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ROYCE'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

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POPULAR interest has recently been aroused by the writings and lectures of Professor Royce. He has not heretofore been conspicuous as a champion of orthodoxy. His lectures, however, at Beloit College, before the Lowell Institute, and at Manchester College, Oxford, since published under the title, "The Problem of Christianity," have attracted much attention in religious circles. In a recent communication to the *Advance* (Nov. 13, 1913), an Iowa Congregational minister declares that Royce has established the truth of the old-fashioned Calvinistic doctrines of Sin, Penalty, Divine Grace and Atonement "with an inexorable logic from which there is no escape." And he adds the remark, from which surely there can be no dissent, "When these doctrines come from the leading philosophical thinker of America, and from an institution popularly regarded as liberal, the event is even more noteworthy." This noteworthy achievement so impresses the *Advance* editor that he prints the letter of the Iowa minister under the caption, "Royce, Defender of the Faith."

In a recent number of *Faith and Doubt,* a magazine established for the defense of orthodoxy, appears a review of Royce's "Sources of Religious Insight." The writer is in nothing critical but in all things commendatory. Professor

Royce is hailed as the Moses who shall lead our doubting and troubled age into the promised land of faith and freedom. And his final exhortation runs, "By all means read the book."

It should be an interesting and profitable study to trace the development of Dr. Royce's philosophical opinions and religious experience.

Josiah Royce was born in Grass Valley, California, in 1855. He received the degree of A.B. from the University of California in 1875, and a Ph.D., from Johns Hopkins in 1878. He was instructor in English Literature and Logic in the University of California from 1878 to 1882, instructor and assistant professor of Philosophy from 1882 to 1892, and since 1892 has held the chair of History of Philosophy at Harvard University.

Note that he began his academic career as instructor in English Literature. This is where he belongs; the line for which his mental gifts fit him. He is a rhetorician and an expositor of other men's opinions rather than a thoroughgoing and consistent thinker. He first gained public recognition and notoriety by attacking the prevalent conceptions of God and immortality. Later, as he attempted to construct some sort of philosophy, he was driven more and more to accept the essential principles of the only permanently satisfactory philosophical system our race has produced — the Christian.

Royce's general philosophical position is the modified Hegelianism represented during the last generation by Professor T. H. Green in England, and by Professor Otto Pfleiderer in Germany. From Kant's "transcendental unity of apperception" has been developed an all-embracing World-Consciousness, in which the finite mind knows the external object, and the knowledge of which is religion. Finite beings

and things are thoughts of the Infinite Consciousness, and the history of the universe is the progressive unfolding of the Absolute Thought. The transcendental unity of apperception has thus been made the source of all truth and life; it is the Hegelian God, deified and enthroned, and universal humanity is summoned to bow and worship. What is Kant's transcendental unity of apperception? It is simply the unity of the finite consciousness — the sense of oneness, selfhood, which abides through all changing mental states, and makes possible the union of subject and object in the act of knowledge. One of the most extraordinary achievements of Kant's idealistic successors was to take this unpretentious principle of our inner life, disguise it in the garb of an unintelligible terminology, quote Scripture about it, and so metamorphose it into the Divine Being. The result is that we "see all things in God," "in the transcendental unity of apperception we live and move and have our being." This theory has manifest advantages in dealing with ultimate philosophical and religious questions. God has two or three distinct meanings, and the philosopher can use the one which suits his convenience; so that there is little difficulty in refuting the common-sense objector, or reducing him to speechless astonishment. God may mean (1) the unity of the finite consciousness; (2) the general principle of unity in the universe [(1) and (2) may fall together for the pantheistic idealist]; (3) the popular notion of Christian theism. It is very easy, on this theory, to prove the existence of God. Do you know the book or the table before you [in the unity of your inner consciousness (1)] ? Then you know God [which means (3) to the hearer], for He is the principle of unity in this knowledge.

Hegelian thought has in general two characteristics: (1)

It is difficult to preserve the independence and freedom of the individual over against the Absolute; (2) In the philosophy of religion the old Christian terminology is retained, but with new and revolutionary meanings. The new meaning, however, is nowhere clearly stated, nor its relation to the traditional beliefs clearly defined.

In this last point we find the explanation of the Iowa minister's enthusiasm for Royce and also of the review of Royce's book in *Faith and Doubt*. These good men are among the many orthodox writers who have been deceived by the ambiguities of the Hegelians.

