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THEOLOGY AFTER THE WAR.

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The war has created no new problem for theology. It has brought home to the popular imagination old problems on a vast and unprecedented scale, and so far will without doubt have a deep and far-reaching influence upon religion. The "average man" has been compelled to think about the reality of providence, the significance of prayer, the possibilities of life beyond death, with widely different individual conclusions. There is an increased impatience with unrealities, and a greater sense of freedom in rejecting them, though this may fall far short of an earnest demand for realities. The truth seems to be that the war is a landmark in the history of theology rather in relation to the past than to the future. The war will serve, in fact, to mark off four hundred years of Protestant theology, of which period the last phase began some hundred and forty years ago, with the critical philosophy of Kant. As the roots of Mediævalism are planted in the life and thought of the Ancient Church, and those of Protestant theology in the life and thought of the Middle Ages, so we may expect to find the theology of the future era already begun in the tendencies of the period that lies behind us. The surest prophecies are interpretations of the past.

I. THE MODERN EMPHASIS ON RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

The most significant feature of the theology of the last century has been the increasing emphasis on religious experience as the starting-point of constructive thinking. The spirit of the biological laboratory has replaced that of the old-fashioned museum. If men are interested in religion today, their interest, practical and theoretical, largely centers in the facts of religious experience. Our own generation has seen a new science come to birth—the science of the psychology of religion. The study of conversions has become a topic for the journalist, and such books as James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* have made a very wide appeal and exercised a correspondingly great influence. In philosophy proper, as distinct from psychology, the central line of modern development is a new consciousness of the values of personality. It may be seen, for example, in Professor Pringle-Pattison's admirable survey of modern philosophy entitled *The Idea of God*—one of the best recent books to show a student the direction in which philosophy is moving. The author says quite explicitly that the central problem for the modern philosopher is "the assertion of the objectivity of our fundamental estimates of value". Nor is the problem confined to the philosopher, for a characteristic difficulty of many thoughtful men and women today springs from the temptation to explain religious experience as auto-suggestion. Moreover, there has been something of a mass-movement toward a genuinely experiential religion, the tendencies of which find expression in the popular antithesis of the heart and the brain:

"A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered 'I have felt'."

This may be seen in the rise and growth of religious movements with the minimum of what is generally known

as "dogma", for example, the Brotherhood and Adult School movements, and the claims to offer a new and more genuinely religious experience made by Christian Science, Theosophy, and Spiritualism. Huxley expressed in choice language that which many have been seeking in the last generation or two:

"A church in which, week by week, services should be devoted, not to the iteration of abstract propositions in theology, but to the setting before men's minds of an ideal of true, just, and pure living; a place in which those who are weary of the burden of daily cares should find a moment's rest in the contemplation of the higher life which is possible for all, though attained by so few; a place in which the man of strife and of business should have time to think how small, after all, are the rewards he covets compared with peace and charity." (*Methods and Results*, p. 284.)

I am not, of course, suggesting that such a Church as Huxley and so many others want is at all possible; they are asking for the consolation of great truths without the truths, for the comfort of the divine Fatherhood without the reality of the Father given in Christ's person and work, for Christian ethics without Christian faith. But this line of thought is represented in not a little of our war-time literature, and its emphasis is significant. May we not see the same emphasis more subtly illustrated in present tendencies toward ecclesiastical reunion? There is felt to be a basis of experiential unity underneath all our differences, however difficult it may be for us to express it in the constitution of the one Church which is the body of Christ. This consciousness seems to underlie the argument of such a book as *Unity and Schism*, by the editor of the *Church Times*, the Rev. T. A. Lacey. The unity of the Church, he says, is the unity of redeemed mankind. "All Christians are brothers. Orthodox and heretic, Catholic and schismatic, all are brothers. * * * We are, in point of fact, one divided family, and the first step

toward reconciliation is the acknowledgement of brotherhood.”

We can trace, then, a real and increasing emphasis on religious experience in these psychological, philosophical, popular, and ecclesiastical tendencies, an emphasis which the influence of the war is likely to increase rather than diminish, whatever be the ultimate form of practical expression, ethical, evangelical, or sacramental. The analysis is confirmed when we test the theology of the last century by its most outstanding representatives. The two conspicuous names are those of Schleiermacher and Ritschl. A friend of mine once asked the late Dr. Denney what he considered the most essential equipment for the constructive theologian. His answer was, “A knowledge of Calvin, Schleiermacher and Ritschl—nobody else counts in the same degree.” I remember discussing this answer with another friend, a man of massive erudition in the history of theology, and he said, “The only addition I should make is Thomas Aquinas—then you have the four great makers of theological system, the four great representatives.” The significant thing is the fact that the two foremost theologians of the nineteenth century are both pioneers in the school of experiential theology. Schleiermacher initiated the school and introduced the positive phase of the new epoch by basing his *System of Faith* on an analysis of religious experience. Ritschl went further in developing the same method and in combining the experiential with the modern social interest. If the past can teach anything about the future, the line they opened up is the line of future development. The chief result of the scientific and historical criticism of religion and theology in the last century has been to throw us back on the citadel of experiential faith, in which to rally our forces. In this concentration on vital experience, as the new point of departure, theology becomes scientific in the best sense. It learns to appeal to evidence that can be tested, and offers proof of its reality. Sir

