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conquering; the temptation is felt by many to regard it as all-sufficient for man.

In the nineteenth century there has been a parallel development, also of great magnitude, in the higher mental sphere, yielding science in the

larger sense (mental science, spiritual philosophy); but the mass of people are more impressed by the marvellous triumphs of physical science, and we look next to some of the disturbing effects on faith which are traceable to the latter.

## The New Evangelical School of Paris.<sup>1</sup>

BY THE REV. J. DICK FLEMING, M.A., B.D., TRANENT.

WHEN the present writer took part in the debates of the little theological club connected with the 'Faculté de Théologie Protestante' of Paris, and presided over by the professors M. Sabatier and M. Ménégos, he little thought that a new school of theology was in formation, which was to receive the terrific title of 'Symbolo-Fidéisme.' Yet such apparently was the case. The Reformed Church theologian, M. Sabatier, whose deep religious interest is combined with a keenly philosophic bent of mind, was already imbuing his pupils with those conceptions of religious symbolism, which have played so large a part in his recent book on the *Philosophy of Religion*. And the gentle M. Ménégos, bringing from his Lutheran upbringing a pronounced evangelical spirit, and yet a mind keenly alive to the scientific demands of the age, had already written his first treatises on salvation, sin, and redemption, and thus prepared for the new school its religious basis. The combination of this evangelical element with the doctrine of religious symbolism, has given rise to new modes of thought, which are exercising to-day a considerable influence in France. The new school has had to encounter opposition from Montauban and many of the religious journals; but the opposition has served principally to awaken the school to the consciousness of its unity, and to the need for the revision of doctrine which it has attempted.

The formal or philosophic principle that characterises the school goes by the name of Critical Symbolism. It is the theory that religious thought, dealing as it does with what is invisible, spiritual, and eternal, but having no adequate categories to express them, is obliged to clothe what is transcendent in sensible, material, phenomenal forms.

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Publications diverses sur le Fidéisme*. By Eugène Ménégos, Professor in the University of Paris. 1900.

The religious sentiment or idea incarnates itself in a local, contingent, concrete form, which varies under the influence of prevailing scientific or philosophic ideas.

There is nothing new in such a conception; it lies at the root of all science of religion, and every theologian who admits the idea of development in religious thought has adopted it. What is peculiar to the school is the thoroughgoing and conscious application of the principle to what might be supposed to lie beyond the sphere of development and change. They frankly recognize that everywhere in religious thought—not only in the creeds of the early Councils of the Church, but even in the teaching of Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles—there are elements that are transitory and local mingled with the eternally valuable; and that everywhere the theologian has the difficult task of separating the essential truth from the old-fashioned garb in which past ages have clothed it, and of presenting it anew in forms suitable to the character and intellectual needs of his age. The orthodox theologian is willing to apply the principle of evolution to other religions, and generally to the history of the Christian Church; but he draws a magic line round the New Testament and the doctrinal decisions of the Fathers, and challenges any that would touch that bedrock of the faith! Even the old Ritschlian tried hard to rescue the New Testament at least from the invasion of this principle; and almost succeeded, though not without straining the exegesis! The new school goes more thoroughly to work. Like the new Ritschlian, the symbolo-fidéist applies his principle all through, and has no hesitation in carrying everywhere his distinction between the eternal verity and its inadequate, changing, historical form. M. Ménégos declares that in so

doing he and his colleagues are only doing consciously in regard to the New Testament what St. Paul did instinctively, by means of allegorizing, in regard to the Old. Paul found the Word of God incarnated in the Old Testament, and sought by allegorizing to disengage the spirit from the letter, the eternal verity from its contingent form. What Paul thus did instinctively, it is the task of theology to do consciously; and amid the changing metamorphoses of religious thought, to seek the eternally valid and valuable, the kernel within the shell, the gospel within the gospel. Such a task is doubtless a difficult one; it would certainly be more agreeable at times if some pope would cut the Gordian knot for us, or if we had some standard of absolute validity to appeal to. But we have no such absolute standard of religious thought; we have the witness of our own spirit, the witness of the ages of spiritual man who have preceded us, and the witness of the Word made flesh; but there is an alloy in all, and we must endeavour to gather from all sources the eternal substantial truth. There is no royal road to spiritual truth. 'In the same way as we gain our daily bread, we must gain our spiritual food—by the sweat of our brow.'

