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BIBLIOTHECA SACRA

ARTICLE I.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF GOD AND MAN.

BY THE REVEREND HENRY A. STIMSON, D.D.,
NEW YORK CITY.

SOME time ago a leading French pastor, M. Monod, speaking before a religious assembly in Edinburgh, said: "Here in Scotland you are discussing whether or not you shall sing hymns in church. In France we are discussing whether or not there is a God." Should such a distinguished visitor come to us in New York, he would not speak in exactly the same terms. He might say: "You in America are discussing methods of ecclesiastical organization and of social service, while the great question before the Christian world is, What is the real relation of man to God?"

This is a question which in its present form has been unfolding for nearly a hundred years. It is growingly important, and it is perhaps well worth while to note some of the steps by which it has advanced. It will be seen at once that it must underlie all theology, and have a very definite effect upon all serious thinking.

It properly arose with Auguste Comte, the French author of "The Positive Philosophy." He sought to show that man with all his faculties is a part of the common universe;
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that he comes under its laws, from which he cannot escape, within which all his faculties are exercised and by which his nature is to be interpreted, as truly as is the nature of any natural force or material existence. Whatever limitations may be discovered in his theory, it must be recognized that it was a splendid contribution to modern thought, and opened the way for the great development both of science and of philosophy which the later years have witnessed.

After him came the scientific movement, which, if it were not so completely a new creation, might be properly called a revolution, for it swept away all the scientific theories of the past and has given us all that we know as science to-day. It gained its great impulse from the work of Darwin and Wallace and the men who quickly gathered about them, as it has had its unfolding at the hands of the army of eager and brilliant men of science who, inspired by their method and their views, have opened for us the new world of the physical sciences within which so much of our life to-day is embraced, and by which so much of even our common thought is shaped.

The great thinkers of the first half of the nineteenth century, each of whom made his contribution to the theology or the philosophy of his day, and who will occupy a permanent place in the history and development of human thought, — Hegel, Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Rothe, the Scotch metaphysicians, and the others, — were for the time being superseded in current thought by the rushing tide of the new interest. For our purpose we can pass them all by, and, confining ourselves to one line of thought, and following the theme that is now before us, we can find our next step, *longo intervallo*, in the book entitled "Moral Evolution," written some years ago by Dr. George Harris, the successor of Professor Park in the Chair of Theology at Andover.

He starts with the assumption that there is a definite plan and goal for the life of every man, which it is the sole duty of the individual to strive to attain. The simple, fundamental law of morality, therefore, is, that progress toward that specific goal is for each man the supreme good; and every effort aimed to secure such progress is, for him, right. He further points out that no man can attain this end alone. He needs the help of his fellow men. Therefore, this conception of what constitutes morality and righteousness is applicable to human society; it applies to all as well as to each, and is sufficiently comprehensive to embrace any scheme of evolution or of religion. It linked the current thought with the whole nature of man and laid a foundation for ethics.

Advancing in our inquiry, we come to the two books of Professor Illingworth, of Oxford, "Personality" and "Immanence." His purpose is to show that the universe cannot be considered without God, its creator, as abiding in it, and his book serves to give us a connection between the current thought and theology. The old idea of a universe as a machine, more or less complete at the beginning, and then operating as the result of the initial impulse, or of perpetual oversight and care, is entirely inadequate. He would recognize God as ever present as the energizing Force of the world. This doctrine of the Immanence of God was immensely attractive and widely accepted; it fitted admirably into the scientific doctrine of evolution as that doctrine must be viewed by those who start with a theistic premise or conviction. He also taught that this conception of God need not lead to Pantheism. In his book on "Personality, Human and Divine," he discussed the nature of man's individuality, and showed that this which, in itself, is the highest conception of humanity, — this being a person and not a machine or a thing, — is

essential to any right understanding of Deity; consequently interpreting God as Law, however splendid the conception of Law may be, must necessarily be inadequate. God is more than law and more than energy. To satisfy either, the requirements of a philosophic conception of the physical universe, or the yearnings of the human spirit, God must be possessed of all those characteristics which man recognizes as in himself the most essential and determining. In short, he must be a Divine Person.

So far, then, we have the conception of Law as applying to all existence. We have an interpretation of man's nature as moving on to a definite goal, in relation to which he discovers what is right and what is good, and we have the thought of God in the visible universe and as a Divine Personality.

Now, with a long step forward, we come to the distinguished French philosopher, Bergson. In his book "Creative Evolution," he shows that the very conception of evolution as the law of the visible universe, implies a goal toward which the universe is moving, a final attainment by which the very existence of that universe, in its origin and in all its progress, is to be interpreted. The very idea of a universe so organized would be inconceivable apart from such a destiny. Then he would show that that goal and destiny were determined at the beginning, as the chicken is determined in the egg, and the oak in the acorn; not only the perfect knowledge of the "flower in the crannied wall," but complete knowledge of the original cell, or the initial structure of creation, as it is disclosed in its subsequent history, would give to us all we need to know of the universe.

Therefore, this conception of the universe which controlled its progress and was potentially complete at its creation, must

have existed before its creation, as the architect's plan exists before its realization in the building. Therefore, there must have been a Mind in which that conception originated; and the Mind belongs to the Being who was before this world, and is above it in all its unfolding and will be present when its work is ended, to see and receive the completion of His own divine purpose.

In this scheme of a universe everywhere governed by law, everywhere moving on toward a definite goal, everywhere bearing testimony to the existence that is before it, over it and beyond it, is given us man, as that work of creation which stands nearest to the Creator, to whom that Creator will most fully communicate Himself, and in whom the characteristics of that Creator are best to be discovered and understood.

