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"Veracity, Reality, and Regeneration"

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VERACITY, REALITY, AND REGENERATION

BISHOP GORE complains that the huge perils in front of the Church of England are due to a refusal in recent years, and among all classes, movements, and offices, to think clearly about principles. He would welcome Disestablishment as forcing the Church to consider its first principles. But his remark applies to lands where there is no Established Church, and applies as much or more. It is a vice of the Church everywhere, and quite conspicuous in the Protestantism whose special charge a spiritual thoroughness and mental veracity is supposed to be. It is not easy to see what is to shake to its senses sections of the Church which never have been established, and to do for them what Disestablishment may do for Anglicanism. It is part of the general blurring of the features of truth in a nimbus of pious impressionism, or in a mist of social sympathy which impairs the individual conscience.

Other effects of this frame of mind are apparent in the type of preaching which pervades the pulpits of the hour. The preachers were never more able, and the sermons were never more interesting. And yet they do not win the public; or it is more than they can often do to hold it when won. The lack is penetrative power and inner moral passion. It fills one with a sense of waste to mark the able men whose ability is only running at half speed for the lack of a power to seize them, to

unite and vivify all that is in them, to bring it out and get it home. It is doubtful if anywhere so much ability is going to seed as in the pulpit, if so much toil, ingenuity, intelligence, and feeling are being wasted anywhere as in the thousands of sermons that go to their drawers as to their last cradle and long home, week by week, to haunt as feckless ghosts the preacher's soul. Hence the restlessness that is observable in the ministry in various quarters, the sense of ineffectiveness, the desire to try a new soil with the same seed, in the hope that the Spirit may at last reward the effort and bring back His sheaves with Him.

But it is not a change of sphere that is required most. That may but foment the unquiet, or else become the soul's narcotic. It is a change of note that is needed, and a change that no new place can bring. If the lack is power, the cause of the lack is the absence of a definite, positive, and commanding creed which holds us far more than we hold it, holds us by the conscience, founds and feeds us on the eternal reality, and, before we can do anything with it, does everything with us. Every Church and every preacher is bound to run down without such a creed, and no amount of humane sympathy or vivid interests can avert the decline. In every direction, the Church is suffering from the inability to know its own spiritual mind, or to strike a stream from its own rock, and from its indisposition to face the situation or its impotence to fathom it. For a generation now we have been preaching that experience is the great thing, and not creed; till we are losing the creed that alone can produce an experience higher than the vagaries of idiosyncrasy, or the nuances of temperament, or the tradition of a group, or the spirit of the age. The older preachers complain that by their education they were set afloat alone on a wide, wide sea of thought and question, without the pole that alone can adjust their compass or lay their course. They were not started with the modernized dogmatic foundation that could enable them to carry their age, and so they were carried by it. In various seminaries the dogmatic was either

antiquated, amiable, or absent. It is cruel to the preachers, and it is fatal to the Church. The ministry becomes more restless, and missions break down in our hands. And all through the lack of power from the highest or of footing in the abyss—all because of the lack of a positive, fixing, ruling belief, with its train of security and blessing, most effectual often where most indirect. The surest and securest have often won no right to be either. The current claptrap against theology is only an advertisement of the lack in religion of that passion of spiritual radicalism and mental veracity which will settle nowhere but at the very roots of things, and must draw its strength from the last realities of the soul's intelligent life. The result of the defect is a vague sense of insecurity as to foundations and an insidious dubiety which, unconsciously to the preacher, conveys itself to his flock, and generates a *malaise* that nobody can explain. There is too much judicious detachment and an absence of that passion and conviction which the preacher should utter, whether he is welcome or not to a people blinded by the god of the period, and whether they will hear or forbear. He may be too anxious about the impression he makes, and too careless about the sound source of impression—too little the agent of a searching truth that makes him by comparison indifferent to the cheers.

