

Contemporary American Theology

THEOLOGICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Edited by

VERGILIUS FERM

SECOND SERIES

Essay Index Reprint Series

1933/1969



BOOKS FOR LIBRARIES PRESS
FREEPORT, NEW YORK

CONFESSIONS OF A TRANSPLANTED SCOT

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By JOHN BAILLIE

MY THEOLOGICAL TRAINING began when, at the tender age of some five years, I was taught the first few responses of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. I was born in a Scottish Highland manse and all my early religious associations were with the more strictly Calvinistic type of Scottish Presbyterianism. The received creed was represented by the Westminster Confession of Faith, and my early boyhood was passed among men and women who knew and understood its elaborate doctrinal teaching through and through, and were well able to meet any difficulty which a boyish mind was likely to raise.

I have never since those days had the good fortune to live in a community that was, generally speaking, so well-informed in matters theological, so well acquainted with the contents of the Bible or so well able to explain and defend what it professed to believe. Not many systems of thought have been devised which (once certain initial premises are granted) hang together in so coherent a whole, or in which the vulnerable Achilles-heel is so hard to find.

But there were certain other features of this religion of the Scottish Highlands for which no mere study of its official symbols will prepare anyone who is a stranger to its inward life. There was here as deep and sincere a development of personal religion as could, perhaps, anywhere be pointed to in the Christian world. The practice of prayer, private, domestic and public, was

given a primary place in the daily and weekly round and was a deep reality for men's thoughts. There was a strong evangelical note, so that one's mind was constantly being turned upon the necessity of regeneration, and yet any kind of sensational or over-emotional "evangelistic" movement was looked at askance.

For never in any type of religion was there a greater sense of solemnity than in this one. Nowhere else, however imposing and fitting may have been the ritual, have I ever been so aware of the *mysterium tremendum* as in these rare celebrations of the Lord's Supper. Here, if ever, *das Numinose*, "the sense of the holy," was found prevailing; the comparative rarity of the occasion giving to the sacramental feast that very same acuteness of emphasis which in another tradition (that I have since learned to prefer) is fostered rather by the opposite rule of frequency.

In recent days and in certain other parts of the world to which Scottish influence has penetrated, Presbyterianism has on occasion become a markedly unsacramental religion, the "coming to the Lord's Table" being sometimes regarded as not very much more than a pleasant piece of old-fashioned sentiment and therefore an optional addition to one's central religious duties. Nothing, however, could be a greater departure from original Scottish religion as I knew it in my youth.

The whole year's religion then seemed to me to revolve round the two half-yearly celebrations, together with their attendant special services stretching from the "Fast Day" on Thursday (when no business was done in the town and all the shops were shut) until the following Monday evening. The Scottish sacramental doctrine is a very "high" one, though not in the sense of conformity to the too crude theory that developed within the Latin countries.

It was through associations formed at school that influences of another sort first began to play upon me,

opening my eyes to certain spiritual deficiencies in this inherited system. I was fortunate in my masters. Since those days I have made acquaintance with a kind of schoolmaster who is greatly skilled in the mechanics of his profession and knows all there is to know (up to the very *dernier cri* in pedagogical theory) about how to teach—but who has little or nothing to impart! Of this kind of dominie it can truly be said that, if only he knew anything, his pupils would in time come to know it also.

My kind of dominie had, for the most part, an opposite combination of qualities and defects. My masters had minds richly stored with various knowledge, but this knowledge was more or less *thrown* at their pupils, to be taken or left according to one's tastes and abilities; and the wiles of modern educational strategy were left unpracticed. I think there were a large number of us with whom the method worked and who drew freely and eagerly upon the store thus set at our disposal.

In this way we became passionate explorers of some of the main channels of English literature. We were deep in the poets, from Chaucer onward; and we were always writing what we hoped might be poetry ourselves. But above all, at this period, it was the great Victorians that inspired us—Thackeray and Dickens, Tennyson and Matthew Arnold and Charles Kingsley, the Brontës, the Pre-Raphaelites, Carlyle, Ruskin. I can remember when the prose of *Culture and Anarchy* seemed to me the most magnificent in our language, and *Pendennis* the most absorbing story. Perhaps in all this the friendly interchange among the pupils counted for as much as the guidance given by the masters; for there was a small coterie of us who shared the same pursuits. Nor was it only by the English classics that our interest was awakened and our imagination stirred, but also by the Greek and Latin authors,

and by the whole glory that was Greece and grandeur that was Rome.