Francis Darwin tells us, in his *Rustic Sounds*, that "when science began to flourish at Cambridge in the 'seventies', and the university was asked to supply money for buildings, an eminent person objected and said, 'What do they want with their laboratories? Why can't they believe their teachers, who are in most cases clergymen of the Church of England?'" Perhaps theology is passing into its laboratory stage, not simply for a few select thinkers, pioneers of the future, but for the rank and file of thoughtful men and women, and we are moving, in fact, toward the democratization of theology.

There is, of course, a familiar objection to any appeal to religious experience as the basis for constructive theology. "How can you appeal", it is said, "to anything so varied, so subjective, so elusive, as the religious experience of the individual?" "Do you not sacrifice the authority of the Church and of the Scriptures in order to give a quite exaggerated importance to passing phases of life?" "What stability, and what standard of truth can we hope to find in the shifting sands of popular feeling?" The answer is simply this—that the approach to theology through experience does not mean purely individualistic experience at all, does not leave room for the crank and the fanatic, does not reject, but is rather thrown back the more on the inherent authority of both the Church and of the Scriptures as the classical sources from which experience is renewed, and by which individual and transient phases of experience may be tested. Any movement in theology which makes light of either the Church or the Bible as sources, standards, permanent factors in experience, is condemned to failure. But to say this is very different from asking men to accept truth simply because it is part of the traditions of the Church, or is found in the literature of the old or new Israel. The Christian experience that concerns the theologian is catholic experience, sifted and tested. It includes not only the present age, but all ages. It believes with Newman,

Securus judicat orbis terrarum”. But its approach is through the indisputable facts of the Christian consciousness—that men have to struggle against something the theologian has called sin, in their own hearts and in the world, that there is a relation of faith which does give new energy to conquer in this struggle for the highest elements of manhood, that man’s life is not purely individual but also social, his full development being reached only in relation to other men, so that the fellowship of the Church is the necessary complement to a full manhood, and that the historic events in which the Bible culminates have been the beginning of a new experience for men, without which history itself is unintelligible. The interpretations of this experience are as varied as men’s temperaments and environments, and the experience itself, as specifically Christian, must be related both to the larger mass of religious experience and to the data of the ethical consciousness. But we need not fear that a reasoned and scientific resort to the theology of experience will ever sacrifice the essential principle of authority. It will rather serve to restore both Bible and Church to the place they claim and deserve by finding its highest and deepest values enshrined within them.

II. THE CENTRAL DOCTRINE—THE HOLY SPIRIT.

If, then, theology after the war follows the line of progress already indicated, and even more explicitly builds on religious experience as its direct and primary foundation, the central doctrine for the immediate future will be that of the Holy Spirit. Christian experience is not a self-contained development, a growth in thought, feeling, and will that can be explained in purely ethical terms. From the New Testament times onward, though in very varied terminology, those who share in that experience claim that it is inexplicable apart from its supernatural factor, immanent and transcendent. Indeed, con-

scious faith in the operation of this factor is the normal condition of the experience. Our fellowship with God through Christ is much more than the memory of a historical Person; it is mutual companionship, communion, interaction and intercourse. Without the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, conceived as God taking the things of Christ and declaring them vitally unto us, there is a lacuna in the Christian scheme. The Christian interpretation of Christian experience therefore necessarily involves the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; to emphasize one is to emphasize the other. Moreover, the broader doctrine of the Spirit of God (in which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ is the highest specialization) enables us to relate Christian experience to the results of the comparative study of religion on the one hand, and to the general ethical consciousness on the other. Whether we ask, then, for a specific Christian theology, or for the larger philosophy of religion and of life, our first need is for an adequate doctrine of the Spirit of God, that is, of God dwelling in man, and of God's Being in the light of that indwelling. This may be seen in each of the three main types of Christian experience, the Quaker, the evangelical, and the sacramental. Of the first, it is not necessary to speak, for the emphasis is clear and explicit, and the need is rather to relate it adequately with the historical element in Christian truth, the realities of history. In the evangelical type of Christian experience, going back to the personal acceptance of cardinal truths, the emphasis is less obvious. These truths are to be found in the Scriptures, which record the faith and experience of the earliest disciples. But the acceptance of them which evangelical experience implies is much more than a merely intellectual assent. The Protestant Reformers taught the activity of the Spirit of God in securing that trust in Christ and that obedience to Him which was essential to Christianity. They saw that it was necessary to link the Word of God as found in Scripture with the

