

*EUCKEN AND CHRISTIANITY.*

WE hear much at present of dissatisfaction with the old forms of the Christian faith and of the necessity for something new. The need for a new form of Christianity has been set forth with great force by one of the most eminent philosophers of our day—Professor Eucken of Jena—in publications which are perhaps more widely read at present than any other serious books. In *Christianity and the New Idealism* in particular, we have his views given in a concentrated form with great lucidity and intense earnestness. The common Christianity, he thinks, fails with respect to its special historical basis as it is usually stated, and in the form of its dogmas, which the culture of the day is unable to accept. But its greatest weakness is its inability to embrace the whole spiritual life of man—all the aspiration and work that are distinctively human. There are other features which call for reconstruction, but these seem to be the chief ones. The new form, Eucken holds, must lose nothing of the eternal substance enshrined in the older forms; but that substance must receive a new setting and be given a wider scope. It must be such as shall find its natural expression, not in a limited sphere marked off as religious, but in the whole of life. And this new form of Christianity can only be derived from the recognition of a transcendent Spiritual Life which, as immanent in man, seeks expression through him. We must base our religion on the assured fact that there is such a Spiritual Life, a “superhuman Power at work within us, lifting us above the narrow limits of our private and particular existence, renewing us, and also transforming our relations to our fellow men”; and we must derive our knowledge of that Life from observation of its manifestations. From various points of view Eucken shows the Reality of

this Spiritual Life, as something incapable of being originated by ourselves; but "revealing itself as a unique creative force within our human existence, thus lifting life into a higher plane." The Churches, in the form in which they have existed, have failed to give due recognition to, and therefore also complete expression of, that Life as a whole, so that we now find a gulf existing between what we may term its religious and secular manifestations, as well as between religion and modern culture and modern social aims.

This basing of religion on the reality of a transcendent yet immanent Spiritual Life is a very helpful thought. It gives us the grounds of our religious and of our Christian faith within ourselves, yet not of ourselves. It brings the supreme religious Authority within each man's own soul, while it does not allow him to rest in mere individualism, but causes him to take note of all spiritual manifestations. If the nature of this Spiritual Life be truly apprehended, it will give adequate direction to all who are thoroughly honest with themselves and responsive to the life which seeks to express itself in and through them and in and through mankind as a whole.

But what we desire at present to point out is, that this just carries us back to that which Christianity itself affirms to be the deepest thing and the abiding reality within itself, which, however, has been too greatly overlooked—which, indeed, the Church as a whole has failed duly to recognise and give its true place to—must we not say, has too often gone contrary to ?

This Spiritual Life which we must grasp as the fundamental reality,—what is it but the movement of the living Spirit of God in man ? If Life be real, this, which is the source of our highest life, is the supreme reality. If it be a reality—the reality—it must be an entity of some kind, not a physical but a spiritual entity. If it be transcendent of us it must be in itself greater than we are, there-

fore not less than personal. It is also *here*, moving in the depths of each man's being, seeking adequate expression : we do not have to go in search of it. While real, it must be at the same time the ideal to which we should be conformed. It can only make itself known to us by causing ideals to arise before us and inspiring us to realise them. It is not reason merely, nor is it ideal only ; it is Life itself—causing us to experience certain feelings and cravings, to be dissatisfied with the actual world and our actual selves, to long for a higher, fuller life and a satisfaction which can only be found through response to and harmony with itself. But this is just the nature, and these are the very functions of the Holy Spirit of truth and love, the presence of which over us and in us is that which distinguishes Christianity as the dispensation of the Spirit. It was the coming of that Spirit on men that created the Church, and it should still guide and inspire the Church. Those in whom that Spirit dwelt “needed not that any man should teach them” ; let them only be true to the Holy Spirit of Christ and of God. That Spirit was the principle and the power of the spiritual life in the individual and in the Christian communities. It was the presence of that Holy Spirit, Jesus said, that was the presence of God in the Son of man ; not merely the power by which He did His mighty works, but, as He said to His disciples, it should be in their experience, a teaching and illuminative Presence : “the Holy Spirit shall teach you.” If Christ were visibly present on earth His Church would naturally look to Him for constant guidance. But in that Holy Spirit He was to be with them and in them for ever. By that Spirit His followers should be guided “into all the truth.” That indwelling Spirit should be more to them than Christ could be while He was with them in the flesh. It was the Spirit of the Father as well as of the Son—God in all the fulness of Spiritual Life.