While in Chicago recently I met a prominent London clergyman who is about to publish a book on current religious topics. He asked me to look over the proof sheets. He has a chapter on "Immortality," in which he repudiates modern substitutes for the traditional belief in continued personal existence after death, especially opposing the ambiguities of the Hegelians. Then proceeding to his positive argument for the traditional view, the keystone of his argument is a quotation from T. H. Green, the distinguished Oxford professor, whom he eulogizes in the strongest terms as a defender of the orthodox position. The quotation is essentially the oracle of Hegel: "It is a principal element of religion that the soul is immortal; as the object of the interest of God it is elevated above the finite."

The obscurity of the Hegelian doctrine of immortality is cleared up somewhat by an interesting little fragment in the posthumous works of Professor T. H. Green: "The immortality of the soul, as = the eternity of thought, as = the being of God, is the absolute first and the absolute whole. As a determination of thought everything is eternal. What are we to say then of the extinct races of animals, the past forma-

tions of the earth? They are eternal, as stages in an eternal process. Relatively to our temporal consciousness, they have perished; relatively to the thought, which, as eternal, holds past, present, and future together, they are permanent; their very transitoriness is eternal. The living agent, man, like everything else, is eternal as a determination of thought." And so the Christian doctrine of personal immortality becomes the pale abstraction that the life of man is a transient incident in universal history, but known forever in the thought of God. When we inquire if we shall know God in a future life, we are told that we shall be known through eternity by the Absolute Thought, as having existed at a certain point of time, soon to vanish forever, so far as conscious, personal existence is concerned, in the abyss of the infinite ages!

Royce's first important book was "The Religious Aspect of Philosophy." All theistic systems, which make God a first cause, are involved in an infinity of contradictions and finally impaled on one or the other of the horns of the old dilemma, "In this bad world the Creator is either not omnipotent or not good." The way out is to substitute for the Christian personal God the Absolute Thought of the later Hegelians — an all-embracing pantheism which makes finite persons and things thoughts of the Absolute. In the constructive section the Infinite Thought becomes a "Judge of our ideals" and an "infinite Seer of the Good as well as of the Evil," though it cannot be said to be good and to exert itself for the realization of the good, for it is to possess no causal power lest it become responsible for this bad world. At the end the moral aim set up is "the realization of the eternal life of an Infinite Spirit." This moral aim is in no

way justified by his argument, for "Life" and "Spirit" mean much more than Thought.

Immortality as conscious continuous existence is discarded. Immortality for a finite being is inconceivable, and the expectation of it is immoral, because selfish. "You love the ideal for its own sake. It is not your triumph you seek, but the triumph of the Highest." It is well to contrast this clear-cut repudiation of the traditional belief with the ambiguous verbiage of his Ingersoll lectures on Immortality.

Here is Royce's philosophy of religion in its original form. His attitude of supercilious patronage toward the popular creed is suggested in the preface: "As the author has no present connection with any visible religious body, and no sort of desire for any such connection, he cannot be expected to write an apology for a popular creed. It is his aim not to arouse fruitless quarrels, but to come to some peaceful understanding with his fellows touching the ultimate meaning and value and foundation of this noteworthy custom, so widely prevalent among us, the custom of having a religion." It is a far cry from this philosophical Colonel Ingersoll of 1885 to the defender of the faith in 1912.

It is not difficult to classify Royce at this period. The type is very common. A young man with some knowledge of current science and philosophy, but with no thorough or sympathetic understanding of Christian theology — regarding theology as a compound of imbecility and superstition. But having the pen of a ready writer and a head quick in jumping at conclusions, he discovers an easy opportunity to make a stir in the world by knocking out the foundation of the prevalent religious system. As he is driven, however, by criticism and more mature reflection to modify his views, in the long years of repentance for having hastily given to

the world the youthful "reconciliation," he draws nearer and nearer to the standpoint of Christian theism. It would be greatly to the advantage of philosophy if it were made a requirement for all philosophical degrees that the student should have taken a course of lectures in theology in some respectable divinity school. Professor George S. Fullerton, of Columbia, who took Professor George P. Fisher's course in History of Doctrine at Yale, has never made such a "break" as that of Royce in "The Religious Aspect."

