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THE

BIBLIOTHECA SACRA

ARTICLE I.

HAS THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION DESUPERNATURALIZED REGENERATION?

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OUR Lord taught, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"; "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3, 5).

This teaching the church of Christ has from the first interpreted to mean that Christian life must begin with regeneration, and that regeneration is essentially a change from spiritual death to spiritual life wrought by the creative, and so supernatural or immediate, agency of God himself. That is, the life of the Christian as such commences with, and can commence only with, the infusion of new life that is discontinuous with his past life and with the ordinary processes of his consciousness. He is what he is, not because of the natural order, however that may be regarded as planned and originated and sustained and even controlled by God. On the contrary, he is what he is because the order of nature, though not interrupted, has been reinforced and determined by a supernatural intervention. This intervention has been prepared

for, its occasion at least has been provided, through God's providential direction of the natural order; and it is also in the thus upheld and guided natural order that the results of the intervention reveal themselves: yet what is decisive in the change must be referred, not to the man's education, not to his environment, not to his own will, not even to his mysterious subliminal consciousness, but wholly to Him who, while ever immanent in, transcends at all points the natural order; that is, immediately to God himself.

All this is well expressed or implied in the Lutheran Formula Concordiæ, which in this respect defines what may justly be called the creed of Christendom. It is to be noted that in this symbol regeneration is spoken of as conversion. The sections referred to run as follows:—

"Conversio hominis talis est immutatio, per operationem Spiritus Sancti, in hominis intellectu, voluntate et corde, qua homo (operatione videlicet Spiritus Sancti) potest oblatam gratiam apprehendere. . . . Hominis autem nondum renati intellectus et voluntas tantum sunt subjectum convertendum, sunt enim hominis spiritualiter mortui intellectus et voluntas, in quo homine Spiritus Sanctus conversionem et renovationem operatur, ad quod opus hominis convertendi voluntas nihil confert, sed patitur, ut Deus in ipsa operetur, donec regeneretur. Postea vero in aliis sequentibus bonis operibus Spiritui Sancto cooperatur, ea faciens, quae Deo grata sunt." [1]

This position has been vigorously disputed. Rationalistic philosophy has from the first tended to deny the possibility of supernatural intervention even in the sphere of the spirit. Pelagian theology has, in like manner, consistently rejected the fact of such intervention in the life of the soul. Science, however, has characteristically ignored this question rather

[1] II. 83, 91.

than answered it in the negative. Even when she has not taken the ground that all inquiry as to the reality of the Supernatural or even as to his manifestations are out of her sphere, she has usually proceeded as though she had done this. Psychologists themselves have been slow to enter the field of religion. Indeed, while the norm of religious experience is, as we believe, given authoritatively in the Bible, and while such experience is described by Augustine in his "Confessions" with a minuteness and vividness which leave nothing to be desired, and while it is analyzed by Edwards in his treatise on "The Religious Affections" with such precision as to yield rich psychological results; yet the distinctly psychological analysis of religious experience began but little more than twenty-five years ago. Even now its experts are confined mainly to America and France. Nor have all these declared themselves as to the ultimate nature of regeneration. On the contrary, many, as Starbuck in his book "The Psychology of Religion," have tried to hold all such inquiries to be *ultra vires* as regards the psychologist. Of those, moreover, who have raised this question, some, as James, teach that, while psychology can describe what happens in regeneration, "she is unable in a given case to account accurately for all the single forces at work";[1] and he inclines to the opinion that somewhere below consciousness the Supernatural must be posited. Latterly, however, the trend has rather been the other way. Thus as early as 1895 Mr. James H. Leuba, Fellow in Psychology in Clark University, wrote as follows:—

"The supposition that a particular portion — if we may use that term — of our psychic life is severed from subjective causal antecedents of a like nature with itself, and is brought about by an act of God following upon a decision determined by Christ's sacrifice — the subject's knowledge or ignorance of it does not affect

[1] Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 196.

the question — belongs to the mythology of a by-gone age . . . . ; the facts make plain that salvation (deliverance from moral duality and sin) is a concomitant of faith, and that faith necessarily follows upon the sin-pain and self-surrender, according to a law of continuity of the same nature as the one determining the succession of our thoughts and feelings. There is no more reason for positing a superhuman interposition in the succession of the phenomena of conversion (sin-pain, self-surrender, unity, joy, disappearance or weakening of certain impulses and desires) than in the more ordinary changes — be they sudden or gradual — of our affective life, as in the cessation of 'moral,' 'mental,' or 'physical' pain. The alterations of personality, recently investigated, are no less wonderful than the conversion-experiences."

