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ARTICLE X.

CRITICAL NOTES.

THE DEBATE ON COMPARATIVE RELIGION.

SHALL the study of comparative religion be included in the theological curriculum? This question is arousing one of the most significant religious debates of the day. In Europe the arguments are conducted somewhat on national lines, and, strangely enough, Germany is contending against the progressive position. More strangely still, Harnack, perhaps the chief advocate of the scientific, historical method, as applied to the facts of the Christian religion, is opposing the recognition of the claims of the same method, when applied to religion in general.

In his Rectorial address before the University of Berlin, in August, 1901,¹ Harnack presented three arguments why the theological faculty should not be altered or enlarged so as to include the historical study of general religion.

It adds point and interest to note the fact, that, hardly a year before, at the *Congrès d'Histoire des Religions*, in Paris, Jean Réville, after recording the progress of the study of the history of religions recently in Holland, France, England, Belgium, Switzerland, and the United States, exclaimed, "Would that we could say as much for Germany! Perhaps one is surprised that we have not yet spoken of that classic home of universities. But, alas! we have almost nothing to say about the instruction in the history of religions in the German universities, for the very simple reason that there is none. . . . Carefully searching the programs of the German universities, one finds courses there on every subject except on the history of religions." M. Réville proceeds to point out, somewhat unsparingly, that the manual on the subject, in vogue in Germany, is the work of a Hollander, de la Saussaye, and that the important annual review of the topic in the *Theologische Jahresbericht* has been intrusted successively to a Swiss, a Hollander, and a Dane.²

Although he makes no reference to Réville, Harnack recognizes "the loud voices that declare the theological program too short and scientifically unsatisfactory." The "Rector Magnificus" begins by conceding

¹ Die Aufgabe der Theologischen Facultäten. Giessen, 1901.

² Revue de l'histoire des religions, 1901, No. 1. Compare Jastrow, Study of Religion, 56.

that the abstract theory demands such an extension of the curriculum, Religion, as elementary and abiding, is a universal concept and has universal expression. The completest induction possible is desirable. Moreover, the same historical method, which alone is justifiable in the study of Christianity, continually leads out to the broader related facts of history. The historical method recognizes only links in a chain, not unrelated fragments. Also, the spread of Christian Missions and the partition of the non-Christian world among Christian Powers, suggest this extension of the curriculum. Nevertheless, weighty considerations stand in the way.

First, argues Harnack, the religion of a nation cannot be studied properly without a knowledge of the language, history, and civil institutions of the people. Unless this is acquired, the study of the religion alone is only a vicious *Dilettantismus*. But these wider studies cannot come under the province of the theological faculty.

Secondly, the religion to which Christian theology should confine itself is the religion of the Bible, the religion of a history that has been evolved in a continuous process for three thousand years, and which is a living power to-day. He who knows not this religion knows none; and he who knows this, with its history, knows all. Christianity is not a religion among others; it is the religion.

Finally, the faculty stand in a responsible relation to the church; and the statutes of the university require the faculty to train devoted young men for the ministry. Here, with a logical connection not plain, at first sight, Harnack asserts very emphatically the right of free inquiry, untrammelled by the church itself. It has only been by a long struggle, which is not yet ended, that this right of free investigation has been gained. But closer examination of the passage shows a significant relation to his theme. The German scientific theologian has at present all the controversies on his hands that he can well maintain; let there be no further complications with church or state by introducing a new element of discord at this time. So, his argument closes with the hope that the time may come, when, after long labor, we may arrive at a comparative science of religion. May men be given us who on the basis of solid investigation shall have the courage to make the synthesis (*Zusammenfassung*); for every synthesis is the deed of the courageous.

M. Jean Réville has just made an able reply to Harnack.¹ He notes with satisfaction the concession that the extension of the course is absolutely rational. Harnack's position, that Christianity presents every phase of religion and hence its study alone includes all needed to know religion, seems to Réville a scientifically untenable argument. "What would one think of the botanist who should say that the flora of the old continent presents a sufficient variety to render unnecessary the study of the vegetation of America or Australia! Generalizations founded on a

¹ Revue de l'histoire des religions, 1901, No. 6.

consciously incomplete induction can never have more than a doubtful value."

