

1916 "Comment by Professor Royce. Extracts from a Letter to Miss Calkins, March 20, 1916." *Philosophical Review*, 25 (1916): 293-96; *Papers in Honor of Josiah Royce* (Offprint of *Philosophical Review* text, with different page numbers), pp. 65-68.

Comments on "The Foundation in Royce's Philosophy for Christian Theism," by Mary Whiton Calkins, *Philosophical Review*, 25 (1916): 282-93; *Papers in Honor of Josiah Royce*, pp. 54-65. Royce especially approves Calkins' account of the relations between his earlier thought and the *Problem of Christianity*.

The typewritten original of the letter is in Wellesley (Massachusetts) College library.

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COMMENT BY PROFESSOR ROYCE. EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER TO MISS CALKINS, MARCH 20, 1916.

"The account which you kindly give of the position taken in my earlier books,-that is, in all the books that precede The

*Problem of Christianity*,—is as accurate and scholarly as it is friendly. I am not conscious of having taken in my recent work a position inconsistent in its genuine meaning with the positions which you recognize. Therefore, precisely in so far, I have and can have only thanks for your interpretation and for your aid.

“But the two central ideas upon which my *Problem of Christianity* turns, the idea of the community, and the idea of what the historical theology of the Christian church early learned to call ‘the holy spirit’ are ideas which are as living, and growing, as they are ancient. They grew when the prophets of Israel began to formulate their doctrine of Jerusalem, which, in the beginning was a city, of somewhat questionable architecture and morals, in the hill districts of Judea; but which, in the end, became the heavenly realm of which the mystic author of the well-known mediaeval hymn wrote, and which the world is still trying to understand. These two ideas, the Community, and the Spirit, have been growing ever since. They are growing today. They certainly have assumed, in my own mind, a new vitality, and a very much deeper significance than, for me, they ever had before I wrote my *Problem of Christianity*. That book records the experience and the reflections which have been working in my mind daily more and more ever since I wrote it. These reflections constitute for me, not something inconsistent with my former position, but a distinct addition to my former position, a new attainment,—I believe a new growth. I do not believe that you change in a way involving inconsistency when you reinterpret former ideas.

“To borrow a figure from a remote field, I do not believe that Lincoln acted in a manner essentially inconsistent with his earlier political ideas when he wrote the Emancipation Proclamation and freed the slaves. To be sure, before he wrote that Proclamation, he had seen a new light. My poor little book on *The Problem of Christianity* is certainly no Emancipation Proclamation, and is certainly no document of any considerable importance. But it certainly is the product of what for me is a new light, of a new experience, of ideas which are as new to me as the original form of my idealism was new to me when I first defined it.

“As for what my present position means, let me say only this: For me, at present, a genuinely and loyally united community which lives a coherent life, is, in a perfectly literal sense, a person. Such a person, for Paul, the Church of Christ was. On the other hand, any human individual person, in a perfectly literal sense, is a community. The coherent life which includes past, present, and future, and holds them reasonably together, is the life of what I have called a Community of Interpretation, in which the present, with an endless fecundity of invention, interprets the past to the future, precisely as, in the Pauline-Johannine type of theology, Christ, or the Spirit, interprets the united individuals who constitute the human aspect of the Church to the divine being in whom these members seek, at once their fulfilment, their unity, their diversity, and the goal of their loyalty. All this is a scrap of theology, which serves as a hint of what I have been trying to formulate in this recent phase, not merely of my thinking, but of my experience. I do not know any reason why this phase of my thinking should attract any other interest than what may be due to its actual relations to a process which has been going on in human thought ever since Heraclitus remarked that the Logos is fluent, and ever since Israel began to idealize the life of a little hill town in Judea.

“I stand for the importance of this process, which has led Christianity to regard a community not merely as an aggregate but as a Person, and at the same time to enrich its ideal memory of a person until he became transformed into a Community.

“The process in question is not merely theological, and is not merely mystical, still less merely mythical. Nor is it a process invented merely by abstract metaphysicians. It is the process which Victor Hugo expressed in *Les Misérables* when he put into the mouth of Enjolras the words, ‘Ma mère, c’est la république.’ As I write you these words, Frenchmen are writing the meaning of these words in their blood, about Verdun. The mother which is a republic is a community which is also a person, and not merely an aggregate, and not merely by metaphor a person. Precisely so, the individual patriot who leaves his home behind and steadfastly serving presses on in ardent quest of the moment

when his life can be fulfilled by his death for his country, is all the more richly and deeply an individual that he is also a community of interpretation, whose life has its unity in its restless search for death on behalf of the great good cause,—its ever-living Logos in its fluent quest for the goal.

“Now this view is at present an essential part of my idealism. In essential meaning I suppose that it always was such an essential part. But I do not believe that I ever told my tale as fully, or with the same approach to the far-off goal of saying something some time that might prove helpful to students of idealism as in the *Problem of Christianity*.”