We have now to see how Professor Ménégoz applies this formal principle to the material of theological doctrine. And, first, we may notice how it helps to shape, and is in turn supported by, the fidéist doctrine of salvation. The fidéist evangel is as follows:—The trials of life, the sense of sin and guilt, together with the feeling that we have been created for life and felicity, and not for death, awaken the aspiration for deliverance or salvation. Conscience assures us that such deliverance must come through the forgiveness of sins, releasing us from the sting of the past. But how is this pardon of sins to be obtained? It is not a matter of logical deduction; it must come to us by way of a personal revelation, through the witness of the Holy Spirit within and without us. Now, among the outward historical manifestations of the Spirit, there stands out one revelation of God with absolutely exceptional splendour; it is that of Jesus Christ. Never was any one so qualified to act as the revealer of God's will to the world; for His person, word, and life bear the unmistakable impress of perfect sanctity. He is the revelation of God in its most perfect conceivable purity: the Divine Word: God manifest in the flesh. His teaching awakens a cordial response in

our spirits, and becomes to us the highest conceivable authority. And He reveals the way of salvation. He brings, first of all, the good news that God loves the world with a love that is beyond knowledge; and He makes known the one condition of forgiveness, namely, faith. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath eternal life.' What then is this faith, which is the absolute condition, but also the sole condition, of salvation? It is essentially an inward determination or act of the whole self, in which a man gives himself to God; it is, as otherwise described, the 'consecration of the soul to God,' 'the movement of the heart Godward.' That is its essence; but it never appears abstractly, in its naked solitary purity, but always in some definite concrete form, and maintains itself there more or less purely, according as the form is adequate or rudimentary. Like the embryo gradually arriving at maturity, so develops in the Bible the doctrine of salvation by faith. Thus, the Old Testament teaches salvation by *obedience* to the law, or, in the time of the prophets, by *fidelity* to the God of Israel; but within these conditions are enclosed as essential the obedience and fidelity of the heart. John the Baptist preached salvation by *repentance*, or conversion of heart; which is just faith (the movement Godward) expressed in relation to the sin which hinders it. This doctrine of salvation by faith fully meets the wants of the religious consciousness. The condition of pardon corresponds so entirely to the character of sin, that we could scarcely conceive it otherwise. Sin is the rupture of the soul with God; how otherwise is salvation conceivable than by the restoration of the lost relation, by the free personal inward surrender of the heart to Him in faith?

The Christian Church, then, is built upon the gospel of justification by faith. But this doctrine will assume many aspects, and must be expressed so as to suit the conditions of the age. In Paul's day, when the risk of an external Judaism was great, the gospel had to be expressed negatively as well as positively; and emphasis laid on the truth that salvation was *by faith and not by the works of the Mosaic law*; in Luther's time it required to be expressed by the positive-negative doctrine that salvation is *by faith and not by good works*. What then is the form of the gospel required to-day? These are undoubtedly days of

criticism, and the Church is passing through a crisis. Rightly or wrongly, the dogmas of the Church no longer appeal to the generality of cultured men. On the other hand, the orthodox, in their zeal to maintain important gospel-truth, have confounded faith with belief in the doctrines of the Church, and in the whole Bible revelation. This fatal superaddition, as it has been in the past, the cause of excommunications, schisms, and all manner of religious persecution, is still obscuring the gospel of Christ, and has driven many from the Church, and weakened its power. Even the liberal theologian, while rightly opposing the superstition of salvation by belief, has been hampered by a similar confusion of terms, and has been led to substitute for faith the ethical conditions of love to God and man; thus falling back into a legalism from which a truer conception of faith would have saved him. In view, then, of these tendencies of to-day, on the one hand, to surcharge faith with what does not naturally belong to it, on the other, to substitute a moral legalism for the gospel, it is necessary to emphasize that salvation is by *faith alone, independently of beliefs*. The value of belief is not denied. As a pedagogic means, right teaching and right religious belief are of capital importance; they are undeniably the ordinary objective means of faith. But belief stands in no necessary relation to faith and salvation. The beliefs may all be present, and the inward self-determination of faith be entirely wanting. On the other hand, a man may have true faith though his mind is perfectly saturated with errors in regard to the most elementary doctrines of God or Christ or the Holy Spirit. Sound beliefs are doubtless provocative of faith, just as faith prepares the mind for a more just conception of truth; but the faith that alone saves is the spirit's movement upward and Godward.