Christianity and Judaism, continues M. Réville, studied in the methods of historical science, involve the knowledge of the Semitic, Egyptian, Assyro-Babylonian, and Persian religions. Has not M. Harnack himself been one of the principal laborers in establishing the important influence of Hellenism on early Christianity? To understand Gnosticism and Manichæism a knowledge of the oriental religions is indispensable. The popular beliefs and customs of the Middle Ages were influenced by the Celtic, Gallic, German, Scandinavian, and Slavic religions as much as by Christianity. We have here a good part of the general history of religions!

The oriental religions, which had a less direct historic relation to Christianity, are to-day of actual and increasing importance. Through inventions and commerce we are in close touch with the Orient. An acquaintance with these civilizations and religions is much more useful to-day than information about the sects of the Middle Ages! Buddhism, Islamism, the Chinese religions, are not memories or abstractions: they are intensely alive. The missionary conquests of Islam in Africa are much more notable than those of Christianity.

To Harnack's dictum that the gospel of Jesus is not a religion, but the religion, Réville responds, "I am personally fully convinced of the religious power and the incomparable morality of the gospel." But, among the educated and the populace alike, there are thousands to-day on whom such a dogmatic assertion would not have the slightest effect. The ear of these can be gained only by rational proof of the superiority of Christianity over other religions, and not by mere dogmatic affirmations.

Réville sums up his argument:—

"If, then, a knowledge of many religions is necessary to understand historic Judaism and Christianity; if it arms the future minister more effectively for the rôle he must play in our modern world; if it furnishes the materials for a richer and more broadly human religious psychology, —then, for religion and for civilization, there is every reason why the religious leaders should not be ignorant of the great religious manifestations in the heart of humanity. This study will also be of great advantage in removing that narrowness of spirit which has always been and is to-day one of the great dangers and principal causes of weakness of the churches. . . . I have no fear that the comparison will result in injury to Christianity; I firmly believe the opposite. But this course will permit us to form less exclusive, less unjust, and more exact conceptions of the religions of other peoples."

He concludes with refuting the charge of dilettantism. The objection would hold equally against the study of the history of philosophy, or the history of culture, both of which are pursued successfully in the German universities. A true investigator need not be a specialist in all the departments utilized in his researches, but can appropriate the results of the labors of others.

The impression made by a study of these arguments is that, on the

principles of free investigation and of the strict use of the historic method, which are assumed by both contestants, the logic of the situation is on the side of the Frenchman. The German concedes the theoretical and ultimate right of the broader view, a concession not easily reconciled with parts of his own argument. The limitations he would retain are defensible only on the ground of the dogmatic conceptions of Christian truth which he has been one of the foremost to discard. He sees, and perhaps magnifies, the temporary and local difficulties. The Paris professor seems to speak in a freer atmosphere, and lays more emphasis on the essential principles involved.

There are other reasons calling for the general study of religion to-day, besides those presented by Réville and conceded by Harnack. Two of these may be mentioned.

1. There are many indications that the world is on the verge of a great spiritual and intellectual movement upward. An analogy in history can be found only in the period of the introduction of the gospel or in the era of the Renaissance and Reformation. There are great converging influences in politics, in the sciences, in religion, which all point to a new period of harmony and unity. "*L'heure des grandes synthèses a déjà sonné.*" The forces in the Christian Churches are no longer spent in antagonism or competition with each other. The sciences are mellowing and turning more to the religious, though hardly to the orthodox, solution of their own problems. The conviction that the religious solution of the world-problems is the true solution was never stronger than it is to-day. Never, therefore, has there been the need to investigate more widely or more deeply the religious spirit that underlies the religions. The Christian spirit feels the elemental thrill of sympathy as it touches the common instincts of prayer, of self-surrender, of sacrifice and hope for the future in many systems that it was once taught to believe were forms of devil-worship. There is, therefore, duty laid upon all who will speak in the name of religious truth, to know, not only what their grandfathers believed, but what the race of man has believed. The Christian sects are emerging from their parochialisms, their exclusive forms, their divisive creeds. The actual working creeds of the denominations are simplifying rapidly, however slow may be the ecclesiastical process of creed amendment. There is not only the vision and hope of the world-conquest. Christianity has always had that. But now the emphasis is placed upon the essential and definite, common-sense principles whereby this conquest can be accomplished. Among these principles is surely a sympathetic and candid knowledge of the actual and hereditary beliefs of the peoples to whom Christianity is presented. This knowledge, therefore, will include not only a vivid conception of popular, debased practices, but a knowledge of the older, and usually nobler, forms of belief, from which the lower, unethical practices are a degeneration.