"We may remark, by the way, that the same argument for the intervention of God's power can be made for any one of the bodily disorders, such as neuralgia, etc., in which sudden cessation of pain is of common occurrence." [1]

So President G. Stanley Hall, in 1904, wrote with pity, if not with contempt, of those theologians who still "deem regeneration instantaneous, as if the soul were shocked into righteousness by a fulminating convulsive change like the perhaps epileptic Paul. An aura more or less describable, a spasm, and presto, all is changed, as if the old soul were torn out and another inserted in its place. It is all the work of the Holy Spirit, which, we have been told, does not necessarily work in time. According to this paroxysmal view, the process is miraculous, but, in fact, it seems so only because its continuity is so shattered in consciousness." [2]

Yet more recently, Professor George Albert Coe, Ph.D., of Union Theological Seminary, in a paper entitled "What does Modern Psychology permit Us to believe in respect to Regeneration?" affirms, among other things, that modern psychology "tends to discredit the notion that in the life of the Christian there occurs an infusion of new life that is entirely discontinuous with his past life and with the ordinary processes of con-

[1] **American Journal of Psychology, vol. vii. pp. 360, 368.**
[2] **Adolescence, vol. ii. p. 342.**

sciousness."[1] This paper of Professor Coe, is, moreover, so temperate and is so evidently written in a spirit that would be friendly to Christianity that it invites as well as raises the question, Has the Psychology of Religion desupernaturalized Regeneration? That is, Has the Psychology of Religion so explained the change known as regeneration as to have explained away the necessity for positing the immediate intervention of God himself in the life of the soul if that change is to be accounted for?

On the ground, also, of its intrinsic importance, this inquiry may well claim our attention. It must determine the truth or the falsity of the Christian religion. The life which the latter demands and in which subjectively it consists is entered on, and can be entered on, only by a second birth, a 'birth from above,' a 'birth of the Spirit of God.' Such, as we have seen, was the teaching of the Founder of Christianity, and throughout the centuries since his disciples generally have so understood his teaching. To deny, therefore, the fact or the supernaturalness of regeneration is to set down Christ and the Christian church as incorrect in their doctrine of what Christianity is and must be. But who may determine what Christianity is, save its Founder and his recognized disciples? We reason thus in all like cases. When the evolutionists of to-day show that, in the light of the facts, natural selection must be conceived far otherwise than Darwin himself and his school represented it — if indeed it must not be altogether repudiated — they set aside Darwinism. At all events, they do this in so far as natural selection may be regarded as essential to Darwin's theory. In like manner, if modern psychology eliminates the supernatural from regeneration, she denies Christianity; for according to Christianity's authoritative

[1] American Journal of Theology, vol. xii. p. 359.

expounders, the Christian religion can begin only with regeneration, and regeneration to be regeneration must be supernatural.

This issue cannot be insisted on too strongly or presented too sharply. The term "Christian religion" may not mean whatever is convenient: it is a definite conception; and it connotes what is, not what might be or what could be or even what should be. It was understood by the only persons who had the right to determine its meaning to refer to a reality; and the reality to which it referred was understood to be at its origin discontinuous with the natural order, or at that most critical point wholly supernatural. If, therefore, modern psychology proves this not to be so, it proves that Christianity is contrary to reality, and thus is not what it claims to be. It does not prove that a new conception of Christianity is needed; it proves that the Christian conception of religion is false, and that another and new religion is demanded. This is the alternative. If the claim of the modern psychology of religion be sustained, then Christianity herself must be repudiated.

But this is not all. In every sense as well as in its true sense will Christianity be set aside. As we have seen, Christ himself is discredited. His teaching on what was so fundamental as the life which he came to introduce was untrue. As to it, he either lied or was mistaken. This is what the modern psychology, so it is implied, has established. But if so, how can Christ continue to be the object of worship? Falsehood so unblushing or error so radical must make reverence impossible. Miracles on his part, so far from offsetting the effect on us of such deceit or such ignorance, would only accentuate it; and then it is precisely the miracle that is the *bête noire* of modern psychology.

Nor can there be any evasion at this point. Many of those

who reject utterly the supernatural claims of Christianity still insist that the essence of "the final religion" will be what they call "the Jesus-spirit." They hold that to interpret reality in terms of Jesus is and always will be the true religion.[1] Yet what becomes of the Jesus-spirit, if we must consider him to have been either an impostor or a fool? Can any age adore untruth? Can our age bow down to crass ignorance? Can the supernatural be eliminated from Christ's claims, if such must be the cost? Nor may it be replied that what the modern mind finds useful in the "Jesus-spirit," his experience of God, his faith in God, can be detached from all else in him and be held for its own supreme worth. Such an achievement cannot be possible permanently. Untruth must vitiate all that it touches. If Jesus was untruthful, his experience of God may be hypocrisy. Superstitious ignorance must destroy confidence. If Jesus believed in the bugaboo of the Supernatural, his God may be an illusion.

Thus it comes down to this, that even what is best in the sense of most useful in Jesus cannot be available for religious inspiration, if he himself must be discredited; and that he himself cannot but be discredited, if in anything so fundamental and decisive as his conception of the origin and essence of what he regarded as the only true life he was, whether intentionally or unintentionally, hopelessly out of the way. In a word, if modern psychology has desupernaturalized regeneration, she has overthrown Christianity herself, and that in the most modern as well as in the original and true acceptation of the term.