I can remember how deeply I was moved in these days by our reading of the *Apology* and the *Phaedo* in the Greek class. That indeed, must be a common enough experience. There must be thousands who can recall what it was like to come upon these pages with a virgin mind. But I, at least, coming to them from my particular background, could not read Plato and Carlyle and Matthew Arnold without being, even then, aware of a slowly emerging intellectual problem. Here was a new world of thought opened out to me, a very different world from the austere Highland Calvinism of my immediate surroundings. To others of a widely different tradition one of these three writers, the dour Scot frae Ecclefechan, may seem to echo a typical Calvinistic outlook, but it was of the difference—the difference that came to him so largely from the German and other romantics—and not of the resemblance that I was then aware. My difficulty was that through these new mentors I seemed to be becoming initiated into a certain region of truth and experience which could not easily be enclosed within the clearly defined frontiers of my traditional system.

And so—like many another lad from the North for many a century before me—to “the College of Edinburgh” with its many renowned teachers. There I studied many subjects, including English literature under Professor George Saintsbury, who has ever since seemed to me the soundest of all sound critics and the safest and surest guide to right reading. But during these college days all other interests were made secondary to my keenly awakened interest in what was virtually a new subject to me, namely, philosophy. I was much influenced by each of the four highly gifted thinkers who were then lecturing on philosophical subjects in Edinburgh. The training they gave us was,

however, mainly in the history of thought and in the use of the tools of thinking, and sometimes almost scrupulous care was taken that we should be left free to form our own opinions.

I remember how once, in concluding the study of Kant's first *Kritik*, Professor Pringle-Pattison (then at the height of his influence) set very clearly before us the great alternative to which Kant's thinking finally led up—the alternative between the two very different lines of development followed by the Hegelians and by the neo-Kantians of the Marburg and other schools respectively—and then wound up his lecture and his course by saying, “At this point I leave you to your own reflections.” At which one eager student (who was my great friend and who was killed in the war a few years later) so far forgot the dignities of the place and occasion as to cry out very audibly, “I’ve been at that point for two years!” At the time I sympathized with his impatience. The task of thought was an arduous one, and often I wished for more definite guidance. But how many times since then have I found myself deploring the narrow indoctrination into the principles and prejudices of a particular (and usually very one-sided) system which some American colleges offer to their students in the name of a philosophical training—to the virtual omission both of the study of logic (the theory of scientific method) and of a proper grounding in the history of thought in past ages.

But though in his lectures Pringle-Pattison was almost nervously careful to keep his personal views in the background, these were easily accessible to us in his published books, and my own mind was greatly affected by them. Certain other influences coming to me through my reading were, however, in those days even more powerful, and to some extent they were of a contrary tendency. Bradleianism was then a great power in British philosophy and, in particular, the name

of Bernard Bosanquet was at the height of its prestige. One of the privileges of these years was the frequent opportunity they afforded us of meeting some of the distinguished thinkers who visited Edinburgh and joining in philosophical discussion with them. One of these was M. Bergson and another was Bosanquet. From the former I learned much but it was the latter who seemed to me the more reliable and careful thinker. And for a year or two I was inclined to follow his lead a little blindly, though not without much reliance also upon other writers too numerous to be mentioned here.

In this way it became inevitable that I should find myself faced with a religious problem. The problem was not, indeed, quite so acute as it would have been had I come directly from my earliest religious associations to this new philosophical atmosphere. Actually the transition was facilitated for me, not only by the wider humanistic leanings of my schooldays, but also by the prevalent temper of the church life of the northern metropolis. Robert Rainy and Marcus Dods were then well-known and venerable figures in its streets. Alexander Whyte and John Kelman (I must mention only those who are no longer with us) were at the height of their great powers. During several winters I was a keenly interested member of Dr. Whyte's famous Bible class (which in these years belied its name, since it was never about the Bible, but about the great figures of later religious history and the later classics of devotional literature). And who that ever saw or heard John Kelman can forget the fine manliness of his spirituality or the breeze of fresh air that he carried with him wherever he went?

Moreover, one was of an age to become deeply interested in the various arts, and to begin to entertain dreams of travel such as might give these interests greater opportunity of development. And one's exploration of general literature was as eager as ever, and

one's own scribbles as frequent. Thus there was not likely to be any entirely sharp cleft between one's general spiritual life and the philosophical conclusions that were gradually taking shape in one's mind. Yet a serious enough spiritual problem did again and again threaten to arise. Not only did a system like Bosanquet's leave the least possible room for the development of a vigorous and full religious outlook, but there were many influences of an even more negative kind which I was not always able to withstand.