A positive, creative, and controlling belief of ultimates, a ruling and resting theology, drawn from the nether springs, is the goal and the seal of spiritual veracity, of that lucidity of soul which, though searching, is not sad but strong. It is not a thing that comes easily or swiftly; and it is readily underprized in a day which is the day of the young, and of all the crudity that that connotes. But it has the staying power, and it can guide, temper, dignify, and command. These are powers that the Church needs and the ministry much craves. But the laity are little interested in such truth, often will not have it. They are still too much the belated victims of a revolt against it which at the upper end of

intelligence now grows obsolete. Yet they too feel the effects of its absence, though they have not skill to trace the trouble to its true source. All the other needs of the Church's hour, social or aesthetic, fall into insignificance before the Church's need of a positive, personal, powerful, and creative belief. It is the one thing imperative in a score to be desired.

Yet as soon as that is said, there is a chorus of angry resistance to the re-establishment on the Church of an Orthodoxy long outgrown and for ever now impossible. There is nothing more depressing than to hear such protests from the ministry itself. What is to be done with teachers who have learned so little in their plastic time as to learn no more after years of ministerial life than leaves such stale *clichés* still possible! They at least ought to rise above the common criers in the press and elsewhere, and to know what words like Orthodoxy or Positivity really should mean to instructed minds, and to minds especially that are saturated in New Testament thought and its rich continuity in history. That discernment of essential reality and expansive truth through the ages is the minister's stay and standard. It is the knowledge and the passion *before* the pulpit that give reality to the passion *in* it and save it from sentiment, melodrama, and lusty *blague*. The power in the pulpit always has its source outside the pulpit—a statement which I reinforce with the remark that the preacher will not be a failure, whether he be an idol or not, who thinks as much as he speaks, and prays as much as he preaches.

But such reflections will tempt some to say that the true object of ministerial training is to make preachers and pastors, and that for this purpose a good deal of instruction could be spared if only piety and sympathy were cherished as they should. And no doubt knowledge, or even thought, is too dearly bought at the cost of these. But men from certain sections of the mission field, for instance, who started and went so far equipped with but the pious passion for souls, come and ask me for some guidance in their belated

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study, telling me they are no longer competent to guide the churches they gathered, that their field threatens to revert to prairie again. The fact is that, even if a man equipped with due attainments gather a Church, to prevent labefaction it must grow in grace and the intelligent knowledge of Christ, and of what Christ is for the moral soul of God and man. And especially it must grow in that knowledge of Him which is relevant not simply to personal and domestic needs but to the intelligent *milieu* in which the members of the Church find themselves even in every local paper and every public meeting. If the pastor and teacher have no power to handle such things, and no ability to do more than show that he buys the minor books, reads the little paper, and knows the little mind, the influence of his piety alone will not do the work of Christian faith. His sympathy, losing in intelligence, will lose in value as time goes on. And a veil will gradually fall between him and his people, which a devout dogmatism can neither lift nor rend. He will cease to be the preacher he was, because he was never equipped to be more than an impressionist, because at the most he only learned to be a reader and to know the questions. He never learned to be a student and master the answers. He has not learned to go deeper than those who ask the questions did, because his reading was but part of the luxury of his life and no part of its toil; because his thought but occurred to him, and was not dug from a mine; because his truth cost him nothing but a little mental exposure, like a sensitive plate, in an easy-chair to the printed ray; because it therefore was not dear, as the things are dear that cost much to master, and powerful, as the things are that by our wrestling prevail; because he had learned the habit of valuing truth but for its effect, and often its first effect, of pursuing but its impressionist side; because he had not learned to love and worship it for beating himself small; and because, therefore, in the true spirit of a sect, if only he could move an audience, he had less concern for what could win the age. He had

but the tangential mind; he centralized, he bottomed, nothing. The result is that in due course he wears out; and he becomes a burden to the Church because he had no touch either with the great world facing it, or the last reality founding it. He did not even know his Bible, because he knew nothing else. This is not a plea for scholarship, but for the culture of that blended mind, heart, and conscience which is the keynote of apostolic faith, and which will not let us alone till it has fired our clay at the burning foundations of the moral world in the Cross of Christ with its revolution and regeneration of all natural things.