2. There is need, above all, for the religious study of religions. We have had in the nineteenth century the philosophical, the psychological, the historical, the linguistic, the scientifically "unprejudiced," and the apologetic or polemic study of religions. The religious study remains to be tried. By the religious study of religions is meant the investigation of all religious beliefs and practices in the light of the Christian faith in an all-powerful, omnipresent, all-loving Heavenly Father, in the belief that the Logos is the Light that lighteth every man, and that the action of the Spirit of God has never been restricted to the confines of Judaism or of organic Christianity. When countless multitudes have invoked the Unseen Power, calling him in their own tongue "Lord" or "Father," has the One Lord and Father been deaf to their cry because the words were not uttered in the Palestinian dialect? When the votaries at a myriad shrines have sacrificed, and suffered, and done all that in their ignorance they knew how to do, to gain the divine favor and their own souls' peace, has the God whose name is Love turned a deaf ear because the suppliants lacked acquaintance with certain historic facts? Preaching to the nations is declaring, revealing, not creating, a relationship with God.

In studying the religions religiously, we are not pursuing an interesting course in "mental pathology," we are not investigating what is merely an irrational mass of superstitions alone, we are face to face with the Melchizedeks, also, priests of the Most High God; we are studying the highest aspirations, the deepest longings of man; but, more than that, we are studying a divine Revelation, made in divers tongues and in manifold ways, to all the ages and the races of man.

LANE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

HENRY GOODWIN SMITH.

THE PURPOSE OF PUNISHMENT.

INTEREST in the reformation of criminals is one of the glories of this generation. Like the earlier world-wide movement for the abolition of slavery, this effort to reform prisoners is a sign of a higher valuation of man. If one who has committed crime can be made into a safe, honest, and useful citizen, it is a great achievement—both for himself and for society. Its importance must not, however, lead us to regard the individual's reformation as the only purpose the law can rightly have in view when it punishes. The punishment may well have relation to other individuals, also, and to society as a whole. In fact, the main purpose of punishment is the protection of society from crime. The saving of the offender is secondary to the saving of society. Reform him, if possible, while protecting the general public; but protect society, whatever becomes of the criminal.

In the case of the lighter crimes, and especially when committed for the first time or by juvenile offenders, the protection of society can be secured by means which may at the same time be effective for reforming the individual. A due measure of restraint, combined with compulsory training of mind and hand for some honest industry, may serve both purposes,—may sufficiently warn observers against his course of crime, and at the same time develop in him the steadfast purpose of an upright life.

In other cases, a crime may show the offender to be like a finger in which gangrene has gone so far that the finger cannot be saved; it must be amputated to save the rest of the body. If we call crime a disease, we should recognize that it is a disease of society as a whole, rather than of the individual criminal. What is needed is not so much to stop the criminal from his crimes as to stop the production of such as he. A forger is sent to prison, not simply to cure him, so that he will not again sign another man's name, but more to keep business safe from the growth of this crime. His punishment may hold back scores of other men from resorting to forgery when in business difficulties. His too easy pardon may make such an impression of public indifference to the crime as will seriously lessen in many minds the motives for business integrity. In the case of spectacular crimes, leniency may turn the criminal into a hero in the eyes of the ill-balanced, and make his career fascinating.

When sympathy for those who have broken the law is permitted to run riot over consideration for the public good, the greatest mischief may result. This led the warden's wife in Pittsburg to help the Biddle brothers break out of the prison in which they were confined under death sentence for murder. The infatuated woman even fled with the criminals, and perished with them in their vain attempt to resist arrest.¹ A more serious case of pity for individuals overriding regard for public interests appears in the action of the Minnesota authorities in paroling the Younger brothers. The story is instructive enough to be told in some detail.