This was in the first decade of the present century. The bleak naturalistic outlook of the last quarter of the previous century still had much power to persuade. It was far more difficult then than it is now to refute the claims of materialism and mechanism. The new developments in physics were only in their infancy and their far-reaching significance was not yet grasped. The purely Darwinian (or rather ultra-Darwinian) reading of biological evolution was the fashionable one to hold, and its exponents had not begun to weaken even to the extent of using the charmed word "emergent."

I remember that for long I could not decide how much importance to attach to the book which now seems more prophetic of the new era than any other that had then appeared, James Ward's *Naturalism and Agnosticism*. For as yet he must indeed have been a bold man, and must have risked the sneers of all the emancipated and knowing ones, who dared to speak a word against the principle of universal causation or the invariability of natural laws or the conservation of energy or the conservation of matter or the non-inheritance of acquired characteristics or the point-for-point correspondence of mind with brain—we need not make the list any longer.

So I descended into the valley of the shadow of the negative. Looking back upon it now, I can only rejoice that, if I had to pass through this valley at all, it

should have been given me to commence my journey through it at so early an age. I have since seen what seems to me far greater and more lasting harm wrought by the same experience coming to men at a later time of life.

Perhaps it was not so much by directly philosophical influences that I was ultimately guided toward a more positive outlook as by influences of a more theological kind leading to a deepening of religious insight itself. Of these I shall presently speak, but meanwhile let me note how I was more and more becoming convinced of the essential wisdom of my honored teacher (and later my very dear friend), Pringle-Pattison. These were the days of high (and now almost historic) debate between Pringle-Pattison and Bosanquet. I wonder if there are many who now doubt that the former, whether or not his own position be ultimately acceptable, at least carried off the honors of that controversy. The underlying principle of Pringle-Pattison's thought was clearly stated by him as early as 1883 in the essay contributed to the slim volume entitled *Essays in Philosophical Criticism* which he and R. B. (afterwards Viscount) Haldane conjointly edited in that year. His own essay was entitled "Philosophy as the Criticism of Categories," its contention being that our experience does not reveal itself to us all on one plane, but on a variety of planes, and that it is the business of a comprehensive philosophy to assign to each level of experience its true place and measure of importance, according to the degree of value and ultimacy which it finds it to possess.

The mechanistic categories of the inorganic world were thus accorded all proper recognition, but it was urged that when we pass from them to the categories of organic life we are passing to what is at once higher in the scale of value and deeper in metaphysical significance as being nearer to the heart of all being. It is

the same again when we pass from the categories of life to the categories of conscious mind, and then again to those of self-conscious intelligence. As organism is more than mechanism, so is personality more than organism. Such a line of thought plainly borrows much from Hegel, but Pringle-Pattison's quarrel with Hegel was, as is well known, that the latter never honestly faced the implications of the fact that the most precious of all our values are inseparably associated with personality.

The guiding thread of Pringle-Pattison's own system was always "the principle of interpretation by the highest we know"—a phrase which appears in his book on *The Idea of God*. It is not, he held, in our most elementary, but rather in our deepest and richest experiences that we have our best available clue to the nature of the Absolute. The stream of evolution, he used to say, is like other streams in that it cannot rise higher than its source. Is is therefore the ripest fruits of the evolutionary process rather than its germinal beginnings that most truly reveal the nature of that from which the process proceeds. The idea that the process was itself ultimate, and that there was nothing behind it, never seemed to him to make sense.

I remember sitting at luncheon with him in Edinburgh in 1928, three years before his death, and asking him what he thought of Professor Alexander's *Space, Time and Deity*.

"Well," he replied, "it is a very clever piece of system-building."

"But perhaps," I suggested, "it is all on wrong lines."

Perhaps none of it is true."

"Of course it's not true," was his almost excited answer. "*It can't be true.*"

"Exactly why," I asked, "do you say that it *can't* be true?"

"Because," he replied, "*it makes everything come out of nothing.*"

A little later, over our coffee, I spoke of the recent great popularity of Dr. A. N. Whitehead's contributions to philosophy. He said he had read only part of what Dr. Whitehead had written and asked me what I found in his books that was good. I said something to the effect that it was at least good to have it clearly recognized that the categories of organic life brought us nearer to the nature of reality than the categories of inorganic mechanism, these latter being highly abstract creations of the human mind. To which he replied, "But all that was in the little black book"—*i.e.*, in the symposium referred to above and published five-and-forty years before.

