



Review

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The Problem of Christianity. By JOSIAH ROYCE. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1913. 2 vols.—pp. xlvi, 425; vi, 442.

These notable volumes reproduce lectures delivered in 1912-13 at the Lowell Institute in Boston and Manchester College, Oxford. Their original form conditions certain features of the discussion. The vivacity, even eloquence of the oral presentation enlivens the printed argument. But the professional reader misses at times the uninterrupted precision of technical exposition. In one point, however, the gain outweighs any loss. Professor Royce's discussion of Christianity is born of experience. Its source is to be found in the experience of a philosopher and a convinced Idealist. But, as the preface suggests, it is no discussion of the closet, framed by the application of *a priori* categories to assumed religious facts. If any one so misconceives the author's method, the study of a single chapter will suffice to correct the error: he need but read in Lecture VI the profoundly moving account of the Christian principle of atonement in relation to human experience and to the modern mind.

The first volume deals with Christianity as a doctrine of life, the second with Christianity and its metaphysical basis. One problem is common to both, the problem of essential Christianity—what is it in the first place? and how is it to fare amid the vicissitudes of later culture? Recent philosophers of religion have often neglected this problem, but from their position Professor Royce emphatically dissents. For him Christianity is the form of faith which so far in the evolution of the world best fulfills the function of religion in the changing life of man. For the principal ideas of Christianity he also cherishes respect: sin and grace and atonement, these are not to be minimized but interpreted. For they are grounded in the spiritual experience of the race. And so they possess objective reality, a fact which confutes the advocates of "liberal" doctrine, as well as the dogmatists who petrified them into literal abstractions. The solution of the problem is to be found in the idea of the spiritual community. As loyalty forms the keynote of the author's ethics, so the studies of his later years have led him to an Idealistic religion of loyalty. The Pauline doctrine of the body and the members re-appears in the idea of the "Beloved Community." It is to this that devotion is due, and disloyalty to it constitutes the irrevocable sin of the spiritual traitor. In communion with the spiritual body grace is to be found; salvation is redemption from disloyalty through union with the spirit of the whole. Even the irrevocable sin can be atoned for: the deed can never be wiped out, but through the work of a redemptive agent

it may be made the occasion for common spiritual gain which had otherwise been impossible. So even the traitor may realize the good that his evil, his irrevocable evil, has brought forth.

The method of the argument varies with the phases of the problem. The fundamental Christian ideas are considered from the standpoint of spiritual experience. Together they constitute the Christian doctrine of life, whose truth and value are attested by their conformity to this experience. But experience has metaphysical implications. Therefore the inquiry proceeds from the discussion of the Christian ideas to the discussion of their basis in reality. This implies primarily the reality of the community, a reality which, as the author holds, has been underestimated by the great majority, even of the best writers hitherto. As the individual consciousness, so the social mind develops its characteristic life. This is other and richer than the consciousness of the detached individual. And as it is richer in itself, so it has characteristic manifestations in language, in institutions, above all as the center of the ethical and spiritual ideal. Professor Royce stops short, indeed, of the personification of the community, although isolated expressions in his earlier argument appear to favor such a conclusion. But short of this, and short of ignoring the individual personalities which compose the common body, he exalts the community to the highest place. To the community devotion is due, as to it in fact devotion is given beyond that which is bestowed on any individual. The Christian ideal is true, because it is congruous with the truth of the community idea. The Beloved Community as a constantly realizing, but never fully realized ideal—is the Kingdom of God for which mankind are summoned to labor and to pray.

