. He would also be utterly ashamed to confess that he could not contrive a symbol or name that would cover everything that exists. He searches, therefore, for a term or category into which all reality can be crammed. This search is difficult, for things are so obviously different. How can dynamite, a burning cigar and a millionaire all be put together in the same space without being disintegrated? How can aspirations, pork pies, the law of averages, Robert Browning and the inhabitants of Mars all be classed under one title? But they must be. The category must be sought, and, naturally enough to one knowing the function of numbers, the intellectualist finds his desired category in number, and triumphantly asserts that all reality is *one*. That is, it is possible to think of all things at the same time if you discharge their differences and only retain their existence or reality.¹ The bare fact of existence is the one thing that all elements of reality have in common. But having this in common they are one. A moment's reflection shows us what

¹ It must not be forgotten that you have no longer got *them*, any more than you would have the dynamite, millionaire and cigar in case suggested above. You have the bare existence of *something*: in the illustration, gases and a smell of burnt flesh.

this means. It means that the category of unity is used to express infinity; which is indeed a solemn metaphysical Irish bull. But if we give it a Greek name and call it Monism the fact that it is a bull is generally regarded as immaterial.

Mr. Campbell, being an intellectualist, and a man of intrepid desire for consistency, is of course a Monist. It should be said, however, that he is very much interested in the adjective attached to his Monism. It is "idealistic Monism." Other Monists have preferred other adjectives. Some choose "materialistic," and others "spiritual." But surely the adjective matters not one whit, except in that it indicates a desire to "hedge" on Monism. For to assert that the "oneness" is, e.g., idealistic, is little better than to surrender to Dualism, since it suggests that there is something in the infinite congeries of finite elements that will *not* let itself be crammed into the monistic pigeon-hole—in this case, matter. Confession of surrender is avoided by calling the thing ruled out "illusion"—but by this time the Monism itself has become illusory. No, to be consistent one must be an unqualified Monist, or an agnostic Monist, and say, "What reality is I don't know, but it's all one."

We need not therefore pause over the adjective, but may pass on to look further at Mr. Campbell's Monism.

The first thing one notices is that Mr. Campbell is chary of giving it any positive explanation. He admits that his doctrine is derived from Hegel, but pleads that the limits of his subject do not allow him to do more than assert that there is but one substance, and that is "consciousness." Of course this is natural enough. You cannot describe a mere misapplied category of unity with any satisfaction, especially where the task of trying to put a content into the category (as when Monism is called "idealistic") is bound to force something out of it that ought to remain

in. So the Monist finds it much more effective to denounce Dualism—obviously (it is thought) the alternative to Monism. Mr. Campbell has quite a horror of Dualism. If an argument can be described as amounting “to a practical Dualism” he seems to think it irretrievably ruined. He regards the getting rid of Dualism as the highest moral duty of the theologian: “We have to get rid of Dualism.” And it is at this point that we see how implacable Mr. Campbell’s intellectualism is. The issue between Monism and Dualism seems to him more vital than that between good and evil. Evil is a shadow—Dualism is almost a disease that we “have to get rid of” at all cost, even at the cost of minimizing sin.

Now I am not here arguing in favour of Dualism. Dualism suffers from almost all the ills that afflict Monism. It too, like its hereditary foe (for the Cain of Monism has been slaying the Abel of Dualism from generation to generation), is the offspring of intellectualism out of the category of number. But dualism does at least recognize the existence of differences, and it is respectable because it generally becomes a metaphysic under the stress of ethical sensibility (as in the case of Martineau). Now it is impossible to ignore the fact that Mr. Campbell has the most vivid ethical sensibility. Consequently, beneath his stark intellectualism, with its cry for Monism and its repudiation of Dualism, the reader is continually coming in contact with a moral Dualism in *The New Theology* which laughs all metaphysical theories to scorn. One or two quotations will illustrate this. Speaking of the doctrine of the Fall, Mr. Campbell says that the purpose of the fall into sin is good, “and there is nothing to mourn over except our own slowness at getting into line with the cosmic purpose.” That “exception” begs the whole question: there is an obvious difference in kind between the “cosmic” purpose and