And then something was said between us about the impossibility of stopping short, as Dr. Whitehead seemed to do, at so half-way a conception as that of organism. The evolution of the categories (or the categories of evolution) seemed to proceed from those of physics through those of biology to those of ethics—from the machine through organism to personality. The view that reality was to be interpreted in terms of the simplest we know was at least plausible. The opposite view, that it was to be interpreted in terms of the highest was that which we both held. But what, we asked, could be said for the view that it was to be interpreted in terms of a conception like organism which was *half way up the scale*?

I still feel as sure as ever I did of the fundamental truth of these main outlines of Pringle-Pattison's philosophy. Of course, when so broadly stated, they cease to be the monopoly of any one teacher and many will feel that these same thoughts have come to them through entirely different channels. Indeed it was partly through other channels that they came to myself, at least in the form in which they are now established

in my mind. Chief among such influences I should place the study of the two great philosophers of ancient and modern times respectively, Plato and Kant. These two seem to me to be the original sources of the outlook of which I have been speaking, and at these sources I have drunk deep and long.

I early became dissatisfied with the current English (and American) criticism of the Kantian ethic and in 1912 began a book on the subject, but the outbreak of war found it only half written and when, four years later, I had the opportunity to look again at what I had written, it was only to realize that it would never now be completed. A small part of it is, however, represented by "A Plea for a Reconsideration of the Kantian Ethic" which I printed in the *Hibbert Journal* in July, 1926.

As for Plato and Greek philosophy generally, we were excellently instructed at Edinburgh in this field, and yet it was only afterward, and more gradually, that I came fully to realize what matchless treasures of wise and disciplined thinking are at our disposal in the dialogues of Plato and the lectures of Aristotle and the scant surviving fragments of the other thinkers, both earlier and later. In later years I have found myself giving more and more of my time to the close study of this literature, and again and again I have offered a course of lectures on the development of theology in ancient Greece.

On my four years' life as an undergraduate in Edinburgh University there followed four years' theological training in New College, interlarded with summer semesters spent in Germany. During these years my philosophical interest was in no way abated. In Germany I attended the lectures of Rudolf Eucken, Hermann Cohen and Paul Natop. Of the several other contemporary German philosophers whom I knew only through their writings I have no space to speak, though

the course of my reflections was notably affected by them. Nor can I speak of the various problems which then occupied me, nor of my constant preoccupation with the principles of psychology, though it may be in place to refer to one article in which I have registered my opinions on the latter subject—"The Psychological Point of View," published in *The Philosophical Review* in May, 1930, and circulated also as an off-print.

I have already said, however, that in my progress toward a more secure mental outlook than I enjoyed in my undergraduate years these general philosophical adventures were less important than certain other influences of a more purely theological kind under which I now came and which seemed to show me that what was necessary for the solution of my problem was rather a deeper insight into religion itself than the successful construction of a lay system of metaphysics. A student of philosophy, who has been looking at religion only through gray-tinted metaphysical spectacles, and who then submits himself to four years of exacting and disciplined theological study, is bound to feel that whole new worlds of understanding are being opened out to him. And nowadays one is often painfully aware of the amateurishness of the references made to religion by certain philosophers whose competence in other fields commands one's deepest respect but who have plainly not devoted to the theological problem that long and hard labor of thought which, when conjoined to an intimate understanding of theological history, can alone lead to a wise and right-minded issue in this particular field.

One new world which was thus opened up to me was that of the historical study of the New Testament. During my first year as a student of theology a small group of us—most of whom were "philosophers"—made a habit of meeting together once a week for the

study of the Greek text of St. Mark. The following year we received much stimulus from the lectures of the very distinguished scholar who then occupied the chair of New Testament in our college. And in the summers I listened to the lectures of two equally distinguished New Testament scholars in Germany. I have never since lost my interest in these studies. Sometimes for as long as a year or two I have found myself neglecting them and seeking light in other ways, yet on each occasion I have come back to them with something of renewed eagerness; and most of what I have written bears marks of the time thus spent.

More and more, indeed, as the years have gone by, have I found myself being instructed by *history* rather than by independent dialectical reflection. More and more have I come to feel that, if I am to decide whether such and such a belief be a true and wise one, my first step must be clearly and deeply to understand its history—to know how it came into the world, from what quarters it has encountered opposition and what have been its fortunes in age-long debate. I do not claim that I entirely understand why a knowledge of the history of an opinion should have this importance in enabling one to judge of its worth. I have no preconceived theory of the matter. I merely find it is the case.