conscious response of the believer, by means of the doctrine of the Spirit, though they failed to work out any adequate doctrine of the authority of Scripture over against the authority of the Church. The Word became for them the great Sacrament, and the Spirit of God operated through it. Now that the *eternal* authority of the Bible is largely replaced by that of its *inherent* truth and worth, the modern evangelical is thrown back more than ever on the doctrine of the Spirit, as the guarantee that God is really present to the believer's heart, through the medium of His Word, literary or incarnate.

The sacramental type of experience similarly depends on certain great truths, but emphasizes the mediation of their efficacy through appointed channels of divine grace. Here we still need the doctrine of the Spirit for any adequate *apologia* of the sacraments. This may be seen, for example, from Paget's definition of the sacraments in *Lux Mundi*:

"By the sacramental system, then, is meant the regular use of sensible objects, agents, and acts, as being the means and instruments of divine energies, 'the vehicles of saving and sanctifying grace' * * * God's Holy Spirit bears into the faithful soul the communication of its risen Lord's renewing manhood; and for the conveyance of that unseen gift He takes things and acts which can be seen, and words that can be heard; His way is viewless as the wind; but He comes and works by means of which the senses are aware; and His hidden energy accepts a visible order and outward implements for the achievement of His purpose."

When the statement is made in such terms as these, there is certainly no irreconcilable antithesis between most of those who are called evangelicals and many of those who are called sacramentalists; indeed, an adequate doctrine of the Holy Spirit would seem to offer the best approach to an *eirenicon*. Words are things, and things are words; the real point of importance is that the Spirit

of God does work through them both in actual Christian experience. We are sometimes told that one result of the war will be a revival of the sacramental emphasis in religion. That would, at any rate, be preferable to a vague and lifeless evangelicalism. The real value of the sacramental emphasis would depend on the degree to which it was accompanied by a noble doctrine of the Spirit of God, and an equally noble charity and sympathy as one of the practical fruits of the Spirit. We may yet be brought to share the communion of the one table of the Lord, visibly as well as spiritually.

III. THE NEW APPROACH TO THE GREAT DOCTRINES.

We must not look for any startling and dramatic change through the new emphasis. At most, the war will rend the veil that has hidden the slow and subtle changes of the past generation or two. We may think of a man growing up in some narrow and exclusive belief, which he goes on defending long after it has been exposed to disintegrating influences. His old creed, still tenaciously held, gradually becomes symbolic to him. He maintains it, by looking through it into something more Catholic, which he unconsciously identifies with it. Then, one day, some incident serves to reveal to him how far he has moved from the letter of the old belief, which has been but a shadow of things to come. So the author of the epistle to the Hebrews constructed his *apologia*, feeling that he still retained all that was permanent in the old, though he had now reached a new and worthier expression for the larger truth.

The doctrine of salvation which many of us hold to-day is still in large measure inarticulate. The new emphasis is there, but it is found together with formulæ which belong to another emphasis. Few Christian men would now assert that all outside their own communion are lost. In practice, we almost all recognize the diver-

sity of expression in the forms of faith. But, in theory, many still cling instinctively to conventional statements of what salvation is, largely because no adequate formula for our broader practice has been attained. The result in relation to the outsider is disastrous. Dr. Forsyth says with truth that "the religious consciousness has taken a form to which the theological phrasing of it that carried the old heroisms has ceased to appeal". A recent report to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference puts down the estrangement of the present generation from the Church largely to the clinging to old presentations of the doctrines of Christian experience. We have to broaden *and deepen* our theory of what salvation is. The examples of faith given in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews are very varied, and some of them are unconventional enough. Yet to the greater breadth of view there corresponds a greater depth. There is an intensity of sacrifice in which the faith of these men found utterance, which guarantees its genuineness and more than atones for its unconventionality. Now it would be somewhat on these lines that our modern view of salvation would have to be framed. The definition would not be in terms either of a particular sacrament or a particular doctrine, but rather of a right relation to other persons, to the whole group of which the man is part. That relation begins with the little group of the home; it goes on expanding to the full horizon of humanity; it transcends that horizon in finding God. If that right relation to other persons, to the point of readiness for sacrifice, be wanting, we feel that no orthodoxy of opinion can be a substitute for it. If it is there, if it is therein imperfect, because in incomplete ways, and within a narrow circle that has not realized its own inherent elasticity, we feel that the man is in the way of salvation. All true loyalties, all natural pieties, all noble enthusiasms, all duties are found within it; the passion for social righteousness and for scientific truth may both be expressed in terms of it;

the sacrificial love of man for man is seen to be akin to the sacrificial love of man for God, and is indeed its essential form. In such a conception of salvation, springing directly from our modern sense of personal values, we have virtually transcended the older dichotomy of two distinct worlds. We have entered the eternal realm of things that death, merely physical death, cannot touch. We have answered some insistent questions about the limits of human probation. Death becomes an incident in the providence of God, whilst the eternal fortunes of the individual are linked to the eternal aspect of his relation to other men and to God, a relation not necessarily to be measured by his own explicit consciousness of it.