The plea for a radical and positive belief is no plea for a repristinated orthodoxy, as its critics ought to know. It urges the only way to escape from Orthodoxy without falling into spiritual vagrancy and mental anarchy. A man may be very positive and creative with a gospel that permits many reputed heresies as to the Bible, the Church, Christ, and the Eternal future. These views may be peripheral; but he stands in the dynamic centre of the grace that creates Bible, Church and salvation, as well as views about them. And to reach that position he will spare neither thought, prayer, nor humiliation. He will be thorough. He will sell all the pearls of old tradition for this pearl of infinite price, which has all Christian doctrine, and a new career for it, sleeping in its deep, rich, and creative heart.

Again, a positive belief is not only not Orthodoxy, but it is not the same as current pietism. It may consist with such pietism, which is largely a matter of temperament, being as natural to some as to others it is alien. But it does not run to coteries, introspection, or the 'language of Canaan'; though, if it do, it possesses the great antiseptic for such complaints. It gives power to the sweet, and to them that have no light it increases understanding.

Once more, a positive belief is not necessarily an ecclesiastical, nor has it a Church seal for an authority. It makes the Church rather than is made by it. Some who

are strongly positive of the current Church. And are anything but positive note and a Church among some whose on the other hand, not disown their obligation refuse to come into a

Nor is it always poetic, magnetic, or so fast spirituality, mysticism by grace of religious spirituality, of pious idiosyncrasy either of Christianity from the that blows through inspiration may be in a psychic dream inferior poetry, or it ten thousand and of Tom Jones. It the willing suspension a warm air. A positive it stakes the salvation finds the cure, crisis. If the first creation It can therefore be and charming. Rev will. Given or taken the world-consciousness the principle of all Humanity, is in the by the divine holiness moral world, and decisive thing for issue of God's own

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are strongly positive do not much court the accent of the current Church. And some who have that accent strong are anything but positive, so far as a gospel goes. A Church note and a Church spirit can be very strong and exclusive among some whose theology is Sadducean; and some, on the other hand, whose gospel is highly evangelical, do not disown their obligation and sympathy to circles that refuse to come into a Church pale.

Nor is it always positive to be religious, spiritual, mystic, magnetic, or so forth. Christianity is much more than spirituality, mysticism, or idealism. It is the moral rescue by grace of religion from religiosity, of faith from mere spirituality, of piety from temperament, of creed from the idiosyncrasy either of an individual or of an age. It saves Christianity from the aesthetic note and the poetic style that blows through an age; for what is often called inspiration may be no more than the result of 'sitting in a psychic draught.' Much religion is not faith but inferior poetry, or it is unawful fiction which sells by the ten thousand and is worse for the soul than the virility of *Tom Jones*. It is certainly not believing. It is but the willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, in a warm air. A positive faith is so far conservative that it stakes the salvation of history upon history. It therefore finds the core, crisis, and spring of eternal life in a divine action. If the first creation was by a word, the second was by an act. It can therefore be moral and powerful, and not simply true and charming. Revelation has its field in the conscience and will. Given or taken, it is a moral act; it is *the* act and crisis of the world-conscience. So that the root of all human morality, the principle of all historic ethic, the foundation of a new Humanity, is in the Cross of Christ and the action there by the divine holiness and upon it, the crisis there of the moral world, and therefore of the universe. *There* is the decisive thing for the soul and for the race, the one vital issue of God's conscience and man's; *there* is the node where

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Time and Eternity really intersect (if we may escape from the notion of mere duration in these words).