It will be seen, then, how differently I feel from a distinguished philosophic friend who writes in his recently published *magnum opus* that "As a rule it will be found that the historical introduction is very much like the chaplain's prayer which opens a legislative session: very little of the subsequent proceedings are decided by reference to it."¹ I should rather agree with the reviewer in the *London Times* who pointed out that

¹ Morris R. Cohen, *Reason and Nature, An Essay on the Meaning of Scientific Method*, p. 370.

this, "far from discrediting the historical method, proves only that the method is not used with sufficient thoroughness."

Yet the most important change of mind which came to me during these years in New College and in Germany was of another kind, and I think what it amounted to was the gradual realization that religion is in possession of an insight into reality which is all its own and cannot be reached at all without its aid. This is the change of mind, of course, which in European thought is represented in different ways by the two great names of Kant and Schleiermacher, and it was in close connection with my study of the Critical Philosophy and of *Der christliche Glaube* that it was accomplished in my own case.

For a general statement of its significance in contemporary theological thought I may refer to some carefully guarded words of Professor Clement Webb. "It was only gradually realized that . . . the existence of God, the object of religious experience and worship, could not be established by purely metaphysical considerations which took no account of specifically religious experience. . . . The significance of Kant's criticism is that it leads to the abandonment of the attempt to justify belief in the God of religion by other than religious arguments. God is known as such—so it comes to be held—only in religious experience"—so he writes in the course of an article entitled "Recent Thought on the Doctrine of God."² In the eighteenth century, he writes again in another publication, it was "very generally assumed that the reasonableness of acting upon a religious creed could be made evident to any man of competent intelligence quite apart from his possession of any specifically religious experience of his own."³ In still a third place,

² *Expository Times*, Vol. XXXVII (1925-6), p. 360.
³ *Religion and the Thought of Today* (1929), p. 36.

in the last words of his Gifford lectures, he warns us that "we must keep ourselves from rashly assuming that convictions we have reached by way of reflection upon the presuppositions of [religious] experience can be verified apart from it" and adds that "this is not to consent to such a divorce of theology from metaphysics as was recommended by Albrecht Ritschl, though it may serve to make his motive in recommending it intelligible to us."⁴

It was only at this time, then, that I left the eighteenth century behind me and availed myself of the newer insight of Kant, Schleiermacher and Ritschl. Yet I wonder if we need really go back as far as the eighteenth century in order to find the older view not only existing but flourishing like a green bay tree. Indeed in the earlier works of Professor Webb himself I can find no such clear recognition of the newer insight as appears in the passages I have quoted from his later writings. And with reference to Pringle-Pattison also my feeling is that only in his later years did he come fully to appreciate this aspect of the Ritschlian teaching (as of the teaching of Kant and Schleiermacher). But in fact can it be claimed even now that as many as half of our living teachers of philosophy in the English-speaking world have profited by the discovery of which I am speaking?

It seems to me that what multitudes of philosophers still believe about religion is somewhat as follows. They hold the study of metaphysics (some of them would even say the study of natural science) to be the only satisfactory and reliable avenue to truth about ultimate reality, and so to the knowledge of God. In the matter of religious belief none but the trained metaphysicians—a truly small band—can hope to stand on really solid ground. None but they can really *know* the truth about God and eternal life. Those who are

⁴ *Personality and Human Life* (1920), pp. 268f.

not so trained may, and constantly do, attain to an "intuitive" grasp of the conclusions to which the metaphysicians are led by argumentation, and this intuitive anticipation of correct metaphysical results by quite unlearned people is what is meant by faith.

But if now it be asked, What is the use of metaphysics if the saints have already reaped its harvest in their own different way?—then it comes out clearly that the saint's faith is far inferior in certitude to the metaphysician's knowledge. The saint has an "intuition" (surely if ever word was overworked, this is the word!) that God exists, that He is omnipresent and omnipotent, that He hears prayer and forgives sin, and that "if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." But if this intuition is to be turned into an assured certitude such as will be secure against doubt, the saint has no alternative but to turn metaphysician. On this view, then, the function of metaphysics is to bring its own scientific criticism to bear upon faith's surmise and either expose its groundlessness or convert it into solidly grounded knowledge.

It will be realized at once that this doctrine can find much support in Plato, who taught that only a thorough training in philosophical kinetics and mathematical astronomy could lead to an assured conviction of the reality of God, and who believed faith to be definitely inferior to science in cognitive value (the successive divisions of his famous Divided Line in the *Republic*, going from lower to higher, being *eikasia* or guesswork, *pistis* or faith, *dianoia* or intelligence, and *episteme* or pure science⁵). It is here, as I understand it, that the Christian tradition has diverged from Plato; and it is here that I find myself parting company with his way

⁵ *Republic*, 509-511 and 533-534.

of thought, which up to this point I am still so largely able to follow.