our slowness, even if that slowness is only temporary. Again, "we, too, are one with God in so far as our lives express the same thing" (i.e. divine love). Here we have an explicit Dualism. Insert the word "only" after "God" and it becomes clearer, but it is there just as the sentence stands. Beyond certain limits we are *not* one with God. We are other than God, and different from Him. More definite still are these sentences: "There are two tendencies discernible throughout nature and in human history. These two tendencies are essentially opposed, are ever in conflict, and ever will be until the whole world is subdued to Christ, and God is all in all." "All acts of selfish gratification of which men are capable are the turning of the current of divine energy the wrong way." Here we have a wrong and a right that are radically opposed, antagonistic elements that are expressed in different terms in the phrase: "To cease to be a sinner is perforce to be a saviour."

Enough has been said to show that Mr. Campbell's intellectualism, resulting in Monism, comes into unavoidable collision with his moral sensibility, which is bound to recognize Dualism. Indeed, at one point this Dualism definitely breaks through his intellectualism and forces him to assert the freedom of the will. He does this, however, with obvious reluctance. "I will frankly confess," he says, "that in strict logic I can find no place for the freedom of the will." He is also careful to reduce the scope of the will's freedom as much as possible. But it must be insisted that this admission of freedom inevitably destroys the whole monistic edifice, and justifies, or rather entrenches, Mr. Campbell's moral sensibility against his intellectualism.

This, however, Mr. Campbell has not observed or admitted. Perhaps he has never thought the metaphysical problem out, for, despite his protestations, one cannot read his book

without feeling that his real interest is theological and not philosophical. Anyway, he passes rapidly away from the metaphysical argument, bearing with him as a sort of booty his doctrine of Monism. This he brings into the theological "universe of thought" (to use the slang of logic) and with it sets about the reconstruction of doctrine. We must therefore follow him as he takes the momentous step from philosophy to theology.

V.

The first consequence of Mr. Campbell's Monism in theological discussion is his refusal to attend to any diversity in the realm of truth. "All truth," he says, "is really one and the same." So he need not stop to investigate the characteristic differences between religious belief, and philosophic and scientific statements. This epistemological Monism has momentous results. But the fallacies induced by the assumption that there is ultimately only one order of truth are by no means confined to the New Theology. They mark nearly all current theologies, and until they are got rid of a valid modern theology is not possible. All we can say upon this point is that had it not been taken for granted, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that "all truth is one and the same," Mr. Campbell would have written a very different book. In fairness, however, it should be said that his critics have been in general as much at sea as himself in respect of the theory of truth.

But we must pass to the next consequence, which is really linked with this first. It is very obvious. It is the identification of God with the unity into which Mr. Campbell has compressed infinity at the bidding of his intellectualism. The passage from metaphysics to theology

is really the exchange of the term "God" for the empty *schema* of "oneness." It is the effort to interpret Monism in terms compatible with Monotheism. Mr. Campbell sets about the task bravely. He wrestles at it with admirable determination, and his very phrases reek with the sweat of the struggle. If will power could have made him succeed he would have succeeded. But the task upon which he had entered was an impossible one and his failure—we need not hesitate to say so—has been complete.

If Mr. Campbell had been consistent in making the change from philosophy to theology he could only have turned his Monism into a Pantheism. Of that there can be no doubt. Strictly speaking, Monism and Pantheism are correlatives. But Mr. Campbell sees clearly enough that Pantheism will not do. And here his trouble begins. He writes his book with the fear of Pantheism continually before his eyes, and his determination to avoid Pantheism necessitates one or two evolutions which we must now observe.

First of all there is an act of homage to the transcendence of God. This is made conspicuously enough in the definition "God is all; He is the universe, and infinitely more," and in the statement that it is an obvious truth that "the infinite being of God must transcend the infinite universe." To vary our figure, we may liken these two phrases to an earthwork hastily thrown up for the defence of Mr. Campbell's position. He hides¹ behind this earthwork when attacked for departure from Theism, and it gives him shelter from which to bombard the theistic position with nearly every other phrase about God in his book.