Here we come upon the element missing in so much of the preaching which is found both able and interesting, and which desires to be large and liberal. It is humane, sympathetic, *vif*, optimist, and in a sense Catholic; it touches us at many points, and we respond; it was its object that we should. But we go away and we know that at the depth and at the centre it does not touch us. It is as if we were translated into a land where every desire of the soul was satisfied, one here and another there, but we were left with the soul itself unsatisfied—unfed, unfathered, and even unreached. And the secret sorrow in the life of many an earnest preacher of the kind must surely be that he is too clear-eyed not to know this. The message (if message it be) may be interesting and able, but it has nothing powerful, creative, miraculous, revolutionary, crushing, and regenerating in it. And yet at last Christian faith is faith in a miracle of re-creation, or it is little. Preaching may be impressive without being regenerative. Some would harshly say that much of the popular preaching of the day is such. But the impression fades. The interest strongly roused, being but interest, wanes. The elation subsides, and we slip into the grey light of common day. We look back it may be to the hour of uplifting, but it is only as a happy memory, not as a fixture of choice, not as a permanent deflection, and a foundation of life or a replacement on rock. We look back as to a memorable play, or a moving symphony, or something equally aesthetic, not as to the crisis of our own life drama. We felt greatly, memorably, the better for it, but we did not live anew, we were not changed and re-settled after the inmost man. We were flushed on a mountain-top, but not glorified in heaven. There was a transfiguration of life, but not a resurrection from death. The grand moral lack of the soul and of society is a regenerating plant for forcing ethic into religion. We

need a religious atmosphere laden with the germs of a fundamental and immutable morality which kill the old man and his deeds by a new life in Christ. What we need is not the regularizing of our natural connexions but their revolution.

If the central issue of Christianity is in the Cross it is a moral issue. What we call the Passion was not merely passive; it was active, holy, and passionate far more. It was the passion of One with the prophet's insight of the righteousness of God and the King's function to establish it, the passion of one whose first charge was to set up and secure the holiness of God in face of man's sin. If the issue was more than moral it was because it was moral on the scale of eternity, moral with all the mystic air that makes the ethic of heaven—that makes holiness. Dealing radically with holiness it was the moral crisis of Eternity and the root principle of human society.

We do not school our conscience at such a Cross. We are afraid it would be a lapse into Orthodoxy and a preaching of the Atonement—a thing now too antiquated for public use. Our moral passion is all used up in the preaching of social righteousness, in proclaiming respect for the moral personality of man as man, and in the denunciation of abuses. Even the Church has but little left for the radical appropriation of our Redemption by our conscience, and the appreciation of its moral essence and its moral cost. Our faith becomes a matter of sympathy and sentiment. And so we have that blend so deadly, from Pharisaism down to Tammany, of a popular manner and a moral vacuity—a natural ethic of the interests and the egoisms with a sentimental religion. From which wars and rumours of wars—foreign war let into a background of civil discord on the like huge scale. There may be little to choose between the mere nationalism of the awful war that paralyses Europe, and the mere labourism of that which was (perhaps is) threatening to paralyse England by the greatest strike on record. As Industrialism comes to be in an age of competitive egoism,

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when the spiritual control has gone and the humane has not yet come, militarism is but commerce in mail, and commerce is but militarism in mufti. A catastrophe so wide as the present war is the result less of a political situation than of a moral situation common to all the nations. It means a day of judgement and the end of an age. It goes back in the last remove to a religious situation, one with more religion than God in it, and more God than Christ. The Kaiser's belief, for instance, is much more Jewish than Christian. He holds but to a Lord of Hosts, the tutelary of a conquering race.

It all means a paralysis of Christian Ethic through a demoralized Christian religion which is more concerned to consecrate a natural ethic than to create a new ethic from the fountain of the New Humanity in the Cross. The source of the one war is the same as the source of the other in principle. It is natural and egoist Ethic baptized with religion but not regenerated by sacrifice. And can we escape the divine judgement on the aggressor, be it capital or labour, which in this present war is falling on the whole naturalist competitive God-oblivious structure of society? So far from its destroying faith, faith might well shake if no such judgement came on a loveless world. What is to make religion the creator of righteousness and the moral revolutionist not of society but of human nature? What is to change its passion from success to service, from grasp to give? Nothing but the Cross of Christ coming home as the New Creator, not directly of the social order, but of the social will, which means the moral soul of each individual man.