The Christian thinkers also have their Divided Line, but it is a line in which the relative positions of faith and scientific knowledge have been reversed. For St. Paul as for St. Thomas Aquinas faith is a higher exercise of the mind than reasoning and one that leads to greater certitude. For St. Paul as for St. Thomas faith stands for no mere preliminary glimpsing of results which scientific investigation can alone put securely in our grasp but for an *independent and even more reliable* source of insight into the nature of things. Unfortunately this very unplatonic claim that was made for faith was often embodied in a somewhat crudely conceived doctrine of revelation, the unacceptableness of which led after the Renaissance to the severe reaction which we now designate as rationalism.

A typical representative of this reaction is Spinoza who deliberately revises St. Thomas's doctrine of the three kinds of cognition (reason, faith, vision) by reversing to the Platonic order and putting faith lower than reason. Another representative is Hegel whose doctrine of the *Vorstellung* of faith as being inferior to the *Begriff* of metaphysics has been widely influential beyond the bounds of his own school. The recent change of mind which is described in the passages quoted from Professor Webb is in essence a return to the Christian position from which rationalism revolted, though its endeavor is to restate this position in terms that need give rise to no further difficulty.

I have already said that it was in great part through the reading of Kant's and Schleiermacher's own writings that this change of mind accomplished itself in my own case. Yet my reading was not carried out without the very valuable guidance of certain friends and teachers, both in Scotland and in Germany. Among

these chief place must be given to Wilhelm Herrmann. When I went to Marburg in the spring of 1911 my mind was indeed already more hospitable toward some aspects of his teaching than it would have been a couple of years earlier. My confidence in the wisdom of the prevailing philosophic attitude to religion—as represented, say, by Bosanquet—was already seriously shaken. But as I listened to Herrmann and read his *Ethik* I was more and more led to agree that religion cannot really be important (and may profitably be replaced by philosophy in the lives of all who are competent to philosophize) unless it can offer us an insight into the nature of the unseen world which is quite specific in character, which can be obtained in no other way than by the practice of religion itself, and which is far superior in point of certainty to any of the conflicting theories defended by the various philosophic schools.

The axioms which were henceforth to serve as the presuppositions of my theological thinking may perhaps be set out in serial form as follows:

- (i) That the truths for which religion stands are of such a kind as to be as accessible and as evident to those quite untrained in science and philosophy as to those who can boast the fullest scientific and philosophical training;
- (ii) That, however, these truths can be brought home to us only through the discipline of religious experience itself and can consequently never be evident to anybody save in such measure as he is visited by such experience;
- (iii) That the only means by which our hold on these truths can be made more secure is, not the pursuit of any independent scientific inquiry in which they can be buttressed from without, but the progressive deepening of religious insight itself;
- (iv) That accordingly the only competent *criticism*

of religious convictions is one carried out, not in the light of knowledge obtained by some non-religious means, but in the light of advancing religion itself—leading to the discovery that the convictions in question are not as *religious* as they ought to be;

(v) That accordingly religious certitude, far from being a product of scientific metaphysics, or being in any way more fully enjoyed by scientific metaphysicians than by other folk, must be, for any scientific metaphysician who possesses it, the main (though certainly not the only) fact on which his metaphysical system will itself be built;

(vi) That while religious faith may communicate something of its own certitude to a metaphysical system in the formation of which it has been allowed to play its proper part, yet no such system can ever hope to possess the same degree or kind of certitude as attaches to the fundamental religious insights themselves;

(vii) That, as regards natural science, the most we have a right to expect of it is that, as Kant said, it should "leave room for faith," not that it should in any way provide a positive foundation for faith.

It will be realized at once that these are not really seven independent axioms but are all deducible from a single principle—the principle, already stated, that religious faith is not a dim fore-grasping of a reality which other and exacter processes of thought and research will afterward more clearly reveal and more securely establish, but a way of knowledge which is at least equal to any other in point of reliability and which leads us into the presence of a Reality that is not discoverable by any other means. It was this principle, and little else, that I took from the Schleiermacher-Ritschl tradition in which Herrmann stood—though I shall have to speak in a moment of another principle that I borrowed from the Kant-Ritschl tradition in which he stood equally.