I. That we may come directly to the point, let us note and at once exclude from the discussion all that with respect to regeneration which modern psychology has established and which, therefore, she may rightly require us to admit.

[1] G. B. Foster, The Finality of the Christian Religion, p. 499.

1. She has proved that regeneration takes place according to law. It occurs usually in the young, and in them during adolescence; it is generally preceded by a sense of sin, is accompanied by or expressed in an act of self-surrender, and is immediately followed by feelings of justification, of joy, and of newness; the variations in the program may be explained by differences of sex, of age, of temperament, of race, of instruction, of environment.

All this, however, and much more of the same kind, has not desupernaturalized regeneration. Indeed, it is in the activity of the Supernatural that law in the sense in which Professor Coe understands it (i.e. law as uniformity of sequence) is to be expected. As he himself has well said in an earlier volume: "What a strange inversion of faith is that which looks for the Infinite Mind in chaos rather than in cosmos! Surely God, as a rational being, will be self-consistent, will act in the same way under the same circumstances. If, then, there were no uniformities in religious experience, the inference would be that religion itself proceeded from some disorderly or mischievous spirit rather than from the Father of Lights with whom is no variableness." [1]

Nature teaches the same truth. The order of nature presupposes a God who will be orderly in all its operations, not because he is under law to nature, but because nature and its laws are the expression of his own nature. He would contradict himself, therefore, if his interventions in nature were less orderly than nature. As Paul remarks, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Cor. xiv. 33). In a word, the Supernatural must be preëminently the sphere of law.

2. Modern psychology has established the continuity of the phenomena of regeneration with the natural order. It oc-

[1] The Spiritual Life, p. 16.

curs after and as one of a chain of antecedents and consequents every one of which we appear to be able to observe. Psychologists, it is true, differ in their conclusions from this. Some say that, in spite of the apparent continuity, there is a link wanting; they, like Professor James, would look for it, if they could, in the subliminal consciousness; and, also like him, they affirm that it may be supernatural.

This significant difference of opinion among psychologists themselves need not, however, detain us. The establishment of the continuity of the phenomena of regeneration with the natural order would not disprove supernatural intervention and so desupernaturalize regeneration. It is here precisely as it is in the case of biological evolution. Were we to grant the lineal descent of man from some lower animal, that would not prove the descent of the entire man, or even of the essential man, from that animal. On the contrary, it would demonstrate the descent thus of only so much in man as was like the animal: and as what is distinctive in man, viz. his religious and moral nature, is unlike anything in the animal, the principle of sufficient reason would constrain us to look outside of the ancestral beast, to an intervention in or rather on the continuous chain of natural antecedents and consequents for an adequate cause. Is not this the contention of Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace, who shares with Mr. Darwin the distinction of having been joint author of the theory of the origin of species by natural selection? In his great work entitled "Darwinism" he says:—

"I fully accept Mr. Darwin's conclusion as to the essential identity of man's bodily structure with that of the higher mammalia, and his descent from some ancestral form common to man and the anthropoid apes. The evidence of such descent appears to me to be overwhelming and conclusive. . . .

"But this is only the beginning of Mr. Darwin's work . . . . his

whole argument tends to the conclusion that man's entire nature and all his faculties, whether moral, intellectual, or spiritual, have been derived from their rudiments in the lower animals, in the same manner and by the action of the same general laws as his physical structure has been derived." "This conclusion appears to me not to be supported by adequate evidence, and to be directly opposed to many well-ascertained facts. . . .

"....To prove continuity and the progressive development of the intellectual and moral faculties from animals to man, is not the same as proving that these faculties have been developed by natural selection. . . . Because man's physical structure has been developed from an animal form by natural selection, it does not necessarily follow that his mental nature, even though developed *pari passu* with it, has been developed by the same causes only. . . .

"....These [mental and moral] faculties could not possibly have been developed by means of the same laws which have determined the progressive development of the organic world in general, and also of man's physical organism. . . . [The higher faculties] point clearly to an unseen universe — to a world of spirit to which the world of matter is subordinate."[1]

We need not, therefore, pause to consider whether there is any unexplained gap between the radical spiritual and moral change which we call regeneration and the succession of mental states leading up to it. Even if there is not, that does not disprove that there has been a supernatural intervention any more than an unbroken continuity of physical sequences in the development of man would prove that in these sequences we had the sole explanation of man. With respect to the point at issue these two cases are parallel.