Royce claims one original feature in this book — the proof of the system of monistic idealism from the possibility of error. For some reason Royce has grown lukewarm on this argument, and it has disappeared from his later writings and discussions. When I was a student at Harvard in 1893–94 I wrote a paper on this argument, in which, to my own satisfaction and to that of a philosophical expert to whom I submitted it, I showed the argument to be unsound. As the problem interested me and I was ready to be shown where I was wrong, I called on Professor Toy, of Harvard Divinity School, and proposed to submit my paper to him. He declined with thanks, saying he had never made a careful examination of Professor Royce's argument. I then called on Professor Bowne, the distinguished philosopher of Boston University. He said he had never paid much attention to Royce's argument, but he would read my paper if I would pay him for it.

I state this item of personal experience to show how deep an impression was made on the Boston scholars by Royce's Hegelian dialectic. To some it did not appeal at all; the professional philosopher was willing to give a few hours or days to it at so much per.

A long step, or one might safely say a tremendous leap,

in the direction of Christian theism is apparent in Royce's next book, "The Conception of God." The Absolute Thought of "The Religious Aspect" has experienced a remarkable transformation. "The attribute of Omniscience, if it were once regarded as expressing the nature of a real being, would involve the presence of other attributes,— Omnipotence, Self-consciousness, Self-possession,— yes, I would unhesitatingly add, of Goodness, Perfection, and Peace." Evidently a reasonably satisfactory presentation of the Christian personal God. No attempt is made to reconcile the antagonistic conclusions of the two books: "Consistency is the bugbear of small minds"; "It is the death of your philosophizing if you come to believe anything merely because you have once maintained it." In the ten years between the two books Royce's religion has had opportunity to grow, and has made excellent use of the time.

Having reached a satisfactory conception of God, the next Hegelian problem is that of the individual. It is commonly asserted that Hegelianism is a pantheism which makes impossible any real independence and freedom for the individual over against the Absolute. This is the theme of the next book, "The World and the Individual."

That his result here is not very satisfactory will be most readily and clearly evident from a study of Royce's little book "The Conception of Immortality." Some good people named Ingersoll, possessed by the idea that the traditional belief in immortality should be defended against the assaults of modern skepticism, left a legacy to Harvard University to provide for an annual course of lectures on that subject. How can you expect an up-to-date Harvard professor to hold the old fogy notion of conscious existence beyond the grave, when Dr. Hugo Münsterberg, the great psychologist of the

philosophical faculty, declares it incredible that the human personality should continue when the sense-organs have disintegrated in death? And yet here is the income of $5,000 offered each year to some distinguished gentleman who can speak for a few hours on something he can call immortality. The temptation is evident for the man who has literary wares to sell. As Congregationalists we have no call to sling mud at our Unitarian brethren in this connection. It is the same temptation with which the Andover professors have been wrestling for a generation and to which at last they have gracefully and permanently succumbed.

It is needless to say Royce does not hold the traditional view of immortality. His position on this matter, set forth in "The Religious Aspect," is about the one point in the book from which he has not "progressed." How then can he give the Ingersoll lectures on Immortality? His treatment of this problem compels that recognition of the originality of his genius which the "argument from error" could not extort.

Royce's idea, briefly stated in popular terms, is this. A thoroughgoing philosophical examination of the alleged human individual discloses the fact that there is nothing to him of a really worthy and self-subsistent sort. What may happen to this incomprehensible "it" when he falls into the Hegelian Nirvana no human wit can surmise, and why should the Ingersoll family be concerned about it? It is a hard guess what may happen "when this mortal shall have put on individuality."

The conspicuous institution in the work and the saving agent for the individual and society is the "Beloved Community." "The spirit of loyalty to the Beloved Community is able to supply us not only with a philosophy of life, but

with a religion which is free from superstition and which is in harmony with a genuinely rational view of the world" (Preface). Royce's notion of the "Beloved Community" is simply the old conception of the invisible church universal. The old religious and doctrinal terms are largely retained: the Divine Spirit, sin, the law, atonement.