That Spirit, we know, did not then for the first time come

into being or make its presence felt in man. The Old Testament—to go no farther—is a witness to the reality of pre-Christian Divine inspiration. Not only holiness but wisdom in counsel and skill in work were attributed to the Spirit of God as their source. It was a new outpouring, or rather, a fuller realisation of a Presence always with us and always seeking expression through man, that came to the world through its manifestation in Christ and His Cross, where God was reconciling the world to Himself so that He might fully dwell in men as their God, making them truly His “people.” It was, in one aspect, an unveiling of the nature of that Spiritual Life which is at once immanent in man and transcendent of him, always moving him to something higher. As it appeared in Christ, and through Him came to men, it was at the same time “an entry of the eternal into time,” its fullest entrance, to be an abiding presence. But the Eternal was always there and has been always the same. Through its complete expression in Christ the nature of the Divine Eternal Spirit was made better known, and men brought into such relationship to God that it came to them with greater power. In this way a new influx of the Spirit went forth through Christ and His Cross; but it was the one Eternal Spirit of God that came thus in power, not something entirely new. And, although that same Spirit still comes to us through these media, it is still in itself that eternal and universal Spiritual Life that seeks to possess and to find expression through all men.

In that Spirit we have all that we need, if only we will believe in its presence, realise its character and be responsive to it. We have in it all that we *can* have; for it is God Himself in man. To bring men under the full influence of that Spirit is the very purpose of Christianity. Its doctrines, ritual and institutions have their entire value in their power to accomplish this—in their ministration to life

in the Spirit. Whenever the Church has erred it has been through ignoring or failing to be true to that Spirit, in forgetting its character as revealed in Christ, or in failing to seek expression for it in the whole of life. Since it is the deepest thing in man, it seeks to inspire, not one department of activity only, but *the whole life*. No kind of work can be outside its influence, no aspiration is worthy which it does not inspire, no aim is true which is not in harmony with it. We may not be conscious of it, but all that is true and good is its working. If it were universally responded to it would not only make the individual life divinely true, but would unify society. Humanity, moved in all its work and in all its aims by the one Divine Spirit, that God may be all in all, is the divine ideal which Christianity comes to make actual. This is the one supreme thing the Christian Church ought to keep before her. We need nothing more than to be true to the Spirit as we have come to know it through our relation to Christ. In no other way can we imagine how the universal Spiritual Life can move us than as such a teaching and inspiring Spirit. All our failure is failure to be true to that Holy Spirit of God and of Christ. We ought to be thankful to philosophy if it can help, as Eucken is doing, to make plain the reality of the Spiritual Life and the absolute necessity of giving it full expression. But we have no need to grope after some new way of apprehending the truth or of knowing the mind of the Spirit. In spite of all that is so well and truly said, Eucken seems, in common with most philosophers, to regard Christianity too much as something external, instead of seeing it to be, in its truth, identical with the Spirit of Life within us, as that has been manifested in truth and power in Jesus Christ. All that we have to do is to be true to that which has thus been made clearly known and brought home to the consciousness of each soul open to the truth. There can be nothing higher than God's Holy Spirit of

truth and love ; there can be no truer inspiration than that which proceeds from the presence of that Spirit within us ; we can find no surer guidance in all our work and aims, individual and social, than to follow its leading. What we need to do is to bring all our doctrine, all our ecclesiastical institutions, all our religious, all our secular work, all our social aims completely under the dominance of the Spirit of God which is already with us and perfectly well known to us. What is wanted is the will to obey it—to be “ led by the Spirit.” We must not keep calling for something new while we ignore or insufficiently realise and obey that which has already been divinely given to us. We must also cease to argue so much about mere outward historicity—Eucken warns us against the dangers of an unspiritual historicity—and fix our attention more on the culmination, on that which has been made consciously and abidingly ours through the historical manifestation of God in Christ. Do not let us lose ourselves in discussing the details of how the gold was mined ; let us rather grasp and hold fast and use the gold itself. What we have is something above doubt and beyond question. *We know* that a Holy Spirit of truth and love, of righteousness and all goodness claims our entire life, seeks to live in us and to work through us. This is God Himself as He has made Himself known in Jesus Christ. Again we ask, What more do we want ? What more does the world in all its life and work require ? What more can we with all our searching find ? The one thing needed is to be wholly responsive to this Divine Spirit of life, to let the Spirit—that is, God Himself—be everything to us.