3. Modern psychology has established that there is a natural basis or preparation for regeneration. The ceremonies of religions other than Christianity and the customs of men in a state of nature indicate this. In a paper in the *American Journal of Psychology,* by Arthur H. Daniels, Fellow in Clark University, "the initiation rites and customs of various peoples expressive of a new life" are set forth; and "the leading

[1] Darwinism, pp. 461, 463, 475, 476.

characteristics of this new physiological and psychological life at puberty and adolescence" are noted, "with the purpose of showing both the natural predisposition to, and the need of the spiritual change which is formulated in the doctrine of regeneration."[1]

Thus these initiation ceremonies, such as knocking out the teeth, fasting, seclusion, changing the name, flogging, etc., which, among many barbarous peoples, mark the period of adolescence, "are something more than mere tests of courage and endurance." "They have a deep psychological as well as physical significance." They were intended to impress the boy with the reality and with the sacredness of the new life on which he had entered. In the minds of these peoples there is a gulf between the life of manhood and that of childhood, and he who would become a man must put away "childish things." He must, indeed, die to his former life. "Kulischer thinks that we find a relic of this primitive practice in the school systems of the middle ages. All the sciences were taught in the cloister and in the Latin language. . . . There was a breach between school and life. The object of the cloister training seems to have been, not to prepare the pupil for life, but to make him "a new creature.'"[2] In a word, Mr. Daniels would appear to have shown that adolescence is by nature the period of new life. It demands such life. It is fitted to develop such life. Now it is precisely in this period that regeneration commonly takes place. This, Daniels, as well as Starbuck, Coe, and others, establishes. Hence their argument. Regeneration usually occurs just when it is most natural that it should occur. Therefore, it is only natural.

This, however, does not follow necessarily. Indeed, the inference may be the other way. If regeneration be the super-

[1] Vol. vi. p. 63. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

natural work of God, it is even to be expected that there will be a natural basis for it and that, as a rule, we shall discover it when and where we find this natural basis. God causes and determines the natural as truly, if not so directly, as he does the supernatural. "The creature" is as really his handiwork as is "the new creature." It cannot be, then, that the former is without reference to the latter, or the latter without connection with the former. On the contrary, the natural will anticipate the supernatural, it will prepare for it; thus it will afford the basis for it. Otherwise, God would not be the absolute Reason. Because he must be this, the very naturalness, so to speak, of regeneration will be an indication of, since in line with, its supernaturalness.

We have a striking illustration of this principle in the case of the Christian religion as a whole. One of the strongest, if not one of the commonest, arguments for its supernaturalness is its naturalness. As Jevons has shown in his "Introduction to the History of Religion," it meets the needs of man's religious nature. It is precisely what that nature demands and for which it prepares. As compared with other religions, Buddhism or Islam for example, it is so much more natural than they are that it could scarcely fail to be the handiwork of the supernatural Author of nature himself. In a word, it is supernaturally natural.

4. Modern psychology has established that the change effected in regeneration so resembles many other remarkable human experiences as on this ground to seem to be "only one species of a genus that contains other types as well." For example, "the new birth may be away from religion into incredulity; or it may be from moral scrupulosity into freedom and license; or it may be produced by the irruption into the individual's life of some new stimulus or passion, such as love,

ambition, cupidity, revenge, or patriotic devotion. In all these instances we have precisely the same psychological form of event, — a firmness, stability, and equilibrium succeeding a period of storm and stress and inconsistency. In these non-religious cases the new man may also be born either gradually or suddenly." [1] To prove and to illustrate the same position, Leuba cites "the alterations of personality recently investigated." [2]

But this has not desupernaturalized regeneration. Because it so resembles many natural changes as to seem to be identical with them it does not follow that it is so. That neuralgic pain often ceases as suddenly as sin-pain need not result from the two kinds of pain being identical and so be a proof that they are. This is precisely the point to be determined; and it may not be determined by any resemblance in form and method, i.e. by any outward resemblance merely. To infer this is to beg the whole question. Things may look alike and even happen alike, and yet be very different. It is here as it is with the embryological argument for man's descent from some lower animal form. The argument is that men and dogs must come from some common ancestor because their embryos are the same, and these cannot but be the same because in their earliest stage they are indistinguishable. This reasoning, however, as has often been pointed out, assumes the very thing which should be proved. It would be established, should it ever occur that a human embryo developed into a dog, or *vice versa;* but as it is, it is far from established. Moreover, in this particular case it is refuted. "Nothing in nature," says Ebrard, "is so well established as that every human being brings forth its own young,— a proposition which

[1] James, Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 176.
[2] American Journal of Psychology, vol. vii. p. 361.

is rather confirmed than invalidated by abortions and monstrosities, since a human monster is never like any of the animal species, but a man stunted and crippled in his embryonic development. It follows, therefore, that the embryos of the different genera and species are not the same, but are generically and specifically different. Like causes have like effects, and, hence, from the distinctness of the effects, we must conclude to the distinctness of the causes."[1] Though the human embryo and the canine embryo look alike, the life monad in either — that which, though invisible, is most essential — must be radically different. The same principle cannot but apply with regard to regeneration. Though it at first resembles so many human and natural transformations, it is too distinct in its result for any resemblance in method, however close, to prove, or alone even to indicate, its naturalness.