Royce's church, however, has certain peculiarities. (1) The ideal of the Beloved Community first found expression in Paul's epistles. "We possess, in the Pauline epistles, information which is priceless, and which reveals to us the religion of loyalty in its classic and universal form." (2) This church has no living connection with, and no interest whatever in, any alleged individual founder. In the Preface the objection of a distinguished authority on Christology is considered. "You speak of this early Christian community as if it were its own creator. How could the church have existed without its founder? Does not your theory hang in the air?" The author replies: "This book has no hypothesis whatever to offer as to how the Christian community originated." This distinguished authority on Christology should investigate the Hegelian theory of origins, using as concrete illustrations Topsy, who "jest growed," and Alice's experience in Wonderland when she saw "a grin without a cat." It may seem surprising that the author did not take Masonry as the type of the Beloved Community. This order is animated by the "Spirit" of fraternity and philanthropy, and goes on just the same whether or not it was founded by Solomon and George Washington.

Royce asserts emphatically and a little peevishly in the Preface that he has never been an Hegelian, and that if he has been he has reformed. It is a little hard to make this square with his attitude towards the individual founder of

the church. The cavalier treatment accorded the individual over against the community seems in exact harmony with the general Hegelian theory, where the individual is always getting lost in the void of the pantheistic Absolute.

Nineteen years ago, while a candidate at Harvard for an A.M. degree, I wrote a thesis on "The Development of Modern Religious Thought, Especially in Germany." From this I quote: "In the view of Hegel, Spirit is 'the idea turning back upon itself and beholding itself as soul, as society and as God.' One needs to have in mind this Hegelian conception of spirit, rather than the ordinary Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as he approaches the study of Hegel's 'kingdom of the Spirit'—the Church. Christ did not rise from the dead in bodily form; he 'arose in the spirit of the Christian community.' This 'spirit' has no relation to the historic Jesus, no relation to an assumed third person of the Divine Trinity — at least in the sense of the traditional orthodoxy. It is rather to be compared to the *esprit de corps* of a social club or an army."

Royce seems to claim that the suggestion for his theory of the Beloved Community came from twentieth-century facts, belonging to our common ethical and religious experience. However that may be, it is quite apparent that in essential features his "church" and Hegel's exactly correspond, and that Hegel has the advantage by about a century in point of time.

As in the "church" notion, so in the use of other Christian terms, we find the same ambiguous and illusory humbug. "Sin" is so completely atoned for that the "sinfulness of sin" disappears, and the theory falls under the heresy of those who taught that the fall was a fall upward. Under his discussion of "penal" atonement, where he speaks of

appeasing an "angry God," the inadequacy of his theological knowledge and his subjection to vulgar prejudice are ludicrously apparent. In developing his own atonement theory, why does he not speak of an angry Beloved Community that must be appeased? Why does not the Community freely forgive the sinner without demanding atonement? In his own exposition of the atonement, substitute Heavenly Father for Beloved Community, and we have a reasonably satisfactory statement of our modern theory of the atonement. If Royce had heard a communion sermon during the last thirty or forty years, he would not have cherished the illusion that his atonement theory was something new.

It is certainly depressing that this sort of stuff, the sweepings of the metaphysical workshops of Germany where Hegelianism has been dead for a generation, can be successfully worked off on our gullible American people.

What shall we do about it? This, at least, can be said:—

1. Christian theology must become independent and self-respecting. Are we satisfied that our American Christianity should continue so lacking in intelligence or in self-respect or in both, as to be so extremely delighted to receive even the left-handed patronage of a man like Royce? A Harvard professor of theology, Professor C. C. Everett, has well said: "Religion must be recognized as one of the essential and fundamental facts of life. It is a fact that does not ask either of philosophy or science leave to be. Religion represents the fullness of the nature; each system of philosophy represents only a part of the nature. Theology should maintain her old position as queen of philosophy as well as of science."

2. Our general public must cultivate a greater interest in the truth, and less in intellectual dainties and novelties.

It was the custom at Harvard Divinity School years ago to have a weeekly conference of professors and students on themes of interest to ministers. On one occasion one of the students, a somewhat "raw person" from the rural districts, suggested that the Apostle Paul preached justification by faith as the cure for the social ills of his time. Comment was made on this by Professor Thayer, the distinguished authority on New Testament Greek.

"Yes; but we must remember that the idea of justification by faith was fresher in Paul's time than now."

"Fresher?" Yes, but is it now any the less true and vital? That two and two make four is not fresh; but modern mathematics has never improved upon nor found a substitute for it.