Soon after the Civil War, a band of robbers became notorious in the State of Missouri, which a little later extended its operations and its terror through Iowa and into Minnesota. In a raid to rob the bank at Northfield, Minnesota, the robbers failed because the citizens defended their property with their lives. Both citizens and robbers were numbered among the dead and wounded when the fight was over. Two brothers named Younger belonging to the band were captured, duly convicted on trial, and sentenced to imprisonment for life. After serving more than a quarter of a century, they have been liberated on parole, and were at once taken into the employ of a mercantile company.

The reasons given for the parole are that they were the youngest and least guilty of the band, that their capture was due to their stopping to

¹ See daily papers, January 31, 1902.

aid wounded comrades, that their conviction was due to their refusal to kill wounded witnesses, and that they have been model prisoners who never from the first gave the keepers any anxiety. So far as these men themselves are concerned, these reasons may be considered sufficient. They will not rob banks again. No one in the community need fear losing life or property at their hands. It is easy to be assured that, though these men thirty years ago made robbery their business and went prepared to kill rather than fail of getting their booty, they are now cured of all criminal tendencies.

From another point of view, however, and one which gives a wider outlook, there is serious objection to their parole. What will be its effect on boys who have found fascination in stories of romantic robbers? It was reported that for some days after these men began work in their new position, the place was thronged with people who wished to shake hands with them. At intervals the daily papers still give news items about them as about persons of public importance. The next we know they may be announced as attractions at a series of county fairs as another once notorious criminal has just been advertised in what has been considered one of the most moral counties of Ohio. It is to be feared that multitudes already so magnify these men's impulsive virtues toward their partners in crime, and their quiet acceptance of prison life, as to overlook their crimes of robbery and murder, and that to not a few they loom up as heroes.

The Minnesota Board of Pardons has taken a great responsibility in granting them a parole. It should never be forgotten by statesmen that we live in a world where not all are wise men and philosophers. The percentage of the unwise and unstable is so large that it must at all times be seriously reckoned with. The peril to society from this Minnesota parole is that it may make many of the unstable look upon a deliberately planned robbery as a light thing, and the shooting down of men who are defending their property as an act which society can condone. A State by one such parole may do more to encourage crime in her youth than her courts and prisons can undo in many years.

Another evil of this action is its influence to make the next community that successfully resists robbers, shoot down without trial the men they capture. One of the most powerful persuasives to lynch violence is the inadequacy of many of our legal punishments. Strenuous efforts are needed to-day in the United States along every line of defense to prevent revolt from the reign of law, and lapsing into the barbarism of private revenge.

It is sometimes asked whether society cannot make a better use of a murderer than to execute him. In many cases, No. When Belisarius hanged two of his soldiers for murder, he secured such discipline in his army as made it a resistless host against the Vandals. England by prompt legal execution of murderers has almost made homicide a thing

of the past, even among her mixed population. Punishments are justified if they secure the great end of public security. This is the main purpose of punishment.

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TENNYSON'S PRAYER.

THE first stanza of Tennyson's "In Memoriam"—and with it the whole prologue—has suffered from commentators. What can be clearer, if let alone, than these lines:—

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove."

If it were possible to make it plainer that they are addressed primarily and directly to Christ, that would be done by quoting the words of 1 Peter i. 8, words certainly familiar to the poet, "Jesus Christ, whom having not seen ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Now what say certain commentaries? I take up the latest, and on the whole the best,—that by Prof. A. C. Bradley of Oxford,¹—and read, "In stanza I. immortal Love is addressed as the Son or revelation of God; invisible, unprovable, embraced by faith alone" (p. 80). According to this, Jesus Christ is not addressed and adored as immortal Love, but love, the affection, is personified, and deified, and invoked. The aim of the note is to cut off the reference to the personal Christ. Again, "In the first shock of grief the poet felt that the love within him was his truest self, and that it must not die . . . and, like undying love, he 'embraced' even in his darkest hours as 'God indeed'" (p. 79). To find a parallel to this inversion, and therefore perversion, of the poet's thought, we may take the Bible statement "God is love," and change it to "Love is God." Do we need to summon the powers of logic and rhetoric to show the important difference between those two statements? Common sense is enough.