5. Modern psychology has established that regeneration does not give or involve any immediate knowledge or experience of God himself. Though its result is unique, it is not unique in this sense, that the regenerated person is brought into conscious contact with the Father, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit, with Deity himself, in any form. In our judgment Professor Coe is right when he takes exception to Principal Forsyth's statement that " regeneration is experienced as a ' causal creative action ' of Christ, in which the believer's inmost being meets ' with Christ in his act on the Cross.' "[2]

All this, however, does not desupernaturalize regeneration. That the subject of it does not in it meet Christ himself does not keep it from being " a causal, a creative," and so a supernatural act. It is the immediacy of the power of God, not our consciousness of his presence, that renders an act supernat-

[1] Apologetics, vol. ii. p. 51.
[2] American Journal of Theology, vol. xii. p. 365.

ural; and his power may be immediately exercised, though he himself be not recognized. That the patient was at the time of the operation unconscious of the surgeon does not impair the fact, or his assurance of the fact, that it was by the very hand of the surgeon that he himself was made a sound man. He infers the surgeon's power from what has been done for him and in him. Nothing but such power so exerted could have saved and cured him. And precisely so, the regenerated man infers that he has been the subject of a supernatural change, not because he has been conscious of God, but because only God's creative energy could have made him that was "dead through trespasses and sins" "a new creature." In a word, though he is conscious of a change within him which his causal judgment insists could have been wrought only by the Supernatural himself, he has not been and he is not directly conscious of the Supernatural.

This, indeed, is the orthodox position as opposed to "the new theology" of Dorner and his school. At this point, therefore, it is the former that is at one with modern psychology. Thus Baxter writes: "It is not, therefore, at least principally, any internal voice, or the Spirit, saying within a man, 'Thou art the child of God,' which is the witness of the Spirit: but as the Lord Jesus hath made a promise of giving his Spirit to all that are his; so when he performeth that promise they may hereby know that they are his."[1] So Edwards says: "The witness or seal of the Spirit consists in the effect of the Spirit of God in the heart, in the implantation and exercise of grace there, and so consists in experience."[2] And thus, too, Stearns, after admitting that he used to hold, with Dorner, that "faith already has the immediate spiritual intuition of God as Father; that it has knowledge not simply of itself, of its being re-

[1] Works, vol. xx. p. 49. [2] Works (1830), vol. v. pp. 314 ff.

deemed, but also, and that primarily, of the redeeming God," — after admitting this, he adds: "In asserting that we have an immediate intuition of God, Dorner seems to me to cross the line that separates the true mysticism from the false. I do not see how we can know any objective reality, whether physical or spiritual, except through its effects in our consciousness. This knowledge is real and immediate, though not unmediated; but it is very different from a direct intuition of the object." [1]

II. Having now observed what modern psychology has established with regard to regeneration, and that all this need not in any wise desupernaturalize it; let us notice, next, what it has failed to maintain, but must maintain if it is to desupernaturalize it.

1. It must show that natural causes are adequate to produce the effect experienced in regeneration. This is the point at issue. As Professor Coe says:—

> "Here is where the difficulty in adjusting the doctrine of regeneration with psychology is most acute. At present the problem takes this form: Does the Christian become acquainted with Jesus Christ otherwise than through the historic process (the Scriptures, the church, etc.)? No psychology would deny that Jesus is operative in the lives of men to-day in the same sense in which Washington and Lincoln and St. Paul still work within us. Nor would any psychologist draw from his science a denial that all these persons have survived bodily death, or that they are now taking an active part in the life of the universe. When, however, a claim is made that we can identify these present activities so as to say that this or that particular effect is wrought by a certain one of these persons, and otherwise than through the historical process, then the psychologist demands that the phenomenon in question be scrutinized." [2]

Now that these present activities must be referred to the Spirit of Christ, and that what is distinctive of them does originate outside of the historic in the sense of the natural

[1] The Evidence of Christian Experience, p. 424.
[2] American Journal of Theology, vol. xii. p. 367.

process — precisely this is the claim of the doctrine of regeneration. Consequently, if this doctrine is to be desupernaturalized, the adequacy of the historic or natural process is what must be proved; and until this has been proved, it cannot be maintained that the doctrine which thus far has held the field, the doctrine of the essential supernaturalness of regeneration, has been set aside. The establishment of anything less than this adequacy, while it might leave the question still open, could not settle it, and certainly could not settle it adversely to a theory which, if true, would be satisfactory.