Let us approach this whole matter on another tack. We have two kinds of admiration, one for the man that can do much better what we are always doing not so well, and one for the man who can do what we never can do or hope to do. We have an admiration for the teacher who is far beyond us, but who may hope in time to make us his own equal, rival, or even superior; and we have an admiration

for the man who has a divine something, a *mirum quid*, in him which parts us from him by a great gulf, and makes him do, with ease and by a touch, what is for ever beyond us and all our toil—a something which belongs much less to its possessor than the inferior gifts or aptitudes do. We have the man of talent, that is, and the man of genius, the man who spurs us as an ideal and the man who is a wholesome humiliation to us, the man who has more than most of a certain endowment and the man who has an endowment that puts him in another kind, who does not simply offer us our ideal, but comes with a *θεῖον*, and lays on us a spell of magic difference, as speech owns music, man woman, and woman man.

It is the latter kind of power that is the analogue in nature to the object of our worship in the spiritual realm. The genius is nature's prophet with a special inspiration, as the apostle is the prophet of grace. The reverence for genius is in the natural world the counterpart of the worship of Christ in the spiritual. Genius promises that which grace *is*. As the genius is to other men, so Christ is to all men, including the genius. He is as far above the spell genius lays upon us as that spell is above the talents we can toil to emulate. We do not compare here, we capitulate. We do not argue, we adore, and we come to rest. His region is creation; the other, inferior and prelusive, is evolution.

Having made this distinction, let us carry it forward on a wider scale. There is a way of regarding all religious history, and Christianity in particular, which views it as the superlative of that evolutionary process immanent in the race (though, perhaps, by God implanted there); and there is a way which views our spiritual history as made and moulded by the invasion of factors transcendent yet not alien, and creatively divine though not the less truly human. In the one case the movement is a process, which may or may not be moral—only civilized; in the other it is an act,

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which is moral or nothing. In the one, the prime interest is that excellent creature man, to whose expansive eminence of soul Christ gives vast aid and superlative effect; in the other the striking thing is not human excellence but human impotence, deepening to human guilt; and Christ brings not an ideal consummation of our best, but a moral Redemption of our worst. For the one view Christ is the greatest symbol, not to say agent, of the natural evolution of the spiritual; man comes to himself in Christ, the pride of the race. For the other view, the greatest thing in the world is not an evolution, but a miracle. It is the miracle of its salvation by a Christ whom we worship as all we could never be, and do not merely revere as the ideal bloom of all it is in us to be. The one view starts from man's fullness, the other from his need. And, while the former finds in Christ the incarnation of a humanity glorious amid all its defect, the other finds in Him the incarnation of God's grace to a race whose glory without Him is, in the end, hollow, doomed, and lost for lack of spiritual power to carry its natural success. For the one view our religious experiences are products of man's natural, though latent, destiny to rise to the higher triumphs of a soul of goodness in things evil; for the other, they are chiefly the result of a special visitation and creative action of God. For the one they mean a higher stage, for the other a new creation. For the one they arise, at most, out of a divine love, ample and imperturbable as the Zeus of Phidias, which our sin cannot agitate or deflect, and from which we are never severed, as our representative Christ never was; for the other, these experiences are such response to God's creative grace as takes in earnest the holiness of His love, and the tragedy of man's guilt. This view finds in the historic Christ something far more tense, real, dramatic and triumphant than a revelation of kindness unruffled and unweary. It finds there something that is more in the nature of history, will, action and agony, yea, an act and crisis within Eternity (not to say the divine