Here we come upon a philosophical determination that man, being a part of the physical universe, living within the realm of its laws, and himself an integral part of that world, stands in such relation to the Creator of all that he may be expected not only to have faculties that are superior to those in the beings about him, but has also duties which are quite other than theirs, and relations to the Creator which are possibly more intimate with Him and certainly more directly responsible to Him. But we have not yet come to any clear statement as to how man differs essentially from other existences in the universe of which he is a part, or just what is his exact relation to the Creator of all.

Advancing now to Rudolf Eucken in his great book "The Truth of Religion," we come to the recognition of the human spirit as evidencing the reality of a world of spirit, and as constituting the one reality in relation to which all else is transient and shadowy. In other words, it is a modern inter-

pretation of the old Greek distinction between *Noumena* and *Phenomena*, the things that are real and the things that are only apparent. Eucken's one aim is to disabuse the mind of the common experience in which we exalt the knowledge that comes to us through our sense, as superior to all other conceptions. He points out that back of this realm of the senses, from which we gain knowledge of the things that are seen and to be readily apprehended, there is the world of the spirit. We belong to that world. We came out of it; we live by the forces that emerge from it; we never shall break away; and at last we shall find ourselves so completely drawn within it, that all the other worlds shall vanish from our consciousness, or fall back into insignificance.

This world of the spirit is to him essentially the world of God; and because man belongs so definitely to that world, he belongs to God, without whom he cannot live, and in whom he is to find the consummation of his existence.

With Eucken, then, we have the visible universe relegated to a secondary place with man detached from it, as one rising out of it into the life for which he was made, and coming into personal relations with a God for whom his soul yearns and in whom his soul shall find its final home.

To-day we advance to a stage beyond this. Professor Josiah Royce, of Cambridge, in his recent book "The Sources of Religious Insight," moves along a somewhat different line and gives us a very important additional conception. He begins, as others have done, with man's examination of himself. Wherever the faculty originates, or from whatever source the desire may spring, men find themselves instinctively moved to search their own hearts and ask themselves what manner of being they are. For man discovers that there is within him what he recognizes as his true self. It is not

his body, and is as completely distinct from his body in his own investigation of it, as his clothes are distinct from his body. This inner personality which he recognizes as his true self, he calls his *spirit* or his *soul*. For the time being, it occupies his body, and though he knows it in no other relations than as dwelling in his body, and though he can, perhaps, not conceive of it as existing apart from this body, in which it dwells and in which it asserts itself, it is nevertheless of a different nature from his body.

Furthermore, as he looks upon the world about him, he sees that other men, by so much as they are men, must have the same characteristic. Each of them also has a spirit or soul which is himself. Inevitably, and promptly, and here is Royce's contribution, the inquirer reaches the conclusion that he and they are all alike parts of one great common Human Self, all having the same characteristics and all so intimately united that they can only be regarded as parts of a common whole.

This greater Self may be called the Self of our common humanity. Of that we all are parts. We have man existing in the material universe, under its laws, sharing its forms of existence, and yet, in his collective reality, a being quite distinct from the rest of his world, not simply because of his individual characteristics, but because he is a part of a larger whole. This self of humanity, not being of the nature of the world about it, and manifestly in its essence distinct from that world, must have relations to an existence which lies above this world and apart from it. That existence is God. God must be Himself the source of this self which we know as human. Therefore, man, being what he is, is of the nature of God; this common human self is from God, and not only belongs to God as the thing made belongs to the maker, but

is of the very essence of God, even more than the fruit is of the nature of the tree, or the child of the nature of the parent. Those analogies are inadequate. This mysterious self of the individual, our spirit, a part of the universal human spirit, cannot be adequately apprehended unless we recognize it as of the very nature and substance of the Divine Spirit and Self. Thus man is not only a creature of God, but, in a far larger sense than the word in its human relations implies, he is a child of God; Divinity is in him.

Standing, now, at this high point of modern philosophic thought, we turn to ask, What, then, is the relation of man to God? And here we have the answer. Man belongs to God as nothing else in existence does. And as belonging to God and being of the nature of God, he obviously can communicate with God and God with him. He can respond to the Divine affection; he can follow the Divine thought; he can move in the plane of Divine action; and he can have a part in bringing to pass the Divine purpose, — all this if he remains true to his nature and his origin. This, then, marks out for him both the privilege and the duty of his existence, and this also determines for him what it is to sin. By virtue of his divineness, he finds that he possesses the power of initial action. Determinism as applied to him is an absurdity. He has a will, as well as a reason and a spirit, by virtue of his origin and nature, and by that will he can decide whether he will be obedient to the Divine Nature that is within him or whether he will ignore that fundamental fact of his own being and, ignoring it, will live denying God. Sin is this act or series of acts by which he cuts himself off from God.

Beyond this, then, we need not go. We have here the firm and sufficient explanation of man's nature, and the foundation for a true theory of his ethical development and of

his philosophy of life, and the basis for a scheme of theology which will be adequate to guide a true religious life. It leaves no possible room for atheism, as it gives room for a doctrine of evolution which cannot possibly restrict the development of man's powers, as it alone furnishes an explanation of man's nature. The believer in God is left free to devote himself to the work of God and to the work of man, to both of whom he is so inseparably joined; and can with free heart leave the world of science to deal with its lesser things, its more restricted laws, its earthbound movement, while he lives for the things of the spirit and of God.