The adequacy of the natural process, however, has not been established. The continuity of this process has, as we have seen, been evinced, and it has been shown, too, that nothing but the natural process has been observed; but this is far from proving its adequacy to explain the change involved in regeneration. Watch a complicated machine at work. You can go back step by step from the finished product to the fire blazing in the furnace, and even back of that to the laying of the coal. More than this, at no point, perhaps, can you discern any human interference. That, however, does not alter the facts that there is a man in control and that a man must have started the fire. From what we know of nature we know that, though it can do much, it could never do that. In a word, the effect is such that only a personal cause will satisfy the causal judgment; and in like manner, the effect in regeneration is such that, in spite of the continuity of the natural process and the fact that the subject of regeneration is not conscious of God himself, we must posit his immediate agency. The causal judgment will not suffer us to do otherwise. Only the creative and so immediate agency of God could make alive a soul " dead through trespasses and sins." The principle on which we argue is the familiar and generally admitted one that only

omnipotence could turn death into life. Before regeneration the sinner was spiritually dead; after regeneration he was spiritually alive; therefore, somewhere in the natural process described as regeneration the Spirit of life himself must have intervened; for only He, and He only by his own power, can quicken the dead. He may work in connection with various instrumentalities: but even then the life-giving power will not be in them; it will still, and as much as ever, be his own. When, therefore, new life appears, we must infer that in the process of nature, however continuous it may have been and however it may seem to have been purely natural, God himself must have intervened. Such is the argument.

The psychologist, it is true, tries to evade it. He denies that it is a fact that men by nature are spiritually dead. They do not even seem to be so. Indeed, there is no essential difference between what we call renewed and unrenewed men. This is evinced by several considerations. Professor Coe sums them up under three heads:—

a. 'The process of the moral life should be radically different in the Christian from what it is in the merely moral man,' but it is the same. They must both 'employ the understanding to discover what is right; must make choices, form habits, resist impulses, criticize conduct, seek social support and coöperation.' Hence, the change on the ground of which we argue that regeneration involves a supernatural intervention does not exist, and so our argument from it falls.

This reasoning, however, mistakes the point. This does not concern the process of the moral life, but its motive and end — in a word, its power. The regenerate and the unregenerate man must 'both employ the understanding to discover what is right; must make choices, form habits, resist impulses, criticize conduct, seek social support and coöperation.' But why

do they, thus or otherwise, try to develop the moral life? The unregenerate man, if you take him at his best, does it because of respect for his own moral ideal. The regenerate man, if you take him even at his lowest, does it because he has made Christ's ideal his own. This is the difference between the two; but could there be a more significant one? Suppose a man utterly without the æsthetic sense. He can see in a superb Greek statue nothing save good building-material. When he does see the statue his only feeling is one of complaint that so good building-material has been wasted. Suppose now that you find him standing before that statue, gazing on it, absorbed in admiration of its proportions, consumed with a desire to reproduce it. Can you imagine such a change as taking place? You can imagine it only as being the result of a creative act. The man must be given the æsthetic sense. Yet this change is slight as compared with that in regeneration: for the renewed man not only beholds in the historic Christ, in whom he could "see no beauty that he should desire him," "the chief among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely"; but he feels his supreme need of him as his Saviour from sin, and experiences his sufficiency as such. How much more, then, must this change be the result of a creative act. He who was spiritually dead must have been made spiritually alive; and this only God, and He only by his own immediate agency, could effect. That the renewed man lives, and can live, only by the same psychological processes as the unrenewed man amounts to nothing. Regeneration is not the effacement of "the old man": it is the imparting of a new life to perfect "the old man": and the significance of the new life is not that its method is one with that of the old; but that, while its method is and must be the same, its power and trend are new and divine.

At this point the psychologists refer to other and as sudden changes, such as the cessation of neuralgic pain, double personality, the evolutionary leaps supposed to precede the appearance of new species. Are these, however, parallel cases? That of neuralgic pain is not. It is the cessation of evil; it is not the creation of good: and the two fall into the same category no more than do negation and affirmation. Nor do the phenomena of double personality or of evolutionary leaps help us. The change in these may be as sudden and as radical as that in regeneration, but it is the nature of the change in the latter, and that only, that is of special significance. Thus in regeneration the change does not consist, as in the phenomena of double personality and of the evolutionary leaps, in a modification of the existing creature, even though that modification amount, as in the instance of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, to a complete reversal of its elements: but it does consist in the imposition on the old creature of a new creature with new elements. This is what regeneration is by our hypothesis, and this hypothesis rests on and is suggested by the consciousness of regeneration. It is the regenerated man's own interpretation of what has taken place within him. We may not say, therefore, that the naturalistic explanation that will account for double personality, etc., will account for regeneration too. The one differs so much from the other in nature that we may not argue from the one to the other; and to claim that the suddenness with which they both may occur disproves this is as if one were to claim that the flash of genius and the spontaneous combustion of rags were the same because they both appear to be instantaneous.