It is evident that these doctrines of symbolism and of fidéisme open the way to a very frank and yet sympathetic critical treatment of the New Testament teaching, and of the doctrines of the Church. Take for example the New Testament eschatology, which gave place later to the orthodox doctrine of a localized heaven and hell. The salvation which Christ proclaimed included not merely forgiveness, but the establishment of God's kingdom on earth, implying the resurrection of the body, with the renewal of life under the common material conditions; and this new reign of

peace and justice was expected by Christ and His disciples within their own generation. Gradually, under the influence of Greek and Roman thought, and after the failure of the earlier expectations, the idea of an eternal happiness in heaven came to displace that of a Messianic kingdom on earth. The way was prepared for such a change by the popular belief in the pagan world that the souls of heroes and virtuous men were taken up into heaven, and there enjoyed eternal felicity. So arose those localized representations of heaven and hell which prevailed throughout the Middle Ages, and only waned after the triumph of the Copernican system. Here, then, we have a double set of symbols, more or less contradictory and inadequate; and we have to ask where lies the fundamental abiding truth? The Gospel of John gives purest expression to it. The form of his conception seems to stand midway between the old Messianic idea and that of heavenly blessedness (as when Christ says in his Gospel: 'I shall come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also'). The form is with John clearly the symbol of the truth he elsewhere taught that salvation is eternal life in communion with God, such a life as death itself cannot destroy. The symbols in which that thought is expressed in regard to the future are all inadequate; both the localized heaven and hell of the Middle Ages and the earthly renovation to be brought about by a sudden and speedy cataclysm. The essential truth is conserved, if we have the assurance of entering by faith into the kingdom of heaven, virtually during this earthly life, and fully, after death, in the life to come.

Employing the same method of symbolism, M. Ménégos proposes a reinterpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the faith in miracles. The doctrine of the Trinity rests upon presuppositions that are no longer ours. Ménégos explains the development of the doctrine in this way. The New Testament is resolutely monotheistic; and the idea of a triple intradivine distinction is entirely absent. It is true, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as a divine force emanating from God: sometimes even as possessing a more or less distinct personality, working in the world, inspiring the prophets, bestowing charisms on Christ's followers; but however far the representation of personality runs, the fact that the Holy Spirit is at other times completely identified with the spirit of God, that

is, with God Himself, as working spiritually within men, shows that the unity of God's personality is in no way affected. Whatever the more ignorant thought as to the working of a Holy Spirit distinct from the spirit of God, such men as Paul and John must have simply identified the two; they certainly never imagined two entities distinct and personal and coexisting in God. Nor, again, do any of the New Testament writers proclaim Jesus as Jehovah, or adore Him and offer sacrifice to Him as an incarnation of divinity. He is the Son of God, in the theocratic sense; He is the first of celestial spirits; He is (with John) the Word of God incarnate. While exalting the person of Christ, and offering Him the highest royal homage, they retain the old monotheism intact. It was only when their homage was transferred to Greek and Roman soil, where heroes and emperors were easily deified, that the idea was accepted of Christ's absolute divinity; and this idea was harmonized with the unity of God by the help of Greek metaphysics and the theory of an intradivine hypostasis. The problem of to-day, then, is to separate from the doctrine of the Trinity the elements that are found to be inadequate, and to seize the eternal truth in its purity. We must abide by the New Testament doctrine of the unipersonality of God. But the Trinity-doctrine symbolizes the fulness of the divine life. We know God not only as transcendent, the Creator of heaven and earth; but also as immanent, speaking to us personally within our hearts; not only as Father therefore, but also as Holy Spirit. This is a natural subjective distinction; in our representative thought we cannot help localizing God in heaven and on earth. The mistake of the Greek and Latin Fathers lay in objectifying this distinction, and projecting it into the being of God Himself. We must abide by the truth that God is one God, one person; but having the double thought of Him as transcendent and immanent, we represent Him in two characters, as Father and as Spirit. But, further, God also reveals Himself to us mediately, through the witness of others; and their testimony we recognize as the Word of God. This external testimony is, however, coloured by the human medium through which it comes; and thus it comes to us in various degrees of purity and fulness. Every prophet, apostle, man of God, the humblest of the saints, so far as the spirit of God is with him, may claim to be God's Word to men. The Jewish people were

above all privileged to be this Word; and from them sprang One who received the spirit without measure—Jesus Christ. Jesus was fully man; but also the Son of God *par excellence*, for He realized in fullest measure the filial relation to God. In that sense He is the God-man, the Word incarnate, the highest religious authority, our Master, Saviour, and Lord. In brief, then, God is one person; but manifests Himself to us in three personal forms—as the Father and Creator, or God transcendent; as the Son, or God immanent and objectified; and as the Spirit, or God immanent and subjective.