The issues that confront us at this time are, as Eucken reminds us, momentous. A large part of the civilised world is becoming indifferent to Christianity, to all spiritual religion. This means, of course, that God in His supreme relation to the world is being forgotten. Even with many in pro-

fessedly Christian associations the religious tone is becoming lowered. Religion is too much a surface-matter—a matter of creed and discussion, of form and outward ritual—too greatly severed also from our other activities. While God is formally acknowledged, His actual spiritual presence within seems to be less of a reality. Discussions concerning the Christ of history have tended to hide the presence of Christ in the Spirit. How many are there who realise that that Holy Spirit of which we read so much in the New Testament, the indwelling of which was so vivid in the experience of the first Christians, is the very presence and power of God and of Christ within us, one with the Divine Spirit of man's true life? If this were realised it would bring our whole life under one Divine inspiration. Not only so: it would bring to us at the same time those influences that would most strongly move us to yield ourselves up to God in the Spirit.

We have made too little in our theology of the reality of that present Divine indwelling—of that Spirit of God and of Christ—which is the source of all truth and of all goodness, which *is* the truth and the holy love that God is moving within us. We have thought of that Holy Spirit too greatly as something detached and separate from the Spirit of God as the Spirit of all true life. The Holy Spirit has for this reason sometimes received only a formal recognition in theology. As a rule, it has been ignored by philosophy. In the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* it is said to have no philosophical significance. Can we wonder that Christianity has got into the present serious position when that which is its ever present Divine power has been so greatly overlooked?

We need to think more earnestly on that Divine presence and indwelling the realisation of which was the designed outcome of the whole earthly appearance and work of Christ. We need to observe and meditate on its manifestations,

above all in Christ, so as to have a clear perception of its nature, and discern its oneness with the Divine spiritual life that moves in all men. We need to look into the depths of our own being, wherein that Spirit is moving, and endeavour to give full expression to it in those orderly forms of thought and life to which it would lead us. Eucken pleads for metaphysics as that which would help us to reach a more desirable condition in religion. Metaphysics, in the sense intended, is simply deeper thought in recognition of that spiritual world which *must* lie within and beyond all that is physically manifested, which is, indeed, "the soul's true home." Undoubtedly, for want of such deeper thought religion suffers. One of the most regrettable features of the present is the disinclination to think deeply. We want everything presented to us in tit-bits. If metaphysics will help us, let us take to it seriously.

But, while we require to bring all our religious forms "into harmony with that phase of the spiritual life to which the world's historical development has led us," we must be careful to note what really *is* of the Spirit of God. What we need most of all is to realise *the nature* of that Holy Spirit which is the crown of Christianity and to see its oneness with the universal Spiritual Life which seeks to possess us. Eucken himself says that his "whole inquiry stands for the conviction that in Christianity, as a religion of moral redemption, such a revelation of spiritual reality has actually been given, and with it, from the deepest founts of being, an inspiration that stirs us to the pursuit of ends that can never be superseded." "It is not our duty," he says, "to fight for a new religion; we have but to kindle into freshness of life the fathomless depths of Christianity." There *are* depths which have not yet been fathomed, even infinite depths. But the essential nature of the Spirit has been clearly revealed. "Who," Paul asks, "hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" "But,"



he adds, "We have the mind of Christ." We have it in the Spirit, he says—"the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God." The mind of Christ is the mind of the Spirit because it was the mind of God in His self-revelation of perfect righteousness and infinite love in Jesus Christ. We shall look in vain for any higher revelation; for, as already said, there *can* be nothing higher. What we have to do is to realise it and apply it to the whole of life under the guidance of the ever-present Spirit. Taught by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, we shall be guided into all truth of thought and life, and, as we are true to that Spirit of God within us, our whole lives will increasingly express the Divine, and the world will become that expression and manifestation of the life of God in man in which alone real individual and social good can be found.

We dare not despair of truth and righteousness or of religious and social unity when we have God Himself deepest in our life—the very Spirit of our highest life. No doubt there is that in man which, in the interests of his lower, earthly nature, ignores the presence and resists the expression of the Divine Spirit in his life. But if men were once led to see clearly that their life can only be true and good as it obeys the Divine Spirit of life: if religion were seen to be, not merely communion with a God outside of us, but unison with a Divine Spirit within, and Christianity the highest form of religion because it is the supreme revelation of the nature of that Divine Spirit and a redeeming influence to bring us into living unison therewith, the opposition would be gradually overcome, and Christianity would bring effectively the inspiration of a universal spiritual life. The essential thing is to see that everything in Christianity culminated in the revealed presence of God with men in the Holy Spirit, and to give in all things complete expression to that Spirit.

W. L. WALKER.