Nor does it avail to answer with Professor Coe that our conception of regeneration is so narrow as to be "too costly for the theory itself." One of the main contentions between

us is that regeneration is no more universal than it is natural, and truth is cheap at any price.

b. It is argued that there is no essential difference between the renewed and the unrenewed man because many unregenerate persons lead highly moral lives. This, especially in view of the fact that both Professor Coe[1] and Professor James[2] admit "that the saint of all men shows virtue in the completest possible measure," amounts to little. For while regeneration must issue in moral living, this, as we have seen, is not the essence of it. That is a new birth, and its distinctive result is a new life and a new heart. It brings one as never before under the power of the law; for it opens his eyes to the claims of him whose nature is both the ground and the norm of the law: but itself *consists,* not in making men moral, but in rendering them alive to the realities of the spiritual world. By nature men have the law written on their hearts; by nature they can and do to a greater or less extent obey it; and by nature it may often be that they are more developed morally than some who have been born into the kingdom of God. In a word, the test of regeneration is not one's moral attainments, but it is his moral state and particularly his moral tendency. The unregenerate man may look like Christ; but is he growing more like him or away from him? The regenerate man may show little likeness at first to his Master; but Christ lives in him and in consequence he is growing like Him.

c. The final ground for denying an essential difference between the renewed and the unrenewed man is that, "as far as observation of present conditions can show, there is no reason for asserting the natural moral helplessness or depravity of all human beings, or of any of them." This would be too

[1] American Journal of Theology, vol. xii. p. 357.
[2] Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 370.

big a question to discuss within our limits, but it is not necessary to discuss it. Professor Coe has misconceived the doctrine of total depravity. It is not that all men or any men are in a condition of utter moral helplessness. It is that every one must become so unless renewed by the Holy Spirit. As we find men, there is never even one who is destitute of all natural virtue; and natural virtue as regards its material is real virtue.

2. The psychologist must show that the change experienced in regeneration has taken place apart from the use of the appointed Christian means of grace. It would not be sufficient, even had the adequacy of natural causes to effect this change been established. While that would prove that regeneration need not be supernatural, it would not demonstrate that it ever was purely natural. To vindicate this scientifically, we must be able to point to cases of regeneration that are unmistakably genuine and that have occurred without the use of those evangelical truths only in connection with which has God encouraged us to hope that He will himself regenerate. Hence, Leuba gives it as his conclusion "that, in the city missions of to-day, belief in the divinity of Christ and in the atonement — not to speak of other doctrines — wields a very scanty influence, and is generally absent until after conversion, at which time the new Christian is generally instructed in the popular theology."[1] This conclusion he fortifies by the statement from Jonathan Edwards's "Narrative of Surprising Conversions in Northampton" that "it must needs be confessed that Christ is not always distinctly and explicitly thought of in the first sensible act of grace (though most commonly He is); but sometimes He is the object of the mind only implicitly." This statement Leuba then tries to illustrate

[1] American Journal of Psychology, vol. vii. pp. 342, 343.

and confirm by the following testimony of "Col. H. H. Hadley, well known in home-mission circles, [and] the instrument of the reform of hundreds of drunkards": "Men have been converted in the delirium tremens. It knocks all the theology higher than a kite! I don't understand it, but it is so. Take my own case, — a big, bloated drunkard, had fifty-three drinks the day before I was converted, most of them brandy cocktails, and before me I saw my Lord crucified; I was converted."[1] Leuba refers also to John B. Gough, whose conversion he characterizes as "practically" that "of an atheist."

With reference to these and like cases several remarks should be made:—

a. Is it certain that they were all regenerations? As we have seen, regeneration and moral reformation are not identical. There may be the latter even to the extent of breaking the bondage of drink and still not be regeneration. If Mr. Gough gave up drink without any recognition of or dependence on God or Christ, then it is clear that he was not regenerated until afterwards. How could he have entered on the eternal life, if he did not know him 'whom to know is life eternal'?

b. By such a case as Colonel Hadley's, theology, instead of being "knocked higher than a kite," is confirmed. The crucified Christ was the truth effective in his regeneration; and that this truth could be effective even when he was drunk clearly indicated the omnipotence of God.

c. That at Northampton some of the converts did not have Christ before them "distinctly and explicitly in the first sensible act of grace" Edwards himself explains when he adds that "he is the object of the mind only implicitly." What is implicit is real.

[1] American Journal of Psychology, vol. vii. pp. 342, 343.

d. The truth on this whole subject is well put by Bavinck: "Conversion which brings us into fellowship with God [i.e. genuine regeneration] never happens immediately, but is always connected with representations and impressions which we have received at some time, shorter or longer, previously. It always takes place in connection with historical Christianity, which in one or another form exists before and without us, and now enters into harmony with our own soul." [1]

e. The proof of this is the fact also mentioned by Bavinck, that "revivals do not occur among heathen, but only within the limits of the Christian Church." [2]

Nor, again, may an argument be based by the psychologist on this, that the means of grace are sometimes used diligently and faithfully yet without effect. This need not indicate that regeneration can take place independently of them and of the supernatural power alleged to accompany them. It may rather indicate that the regenerating power is not in even the saving truths of the gospel; but that it is in the Supernatural himself, and that He is sovereign even in his bestowal of grace in connection with man's use of the means of grace. "God quickeneth whom he will" — this, rather than psychological conditions, is the only explanation of the mysterious inability of some as regards "the things of the Spirit," especially of the fact that some who are "not far from the kingdom of God" never enter it.