I never had any sympathy with the subjectivist trend in Schleiermacher's thought, nor with his equation of religion with feeling, nor with his psychological doctrine of the primordial character of feeling as over against thought—doctrines to which William James and the American "psychology of religion" have given a new lease of life. Nor did I ever have much sympathy with the other aspects of Ritschlianism—its bitter anti-Catholic polemic, its narrow Lutheran Christocentrism, its inhospitable attitude toward whatever religious insight stands outside of the Christian tradition, its Marcionite tendency in regard to the Old Testament, its extreme opposition to mysticism, its disqualification of the Greek contribution to Christianity as embodied in the Catholic dogmatic and ecclesiastical system. Except in regard to the one great un-Greek insight described in my quotations from Professor Webb, I still remain a Christian Platonist.

At this point I may interject the remark that the so-called Theology of Crisis seems to me, as regards *one* side of its teaching, to have grown out of precisely those aspects of Ritschlianism which I found myself from the first rejecting; and this in spite of the fact that the Ritschlian system is in other respects the object of its direct and very bitter attack. Professor Barth listened to Herrmann's lectures at Marburg very nearly at the same time as I was listening to them, but we must have been attracted and repelled by very different sides of our teacher's thought.

A sentence from Von Hügel's posthumous volume will express more adequately than any words of mine the position which I feel obliged to defend both against Ritschl and against Professor Barth: "It has been, I take it, one of the greatest blessings vouchsafed to the Christian religion that it should have sprung historically from another historical religion, that it should be constrained by its very origins both deeply to respect and

to admire another religion, and yet to consider itself, at its best, as bringing further light and help to the deepest places of the soul."⁶ Or again I would subscribe to the words of Justin Martyr in his *Apology* that "whatever things have been rightly said by anyone belong to us Christians." But there is *another* side of the Barthian teaching which I can do nothing but warmly welcome and to which I feel myself, as time goes on, increasingly indebted. Its protests against our overweening humanism, our cheap evolutionism, our smug immanentism and our childish utopianism have been most challenging; and in what it has to say about our human insignificance as over against God and about our utter dependence on Him for our salvation it is difficult to do anything but rejoice.

In debate with my theological friends in this country I have, more often than otherwise, found myself defending the Barthian positions against the very opposite principles which are professed by perhaps a majority of them. Yet even here I am unwilling to follow Professor Barth all the way. There are indeed many things which he might have been the first to teach me, and in which I might be ready to follow him more unsuspectingly, had I not learned them first from Von Hügel—and learned at the same time to beware against understanding them in too one-sided a fashion.

Barth and Von Hügel have very much the same medicine to administer to our ering modernism, but only Von Hügel is careful to provide also a suitable antidote against an overdose. "Eternal Life," he writes, for example, "... will be found to include and to require a deep sense of human Weakness and of man's constant need of Divine Preventence, and again of the reality of sin and of our various inclinations to it; but also to exclude all conceptions of the

⁶ *The Reality of God*, p. 146.

total corruption of human nature, of the essential impurity of the human body, or of the utter debilitation of the human will. The Pauline, Augustinian, Lutheran, Calvinist, Jansenist trend, impressive though it is, will have to be explained, in part, as a good and necessary (or at least as an excusable, temporary) corrective of some contrary excess; and, for the rest, it will have to suffer incorporation within a larger whole, which, in appearance more commonplace, is yet in reality indefinitely richer—the doctrine and practice of Jesus Christ Himself. 'In my flesh abideth no good thing' will have somehow to be integrated within 'the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'"⁷

The other principle which Herrmann was largely instrumental in establishing in my mind was, as has been said, one which connected him (and his fellow-Ritschlians) rather with Kant than with Schleiermacher—I mean the rediscovery of the organic nature of the relation between faith and morals, between our religious belief and our consciousness of obligation. Yet here again the position to which I was ultimately led was one which my teacher would be very far from owning. Herrmann seemed to me to be admirably right in regarding an intimate acquaintance with the realities and difficulties and despairs of the moral life as the *Weg zur Religion*—the one indispensable preliminary to the attainment of religious insight; but I could not follow him in his insistence that such acquaintance was a *mere* preliminary or that religion, when it came, came as something *altogether* different and new.