The metaphysics of the community once more links Christianity with the reality of the world at large. The community itself is the type-form which best solves the old problem of the many and the one. And through a study of knowledge it leads to a new development of Idealistic doctrine. Traditional theories from Plato to Bergson have recognized two modes of knowledge, perception and conception. The Platonists have emphasized the latter, the empiricists, down to James and Bergson, with equal partiality have magnified the perceptual form of thought. To neither school, nor to the many who now discern the constant fusing of perception and conception, has it been given to note a third and more important form. This is "interpretation." Self-consciousness is the interpretation of the individual's present and his future to himself. History is the interpretation of the past in lessons for the present and the time to come. Science proceeds by the

verification of hypotheses, and verification is interpretation of the individual's discovery into established doctrine accepted by the common mind. Following Charles Peirce, from whom he derived the germ of his own theory, Professor Royce defines interpretation as a triadic mode of cognition. There is that which is to be interpreted, there is the mind to which it is to be interpreted, there is the interpreter to mediate the two. More abstractly, interpretation is illustrated by comparison. Terms do not agree or differ—merely. They agree—or differ—through the mediation of a third, which interprets their likeness or difference. But this interpreter, this third, involves fresh problems. Whence come new mediations and new interpreters—to infinity.

Finally, this highest form of knowing supplies the clue to universal metaphysics. The time-order is of the nature of interpretation. The evolution of the world is the manifestation in time of the one ideal-reality through successive partial syntheses of interpretation. The spirit of the world is the infinite interpreter, as the spirit of the community is the mediator of all its individual members. So the metaphysics of the community and the metaphysics of the world are one. And essential Christianity, summed up in the idea of the Beloved Community, articulates into the final truth about the world.

That his philosophy of religion suggests manifold questions is recognized by the author, who also frankly considers the issues raised. Two classes of these only can be noted here. In the field of religion proper, and of Christianity, his conclusions most directly challenge current views in regard to a class of questions which may be termed questions of personality. The influence of the Founder of Christianity on the primitive Christian community; the relation of the individual to the community in any religious body; the personal character of religious devotion and of its objects—these are conceived differently by Professor Royce and many later thinkers. As already noted, he avoids the conclusion that the community is a person, and rightly; but what of the Spirit of the Community, and what of the Infinite Interpreter? In philosophy, most interest will be aroused by the new doctrine of knowledge. Is 'interpretation' specifically different from that fused synthesis of perception and conception which is justly recognized as the common form, or is it a phase of the same essential process? Is comparison the type of interpretation, or must not other forms of synthetic thinking be correlated with it? In either case, does the noëtic ground compel the inference to the metaphysical conclusion? And if so, does the new Idealism free us from the

ultimate difficulties which were involved in the religious philosophy of the old?

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Identité et Réalité. Par ÉMILE MEYERSON. Deuxième Édition. Revue et Augmentée. Paris, Félix Alcan, 1912.—pp. xix, 535.

The first edition of this important book was published in 1908. In the present edition the work has been augmented by one hundred pages.

The work is a discussion of the fundamental epistemological principles of the physical sciences in the light of their history. The philosophical principles of biology and psychology are only incidentally dealt with. Professor Meyerson works out, with admirable clearness and with abundant illustration, his general view of the leading principles of physical science. The most striking feature of his book is its very thorough and exhaustive historical documentation. He seems to have a complete and ready command of the history of the physical sciences as well as of the history of philosophy. No less than four hundred and sixty-seven authors and schools of thought are either cited or referred to and always, so far as I am able to judge, with pertinency to the points under discussion. I know of no writer in this field since Whewell who shows so much learning. The student of the logic of the physical sciences will find the book a rich mine.

The book begins with an examination of the theory advanced by Comte, and in our own day most notably represented by Mach, that science has, or should have, no other task than to determine descriptively the *laws* of phenomena with a view to prevision and action. M. Meyerson contends, very justly I hold, that the principle of *legality* alone furnishes a very insufficient conception of the aims of science. Science seeks to *explain* phenomena *causally*, and all explanation consists in establishing the identity of antecedent and consequent. This is the scientific conception of causality, which thus aims at the reduction of all difference to identity and would issue, if completely achieved, in the elimination of time and change. Progress towards this aim means the triumph of mechanical methods and principles of explanation, and M. Meyerson holds that mechanism has proved to be by far the most fruitful method of science. Science will continue to follow this road, although it will always be confronted by an irreducible and irrational factor in experience. The most widespread, persistent, and fruitful mechanical conception in the