Now what reason is there why any commentator should intervene where all is clear to make all dim? Professor Bradley is not the only one who does this. Genung and Davidson do the same. The former says, "Immortal Love is addressed as Son of God"; also that the address is "to the Christ-nature rather than to the Christ-name." Why this strain imposed upon a meaning so obvious? Why turn a prayer to Christ into a prayer to an affection even so royal as love? The cause may be found partly in the attempt to find something deeper and more worthy of a great poet than a simple prayer to Jesus Christ; and yet there

¹ A Commentary on Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1901).

is nothing deeper than God, and devotion to him; and there are intellectual depths enough in the prayer itself, without seeking to multiply them beyond the limits of devout personal faith.

But this supplanting of Christ by love is probably due not chiefly to a dreamy search for profundities of meaning, but to the influence of other parts of Tennyson's poetry, especially of the later portion of "In Memoriam" itself. In the sonnet "Doubt and Prayer," published in the poet's latest volume, are the lines:—

"Before I learn that Love, which is, and was
My Father, and my Brother, and my God."

Does not that prove that "Immortal Love" in the Prologue is the primary object of address and adoration? No; to use it so is to violate the fundamental law of exegesis; viz. Every passage belongs in its own place, and shows its meaning there. Those lines are far away from the Prologue in origin, in setting and connection, and have nothing to do in explaining it.

The later portions of "In Memoriam" may have a better claim. Professor Bradley says that "the later sections will be found the best commentary on the Prologue." Here, it is true, we find such a line as this (Canto cxxvi.):—

"Love is and was my Lord and King,"

but in none of these sections is there any confounding of love with God. It is also of prime importance that the Prologue is introductory and personal. It is almost a preface. It came fresh from a mind and heart full of the whole poem, but it is not a summary, and not an epilogue. The poet knew his art better than to make it either. The ecstasy of some of the later cantos is out of place in a preface. The Prologue breathes the spirit of the whole poem, without repeating its passionate rhetoric, or its shadowy speculations. It lays the whole work, quivering with love, on the altar of Jesus Christ, who is immortal Love.

To the question what Tennyson himself thought of the mis-explanations of his commentators, I can discover no exact answer. He commended Miss Chapman's "Companion to 'In Memoriam,'" although it begins with the remark, "The Poet dedicates his Elegy to that Unseen Love which is, he trusts, at the heart of things, in which all things live and move and have their being, which is perfect power and perfect tenderness and perfect justice." On the other hand, he had in his possession for some time Dr. Gatty's "Key to Lord Tennyson's 'In Memoriam,'" and made so many corrections that the author says of the corrected edition, "I feel sure that it contains nothing which he disapproved."¹ And the "Key" contains the following: "The prefatory Poem is addressed to Christ, God Himself upon earth" (p. 143). If the question had been put squarely to the poet, "Did you mean Jesus Christ in your

¹ Preface to Fifth Edition, p. xxvii.

invocation?" I imagine he would have regarded it as an impertinence. It seems, however, that more than once he was asked the meaning of "immortal Love," and, according to the Memoir by his son, "he explained that he had used Love in the same sense as St. John" (1 John iv.).¹ This is the chapter that affirms and repeats "God is love," and also emphasizes the incarnation thus: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him." The interpreters that bid us think of Love as a substitute for Christ will find scant comfort in their reading of that chapter.

If still some have the feeling that the simple, obvious meaning is too orthodox for Tennyson, it is sufficient to say that, however unorthodox some of his statements of belief, uttered hastily in later life, may appear, certainly, at the time of writing "In Memoriam," he was a devout believer in the Incarnation. To Dr. Gatty he said, "I am not very fond of creeds: it is enough for me that I know God Himself came down from heaven in the form of man."²

The Christian thought of to-day centers in the person of Christ. It is greatly worth while to rescue this prayer from the misty realm of abstractions, and place it where it belongs,—in the forefront of the Christian devotion of the world of culture and intellect. It is not a rhapsody on love, but a real, vital prayer,—sincere, humble, profound, sublime.

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¹ Vol. i. p. 312, note.

² Key, p. 143.