¹ It has been almost amusing to watch the play made with these two phrases by Mr. Campbell's supporters in the Press. That Pantheism is the proper name for Mr. Campbell's position has been obvious to many of his critics. But how baffling to have these sentences quoted against them!

For Mr. Campbell, having once paid homage to transcendence, is careful not to let it have any actual influence in his thinking. We get two modes of God, he says, "the infinite, perfect, unconditioned, primordial being; and the finite, imperfect, conditioned and limited being of which we are ourselves expressions." The first of these modes is transcendent, and so we can never know anything about it; "it is only as we read Him in the universe that we can know anything about Him." This transcendent mode of God is therefore dismissed from further consideration, and when Mr. Campbell speaks of God he of course means merely the God we can read in the universe. Otherwise he would be talking entirely at random.

And here two remarks must be made. First, this is the point at which it is necessary to repudiate Mr. Campbell's doctrine with the utmost emphasis, so far as it touches theology. To divide God into two parts, so to speak, the lower only of which is knowable to us, and to deny to Him the power of revealing to men His real nature *as transcendent*, is to ruin faith. If in Jesus Christ we have not an adequate revelation of the holy and loving purpose of the transcendent God, we have nothing. To treat Jesus as an element in the knowable "universe" which might have to be repudiated were we ever admitted to a vision of the transcendent Deity, is to rob Him of any right to our worship, whatever be our other theories. Next, it is obvious that this radical distinction between God as "the universe" and God as the "infinitely more," defeats Mr. Campbell's Monism. For if we must be wholly ignorant of the transcendent God, how can we be sure that He is identical with the immanent?

Having noted Mr. Campbell's homage to the transcendence of God and subsequent practical desertion of that theory, let us see how he describes God immanent in the universe.

He uses many phrases in this work. God (it is not worth while to repeat the word "immanent," for the God who is the universe is the only God Mr. Campbell pretends to know anything about, and the only God he describes) is the "higher-than-self whose presence is so unescapable." He is "the uncaused Cause of all existence." He is every one's own existence. He is "the mysterious Power which is finding expression in the universe." "The real God is the God expressed in the universe and in yourself." That is to say, if any man wishes to know God thoroughly he must make an induction of all that is in the universe and say, "God is all this." He must leave nothing out. Inasmuch as he omits even the smallest element he is leaving out a part of God. Now the consequences of such an induction are obvious. They necessitate the inclusion in our notion of God of all that is ugly as well as of all that is beautiful; of all that is wicked as well as of all that is good. There is no escape. Everything must go into your pigeon hole of unity if you are a Monist, and everything must put its essence into your idea of God if you are a believer in Mr. Campbell's New Theology. The lower-than-self must be God as well as the higher-than-self.

Here it is that we face the gravest consequences of Mr. Campbell's application of his Monism to theology. God being, according to *The New Theology*, the All—the universe including each man's self—He must *be* sin. Mr. Campbell never admits this, and still less does he state it clearly. But it is a conclusion inevitably hidden in his premisses and implied in a host of phrases. Take these instances: (1) "The being of God is a complex unity, containing within itself every form of self-consciousness that can possibly exist." Are sin and guilt in any way a form of self-consciousness? Then sin and guilt are contained within the being of God; that is, they are a part of God.

(2) "The imperfection of the infinite creation is not man's fault but God's will, and is a means towards a great end." But part of that imperfection is sin, and therefore sin itself is "not man's fault but God's will." And God's *will* is the very heart of His heart, the essence of His personality.

(3) In another passage Mr. Campbell calls God "the Power revealed in the cosmos," and goes on to say, "I shall continue to feel compelled to believe that the Power which produced Jesus must at least be equal to Jesus." Under certain conditions this statement would be sound enough. But not under a monistic premiss. For what is to hinder another from saying: "The Power which produced Nero must at least be equal to Nero"—say in bestiality or cruelty? But these instances are enough to show that Mr. Campbell must find a place for sin in the very nature of God. In order to be true to his monistic principle he must say that the lower-than-self is as truly God as the higher-than-self.