My difficulty with such a view lay, and still lies, in my firm persuasion that in our moral experience we are *already* in real (though it may be unrecognized) touch with that Divine Reality of which religion discourses. The law may be only a "tutor," but its word is none

⁷ *Eternal Life* (1912), pp. 391 f.

the less the word of revelation. In all our apprehensions of value we are, I believe, being apprehended of God. To feel, in however faint a way, the attraction of a higher ideal than that which has hitherto been realized in our actions is, I believe, to experience a direct visitation of the Holy Spirit, even though it may not always be acknowledged as such by him who receives it. Our sense of sin is itself the Spirit's work. As I have ventured to put it elsewhere, "In the experience of moral obligation there is contained and given the knowledge, not only of a Beyond, but of a Beyond that is in some sort actively striving to make itself known to us and to claim us for its own."⁸

I should therefore hold that the consciousness of value is itself a religious and—to use a word of which I am in no wise afraid—supernatural experience; that the central moral experience cannot in the end be correctly described without the introduction of some transcendent reality (as distinct both from non-transcendent realities and from transcendent idealities); and that accordingly no such thing as a "mere morality" can really exist. Yet almost all men will admit to having been visited by the moral experience; and so it has seemed to me that here we have the strategic point from which to undertake the interpretation and defense of religion in the contemporary world. It seems natural to begin from something which is not called in question and which may be taken as common ground. This is what, in much of my teaching and writing, I have tried to do.

The years—not much less than four—which I spent in France during the war were fallow years for me, as for so many others. I hardly read a page either of divinity or of metaphysics, and I had little time or opportunity for consecutive thinking. Yet the period brought with it a very great broadening of experience

⁸ *Interpretation of Religion*, p. 462.

and, above all, such an understanding of the mind and temper, the spiritual needs and capacities, of average (perhaps I should rather say of *normal*) humanity as I at least had not before possessed. "He was only used to Cambridge," writes E. M. Forster about one of the characters in his fine novel, *The Longest Journey*—and, *mutatis mutandis*, I might apply the words to myself, "and to a very small corner of that. . . . That was what annoyed him as he rode down the new valley with two chattering companions. He was more skilled than they were in the principles of human existence, but he was not so indecently familiar with the examples." When I turned again to my old pursuits after the war was over, the khaki figures still seemed to keep their place in the background of my mind, and in much of what I have written since these days a clairvoyant reader may find them haunting the margins of the page.

But the years that have gone by since 1919 are still too near at hand to be seen in any true historical perspective. They have been so full of diversified study, and so rich in interchange of thought and opinion, that an adequate account of the formative and qualifying influences they have brought to bear upon me would, if attempted at all, have to be long and detailed. If I were to single out one contemporary writer rather than another whose books have really determined the direction which my thinking has taken, it would have to be Von Hügel. But old books have been as much in my hands as new ones and have counted for at least as much in respect of intellectual guidance and stimulation.

It remains only to add that no more during these later years than during the earlier ones has the philosophic quest, taken narrowly by itself, appeared able to afford me complete mental satisfaction. My interest in poetry, in the general literature of the few countries whose languages I could command, in history, in vari-

ous forms of art, as well as in nature itself, has not lessened but rather increased as the years have gone by. Yet not one of these varied pursuits has ever been followed as a *mere* pastime. They have all, in some way, been parts of a single pilgrimage. In all of them I have, however mistakenly, seemed to myself to be seeking the One True Light, and I think that my interest in any one of them would have collapsed very suddenly if I had come to feel that it could in no way advance my central quest.

I remember with what delight I welcomed Professor Gilbert Murray's essay on *Literature as Revelation* on its first appearance, because it seemed to express with admirable felicity something I had long been trying to say to myself. A few sentences from it will form a fitting conclusion to these somewhat desultory pages. "There are among lovers of literature . . . some who like it for all sorts of other reasons, and some who demand of it nothing less than a kind of revelation. Most people of culture, I believe, belong to the first class. They like literature because they like to be amused, or because the technique of expression interests them. . . . And the other class—to which I certainly belonged all through my youth and perhaps on the whole still belong—does not really like the process of reading, but reads because it wants to get somewhere, to discover something, to find a light which will somehow illumine for them either some question of the moment or the great riddles of existence. I believe this is the spirit in which most people in their youth read books; and, considering their disappointments, it is remarkable, and perhaps not altogether discreditable, how often they cling to this hope far on into the region of gray hairs or worse than gray hairs."⁹

In writing what I have here written I have not regarded myself, and I hope the indulgent reader will

⁹ *Essays and Addresses*, pp. 126 f.

not regard me, as making an essay in intellectual autobiography, which is perhaps the most difficult of all literary kinds and has been essayed successfully by hardly more than half a dozen people—by St. Augustine, Descartes, Rousseau, Newman, by Wordsworth in the *Prelude*, and perhaps by Goethe. No, I have not written an autobiography: I have been “interviewed”—that’s all.

PRINCIPAL PUBLICATIONS

Books:

- The Roots of Religion in the Human Soul.* New York, George H. Doran, 1926.
The Interpretation of Religion. An Introductory Study of Theological Principles. New York, Scribner’s 1928.
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