In a similar spirit Ménégoz attacks the question of miracle, endeavouring to be true at once to the conclusions of science and to the needs of faith. He shows, first of all, that modern theology has ceased to accept in its entirety the biblical notion of miracle. The biblical authors saw in miracles not simply extraordinary natural facts, but phenomena contrary to the natural order, or, as we should express it to-day, phenomena contrary to the laws of nature. Their tendency was to magnify their non-natural character, in order to represent them all the more clearly as divinely produced. This has been denied both by liberals and by the orthodox in their desire to hide as far as possible the gulf that divides ancient from modern thought. But the fact remains. It is true the Bible writers had no definite and elaborate theory of miracle, and that, from their ignorance of nature's laws, they often confounded the marvellous and the miraculous; but they did not identify the two conceptions. They could still distinguish the wonderful, or what is contrary to the habitual course of things, from the miraculous, or what is contrary to the natural course of things. Cicero's view of miracle as something '*contra naturam*,' which 'could not happen except by divine intervention,' was the common view of ancient times; was the view shared by Christ and His apostles; and has remained unchanged as the orthodox view of the Christian Church, Protestant as well as Catholic. It is evident no less that the Church has departed from that notion. The apologetic expedients of to-day; the assertion that the miracles of the Bible are only natural facts of which the laws are unknown; the appeal to the mysteriousness of life, or to the moral miracles of faith and conversion; the allegorizing of the miracles into moral phenomena; the constant attempt to minimize them and reduce their number;—

all prove that there has been a displacement of ideas, and that the gulf between ancient and modern thought remains unbridged. The apologies themselves only strengthen the conclusion that no one fully accepts the views of Moses and the prophets, of Jesus and the apostles, of the theologians of the Middle Ages, and of the Reformation in regard to the miraculous. We no longer unhesitatingly believe in miracle as a derogation from the laws of nature.

Is the gulf then unbridgable? Not so. We do not believe that God suspends the laws of nature; for these are the adequate manifestation of His will in the order of natural things. But while we thus lay aside the ancient rudimentary conception of the world, and the reading of history which such a conception naturally produced, we can still enter into spiritual communion with the sacred writers by disengaging from the contingent form, the living kernel of their faith. Underlying the symbol is a faith which we can assimilate, namely, that in certain circumstances God intervenes in an immediate way in the course of human affairs. Fundamentally, miracle is the intervention of God in the world in answer to prayer. But it is not necessary that this intervention should take

place contrary to the laws of nature. We ourselves intervene daily in the course of nature, by utilizing its laws; not by contravening them; and may not the Heavenly Father intervene in the same way? We believe, then, in miracle no less than did the ancients; but we explain its relation to nature differently. For them miracle was a divine free act of God, interrupting the *natural* course of things; for us it is a free divine act, interrupting the *fatal* course of things, but working in harmony with nature's laws.

Whatever may be said as to the methods and merits of this school, it will be evident from this brief account of it, that it does not fear to look facts in the face, and to address itself to the deepest problems. 'Where is this symbolo-fidéist school going to end?' asks one of its timid critics. 'Where will it end!' Ménégos replies: 'It has already penetrated the heart of Scripture, and found there the heart of Christ, revealing the heart of God. There is its lofty refuge; and thence it can study with calm, and a conscience at rest, all biblical questions; assured that historical truth is more precious than an erroneous tradition, and that the endeavour to discover that truth is a blessed work and worthy of the holy calling of theology.'

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF HEBREWS.

#### HEBREWS V. 7, 8.

'Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered' (R. V.).

#### EXPOSITION.

'In the days of His flesh.'—The word 'flesh' is here used for His humanity regarded on the side of its weakness and humiliation.—FARRAR.

'Having offered up.'—The regular sacrificial word used throughout this Epistle, and it probably implies that while all the sufferings these words describe were fitting our Lord for His priestly office, they were also part of what He had to suffer as the bearer of our sin.—ANGUS.

'Prayers and Supplications.'—The first word *δέησις* is the general term for a definite request (e.g. Ja 5<sup>16</sup>). The second, *ἱκετηρία* (here only in N.T. in which no other word

of its group is used) describes the supplication of one in need of protection or help in some overwhelming calamity. The one (*δέησις*) is expressed completely in words: the other (*ἱκετηρία*, properly an olive branch entwined with wool borne by suppliants) suggests the posture and external form and emblems of entreaty.—WESTCOTT.

'With strong crying and tears.'—There is a tradition that originally the high priest on the Day of Atonement, when he offered the prayer for forgiveness in the Holy of Holies, uttered the name of God with a loud voice so that it could be heard far off.—WESTCOTT.

THE Evangelical tradition preserved to us does not mention *tears*; the oral account heard by the Author may have contained this trait, or he may have supposed it included.—DAVIDSON.

'Unto Him that was able to save Him from death.'—Or 'out of death.' These words might mean either that He prayed to be saved from dying, or that He prayed to be delivered out of the power of death, a sense which would admit that He contemplated falling into its power for a time. . . . The sense 'out of death' would make the