The poet Walt Whitman ("The great poets," says Mr. Campbell, "are the best theologians after all, for they see the farthest") has expressed this view without any reserve in his verses entitled "Chanting the Square Deific." In this poem he attempts to restate the doctrine of God by adding a fourth person to the Godhead, so as to describe completely what Mr. Campbell calls "the real God . . . expressed in the universe and in yourself." The persons of this "Square Deific" are God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and—God the Devil. Walt Whitman is a consistent Monist.

Mr. Campbell, however, cannot be a consistent Monist, for his ethical sensibility is in constant revolt against his intellectualism. So he has to find some way out of his dilemma. This he attempts to do by means of his doctrine of sin, to which end we shall now turn.

VI.

“How can there be anything in the universe outside of God?” asks Mr. Campbell. And the answer expected is obviously, “Nohow.” And so—it seems quite simple—sin cannot be in the universe. “Evil is a negative, not a positive term.” “It is not a thing in itself; it is only the perceived privation of what you know to be good, and which you know to be good because of the very presence of limitation, hindrance and imperfection.” “Sin is actually a quest for life, but a quest which is pursued in the wrong way.” It is selfishness. It is isolation from the infinite. It is “slowness at getting into line with the cosmic purpose.” It is a shadow where there should be light.

One aspect of this question I do not propose to labour here. Mr. Campbell has probably had it pointed out clearly enough to him that these phrases are unsatisfactory in the light of our consciousness of sin as something which poisons, stings, burns, destroys our own soul. But what I do want to point out is that this explanation of sin does not get rid of the necessity of including sin as something real in the nature of God as revealed in the Monist's universe. To call the term we apply “negative” is not to make the thing to which it is applied any less real than a thing to which a positive term is applied. Absolute zero is a temperature of *minus* 273° Centigrade. But the term indicates something physically as real as the term *plus* 100° Centigrade. Privation is just as real as abundance, and a wrong direction in any quest is just as real as a right direction. Selfishness is just as real as unselfishness. The fact of the matter is that Mr. Campbell is so taken up with the idea of substance (which in his case is nothing more than the empty category of unity into which he attempts to cram all infinity) that anything which only has to do

with direction or limitation is treated as metaphysically nil. But the distinction between a wrong quest and a right quest is just as vivid metaphysically as is the distinction between time and space. Sin and saintliness may be placed side by side in the same category as each being a "quest," and time and space may be placed side by side in the same category as each being a continuum, but metaphysically the difference between sin and saintliness is even more radical than that between time and space, for they are mutually exclusive and destructive.

At the bottom of Mr. Campbell's failure to see that sin must be treated as real, is that intellectualism which is content to subsume all reality under the notion of number—unity. If all is one and two things are mutually exclusive, then of those two that which we term "positive" is real and the other unreal.

If, however, the reality of sin be once admitted, it must, all dialectics notwithstanding, be given its place in the monistic view of God. Hence when Mr. Campbell says, "Jesus is God, but so are we," and "sin is selfishness, pure and simple," we have a right to conclude that sin is God in us seeking Himself, and is therefore one of the modes of "the self-realization of the infinite"—of God.

This is a conclusion to which Mr. Campbell refuses to advance. But that is not because it is inconsistent with his premisses. It is because it is inconsistent with himself, with his moral sensibility, with his experience of Jesus Christ. And here we see how impossible it is to persist in Mr. Campbell's completely vicious method. That method is determined by Mr. Campbell's intellectualism and not by Jesus Christ. Now and again, as we have seen, Christ does occupy, if but for a moment, His proper place: He is "the undimmed revelation of the highest." Yet the main course of Mr. Campbell's argument is guided, not by

this undimmed revelation, but by the crass intellectualist dogma of Monism. When however that method has led its author to its final logical conclusion, the justification of sin by its inclusion in God, the real worship of Jesus which is in the thinker's heart asserts itself, and the method is deserted, though unconsciously. And this gives us the clue to the problem of method. The Christ who thwarts the method of intellectualism at the last should have determined the method from the first.