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Nature) itself, a new creation, more creative than the old, the last creative Act, of which the first creative Word was but the preamble, and which recovers us for living and mystic union with God in the moral crisis of the holy Christ crucified, risen, and royal for ever. In a word, the difference between the two views is that the one rests on the evolution, however divinely guided, of a spiritual nature indelible in us as children of God in a natural Fatherhood; the other rests, not on spiritual evolution and education, or coming to ourselves, but on spiritual miracle, absolute crisis, death turned life, new creation, and an eternal redemption which is worlds more than another step in the evolutionary series. We have there spiritual evolution, expanding under a natural but infinite fatherhood, and here moral miracle and re-birth, worked by the creative grace, and not the mere nursing kindness, of a Holy Father. We have there sympathetic intuition as the key of the world, here the soul's moral experience. In the Cross of the Holy Son, Jesus Christ, we are created anew, and our impotence is empowered to all the good works that we could dream for our torment but never reach for our rest. The heavenly thing was latent in Him and not in us.

These are the two issues—evolutionary idealism and new creation—which dispart to life and to death for the Church of the day. They should be clearly grasped, for they make the great watershed of Protestant Christianity—development or redemption. Their difference is more vital than that between Rome and Luther, more vital than any difference in the world, except that of evil and good; of which, indeed, they are the heavenly counterpart and eternal crisis. They differentiate the liberal Christianity and the positive, the Christ of excellence and the Christ of Grace.

It is the latter of these alternatives that alone does justice to the searching passion of veracity and reality, piercing indomitably to those moral issues that form the central tragedy of a tragic world and the crucial area for human destiny.

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Man turns on his conscience; and it is the conscience also that goes to the heart of Eternity, and is, therefore, the organ of the holy. For if morality is the nature of things, the crisis of things is man's relation to the Holy. It is in man's sin. For the classic consciences the certainty of salvation is inseparable from the sense of damnation. It is there, to that arena, that we are carried by the most unsparing spiritual veracity, by an insatiable moral realism, by the radical pertinacity of moral thought and the energy of moral imagination that *will* go to the root of things in a spiritual world, and rest only at the deep centre of a universal whole. It can rest but where Eternity rests—in the Being, Will, and Act of the Self-existent, Whose Being is Holiness and Whose Will is Grace, and Whose Act is the New Creation of the New Humanity. The theology of grace is the higher realism of that conscience which makes life real and growth radical.

So the whole idea of veracity deepens for us beyond mere truth-telling with our neighbour to a veracity with our self, and passes on from speaking the truth to thinking to a finish. We are driven to ask the relation of the self (when its speech has become as honest as you will) to reality. Let us talk less of conscious hypocrisy and think more of unconscious unreality. Is our most intimate experience contact with reality, or is it a mere symbol? Is the highest we feel or think to be God, really God, or may it be illusion?

To illustrate. In the realm of religious truth, we may consider that the kind of veracity represented by the great critical movement has about done its work and nears its term. There is, for instance, in Germany (if we can at present give our mind to Germany's better self and true world power), a standstill for the moment in the region of pure theology; which is explained by the fact that the critical stage is as I say, and that the theological mind is taking in the new situation and preening its wings for a new departure in the direction of depth. The deeper mind