III. The attempt of modern psychology to desupernaturalize regeneration proceeds on two false principles:—

1. One is the impossibility of supernatural intervention. Thus Professor Coe says: "If the psychologist should come across a case that cannot be explained [he is referring to regeneration] by any of these [naturalistic] principles, he would

[1] The Philosophy of Revelation, p. 238. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 234.

not, even then, admit its entire intractability to psychological analysis under the postulate of law." [1]

What is this but a courteous way of assuming that everything in or connected with regeneration must yield to psychological analysis, must belong to the natural order? But what is this, if not to decide in advance and offhand the point at issue, and so to beg the whole question? Nor may it be retorted that our method involves the same fallacy. Our claim that regeneration must imply a supernatural intervention proceeds on the ground that regeneration is essentially a creative act; but that it is a creative act we feel bound to establish and do establish, not by *a priori* assumption, but by reflection on wide and careful observation and experience. In a word, the psychologist argues that there cannot be a new creature; for that would necessitate creation: whereas we argue for creation on the ground that we find ourselves and others to be new creatures.

Nor may it once more be replied that we at least decide *a priori* that a new creature presupposes creation and so supernatural intervention. This is true. But we do it not without authority. Any one would stultify himself who did not do it. The causal judgment so demands, and we must recognize it or decline to think. The psychologists recognize it. It is on the ground of it that, as we have just seen, they argue that regeneration cannot issue in a new creature. Thus the question is not as to the validity of the causal judgment; it is as to whether we are or are not new creatures as the result of regeneration, and that is a question of fact and we decide it by facts.

2. The other false principle on which the modern psychology of religion proceeds is the primacy of feeling. Feeling is

[1] American Journal of Theology, vol. xii. p. 362.

not, as Professor Francis Bowen used to say, "a state of mind consequent on the reception of an idea." On the contrary, 'the intellect is the slave of the affections and sensations.'[1] Religious feeling and experience are not a reaction in view of revelation; but revelation, in so far as it is real, is the consequence of religious feeling and experience. Hence, Leuba says again: "No definition considering religion as a noetic impulse and making it dependent upon particular conceptions, as that of God, of soul, of spirit, of immortality, can possibly be adequate. *The essence of religion is a striving toward being, not toward knowing.*"[2] Consequently, regeneration is quite independent of doctrine: the latter is only an afterthought to explain regeneration. Indeed, if we would understand religion or any of its manifestations, there must be an absolute divorce between it and theology.[3] Religion is wholly a matter of feeling.

Now without pausing to criticize from the standpoint of psychology this increasingly common position, it will be sufficient to remark that it has no standard by which to form a judgment of what conversion consists in. It has no idea to which to justify this or that particular conversion; and, as Professor Bowen used also to say, "Every feeling must justify itself to some idea." It can describe the treason of Judas and the conversion of Paul, but it may not of itself say which is regeneration. As Bavinck writes: "If all these religious phenomena are studied only from a psychological standpoint, the result is that they lose their character and their content is sacrificed to their form. . . . Viewed psychologically, all alterations of personality are alike: the fall is as much a transformation of consciousness as redemption and regeneration; the change of a

[1] Leuba, American Journal of Psychology, vol. vii. p. 349.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 313. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 314.

virtuous man into a drunkard or a voluptuary, a thief or a murderer, is as much a 'conversion' as the coming to himself of the prodigal son and his return to his father's house."[1] In a word, though the modern psychology of religion were not vitiated by its foundation in feeling, that foundation would invalidate its testimony as to the nature of regeneration as of religion in general. Experience cannot test itself. Feeling cannot judge its own nature. To say that a feeling is right, we must know more than how it feels.

Such, then, is our argument. It has not proved regeneration to involve a supernatural intervention. We did not assume to do that. We do not claim that the psychologist, if he keeps strictly within his own sphere, can do that. He must call in metaphysics, if he would do it. What we undertook to show, and what we believe that we have shown, is that the modern psychology of religion has not desupernaturalized regeneration, for:—

1. What the modern psychology of religion has established is not inconsistent with there being that in regeneration, scripturally conceived, which is discontinuous with the order of nature.

2. What the modern psychology of religion must establish if it would prove that regeneration, scripturally conceived, does not involve a supernatural intervention, it has not established.

3. The method of the assumed establishment of this position begins by begging the question at issue and founds itself on a psychological theory which would disqualify it for considering the question, even if it had not decided it offhand in advance.

[1] **Philosophy of Revelation, pp. 210, 236.**