Two main things indeed Mr. Campbell has deprived of their proper places in his New Theology. The first is the doctrine of the transcendence of God, and the second is Jesus Christ. May it not be that when these two are allowed to exert their due influence upon theological thinking a more acceptable theology will be evolved? For indeed they are part and parcel of each other, being connected by that very phrase of Mr. Campbell's which calls Jesus "the undimmed revelation of the highest." The highest? What is that but the *transcendent* God? Revelation? What is that but the unveiling to the eyes of men of what by mere searching they could not discover in the universe of which they are a part? If then in Jesus we have this undimmed revelation we must make Him the centre and starting point of our theology—not metaphysical Monism, nor God as immanent, nor anything lower than "the highest." And this is exactly what Mr. Campbell might have done had he carried out the projected "untrammelled return to the Christian sources."

VII.

To sum up: most of us share Mr. Campbell's desire to see Christian theology so reformed as to be in harmony with modern research, and to be able to thrive in the modern intellectual atmosphere. His general aim and ours, in this

matter, are alike. But he is prevented by his false philosophical method from achieving this desired result. Instead of allowing the facts of the Christian sources to give their own message, his intellectualist prejudice forces him to assume a Monism not to be deduced from the Christian sources themselves. This Monism, once adopted, makes a true scientific method impossible, and forces upon Mr. Campbell a doctrine of God which is only saved from the charge of Pantheism by certain assertions not really germane to the general position. This doctrine of God logically makes all evil, including sin, divine. Only, Mr. Campbell's moral sensibility hinders him from admitting this, and forces him instead to deny the real existence of sin. It only remains for me to point out that the foundation of this whole edifice is the doctrine of Monism—a doctrine nowhere taught by Jesus, and having no place in the "Christian sources."

I am sure that Mr. Campbell does not desire that his critics should apologize for speaking frankly of his work. For my part, it is with great reluctance that I have felt it necessary to express such complete divergence from Mr. Campbell's views. But, as already explained, it seems to me necessary for those desiring a really progressive Christian theology to repudiate the method adopted in *The New Theology*. Further, we need not despair of having Mr. Campbell with us in a better advised forward movement. Surely it is not too late for him to take part in a return to Christian sources that shall be untrammelled by Monism. Too late? He is still one of the younger men, and the only obstacle in his way seems to be his adherence to that intellectualist metaphysic which forms the basis of his present teaching. May I venture to commend to his attention and that of his followers two things which should give them some positive modern method

with which to replace the Monism which is both out of date and fallacious? The first is *scientific method*. By this I do not mean the theological speculations of scientists such as are embodied in Sir Oliver Lodge's interesting little venture called "The Substance of Faith," but a logical analysis of the principles of thought implied in natural science, such as is given by Professor Karl Pearson in his *Grammar of Science*, or by Professor A. Riehl in his *Philosophischer Kriticismus*. The second is closely allied to this, namely, *the pragmatic method in philosophy*, which is an epistemological instead of a metaphysical method, as exhibited in the writings of Professor James, of Harvard, and, pre-eminently, of Dr. F. G. S. Schiller, of Oxford. Applied with discrimination these two methods will, properly considered, make "an untrammelled return to the Christian sources in the light of *modern thought*" possible, and further continuance in the methods of *The New Theology* impossible.

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FAITH IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

THE interest taken in the many questions which gather round the Fourth Gospel in these days is very great. It is indicated by the large number of books and treatises on this subject which have recently appeared. One of the most remarkable of these is that written by Mr. E. F. Scott. It is entitled *The Fourth Gospel* and is published by Messrs. T. & T. Clark.

In a very suggestive book, which reveals wide reading and great ability, Mr. Scott naturally has much to say on the subject of faith or "believing" as it appears in this Gospel. He says :