Take another doctrine, that of the atonement, which follows on naturally from this view of sacrificial relationship. The war has brought nothing so forcibly home to the hearts of men as the suffering of the innocent with and through the guilty. The solidarity of the race is set plainly before men's eyes. However unjustly it may seem to work out in the individual instance, the fact is there, and it is an undeniable fact of life. If the solidarity of the race really extends to Him in whose image it is made, whose divine nature it is destined to partake, then there is nothing strange to our experience in the doctrine that God in His Son suffers with and through the guilty race of men. But the atonement, of course, means more than this. It means that the cross, the culminating point of the life of Christ, somehow enriches the world and becomes in the old metaphor, which we have forgotten is a metaphor, a sacrifice. How shall we express the worth of that sacrifice? Here is the point at which doctrines of the atonement so often fail to satisfy men's thought and conscience. No artificial theory of the worth of the sacrifice will permanently appeal to men, and every theory must be in terms of the living thought of the age to which it would appeal. For us, this means emphasis on the positive worth of the personal values in the life and death of

our Lord. It means that the sacrifices made by men for all true ends have their own far-off but real kinship with the sacrifice of the cross. "Nothing is lost", Bourget finely says, "when we make an offering of it". The modern definition of the atonement must be in some such terms as these, rather than in those of animal sacrifice, or slave-ransom, or financial debt, or legal penalty. Such modern approach to the atonement, whilst asserting a new relation to God constituted by the work of Christ, also gives a new significance to the apostle's conviction that he filled up that which was lacking in the sufferings of Christ, and that he was poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of other men's faith. Whilst we look to the one perfect Offering of the Son of God to make atonement for our sin, may we not also feel the inspiration of the thought that the Spirit of Christ dwelling in His disciples goes on to complete in their imperfect sacrifices His own work of redemption, since their best is His gift and inspiration? Along some such lines as these, the cross may yet come closer to the lives and hearts of men than our generation has ever seen.

A further illustration can here be no more than suggested—that of the doctrine of God. The war has helped to popularize the old Gnostic and Manichæan heresy of a finite God, and that specious dualism is a natural reaction from abstract Absolutism, prompted not only by speculative difficulties, but by the desire to find a God in genuine contact with the struggle of human life, sharing our daily strife here and now, as well as long ago on the far-off hill of Calvary. What is this but a desire for that Real Presence of God which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit declares, a doctrine so largely neglected in that fourth century when the traditional doctrine of the Trinity was framed? Only the approach to God from *within* the experience of a growing fellowship with Him can yield that for which so many are seeking, a conception of God warm with our life-blood, clear through the historic revelation in Christ, majestic in transcendent love. This

it is to have access in the Spirit through Christ to the Father.

Are we to look for some great personality to arise, a pioneer of Christian thought who shall translate our confused and inarticulate convictions into a working formula of churchmanship and evangelism? That has happened in both of the great crises with which we might compare the present. When Alaric and the Goths sacked Rome in 410, it seemed the downfall of civilization. But Augustine, in his "City of God", laid the foundation-thought of the Mediæval Church. Again, when the Renaissance destroyed the authority of that Church, Luther gave to the world a new life through his emphasis on justification by faith instead of works. A third in the great succession may come to emphasize for us the supernatural over against and yet within the natural, and to give us in simple and effective formula the Christian guarantee of moral and spiritual values. But there is another alternative. I have already used the phrase, "the democratization of theology". The progress of theology after the war may depend on a mass-movement of religion rather than on the dominating influence of this or that great pioneer. Whilst the expert will keep his necessary place in technical studies, and in the philosophical articulation of thought, the plain man may come to see that the vital things are common ground and demand from theology a fuller correspondence with that truth of religion. The result would be a greater simplification of issues, a wider variety of statement within the common loyalty to Christ, and the restatement of theology in terms of humanity rather than of intellectual system. The doctrine of the Spirit is the democratic doctrine of theology, for it declares that all men may be kings and priests unto God, it interprets the ethical consciousness of men as a royal commission direct from God, it enforces at once the uniqueness of each life in its contribution to the knowledge of God, and the fellowship of the one Body of Christ, into which we were all baptized in one Spirit.