would then take its flight from the sifted critical results, and view the old powers and truths in the new constellation of facts and ideas. We owe the modern passion for veracity largely to modern science. But the veracity of science (and especially critical science) casts us upon the veracity of philosophy; and, as philosophy is now in a new flux, through men like James, Windelband, Eucken, or Bergson, that is again driven to a veracity, deeper still, which adjusts all truth no longer to the metaphysic of substance but to the metaphysic of energy, to the last reality not of thought but of active life—an absolute personality as a holy and creative God. The veracity of range casts us upon the veracity of depth, and seeks the last depth in the abysses of action rather than the recesses of thought. The interest of truth (as it were), from being horizontal, grows vertical; and from vertical it grows energetic. The positivity of science passes upward into the positivity of reality; reality is action; and the last reality is dramatic and personal. Generalization gives place to intuition. And yet for contact with the great reality something more activist is needed than Bergsonian intuition, something more lifelike and dramatic, more of the nature of will and deed, more in the way of personal faith, and the metaphysic of that. A growing conviction arises, from the study of scientific method on the one hand and the modern sense of life on the other, that reality is beyond science, which can only handle the demeanour of reality, and not its purpose or its nature. Our attention, chained and disappointed in soul by the movement of order, is loosed and fascinated by the movement of shock. We ask what it is that is objective to our objective world, what is within the cosmos and makes its goal, to what reality we are brought by all the stages of illusion; and we wonder whether its nature is not given us by something which does not so much crown the sane procession of law, or dawn as a clear warm inner light, but rather arises from the collisions that seem to defy law, and from the

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tragedies that rend the soul itself, and shake and eclipse the light within. We have the collision of life with ethic, of reason with will, of morality with happiness, of the will to evil in us and the will to good. We have the deadly blow of the Cross on the normal world. The last veracity, far beyond the placidity of mere peaceful evolution, may well be a veracity of tragic crisis, of reconciliation, and not merely of expansion. For there is a flatness even about an expanding and evolutionary series, which levels life as fast as it enlarges it, and takes depth and power away, as it increases breadth. We lose in value what we gain in order. And the plan of creation may be found, by a due sense of *all* the facts of experience and insight, to be an active and personal purpose of redemption with which the whole world travails. The great metaphysic may be (as I say) a metaphysic of energy rather than substance, of will rather than of pure being, of soul rather than science, of personality rather than of reflection, of history and its action instead of thought and its repose—a metaphysic of society, of the Kingdom of God rather than of entity and essence. As against the plea that the notion of miracle unsolders all order, disturbs all harmony, destroys all forecast, and unsettles all life, my point is that miracle, spiritual or physical, comes nearer to the root of reality than Evolution, than Law, since it partakes of the nature of the incalculable and inexplicable act which founds the world—creation.

This movement of our interest cannot stop short of a fresh interpretation of what creation means or involves as its own consummation. It is even suggested whether a due and new philosophy of the act of creation must not have for its condition a new creation of the philosopher; whether religion does not autonomously grasp and hold a reality which for philosophy is but an asymptotic mirage; whether the nature of evolution is not travail rather than process, a new birth rather than a new stage; and whether regeneration is not the last goal, and therefore the master key,

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of the cosmos itself. representing the recent philosophy of religion, independent of a scientific metaphysic not of scientific substance but of power by a personality reduced and felt by life's experience by the method of the takes a creation to which perfects and creates be qualitative, and the process of the first creation in the supreme act of creation in *excellis*, and that it is something at stage of a process set plane? This last, the scene but the final our moral victory over our head of a lament of a procession. Whereas the closest, creating person can be. Our moral best is not crowning the free kind consummation of a process thesis' of powers, as phrase he means that by the synthesis of their resultant. What is a real novelty in the is in its nature created whose inner nature all which is, at its close, the first. It is with

of the cosmos itself. Men like Wendland and Troeltsch, representing the recent and foremost influences in the philosophy of religion, claim for religion its own metaphysic, independent of a scientific, but not in conflict with it—a metaphysic not of science but of faith—a metaphysic not of substance but of power, in which the leading part is played by a personality reducible to no logical or calculable scheme, and felt by life's experience and action rather than reached by the method of the schools. Is it absurd to think that it takes a creation to understand creation; that the change which perfects and crowns creation in holy personality must be qualitative, and therefore itself a creation; that it is the *process* of the first creation coming to its true self and secret in the supreme *act* of the second, in something which is creation *in excelsis*, and the only creation we can experience; that it is something which is more than the final automatic stage of a process set moving by an initial creation on one plane? This last, this automatism, would make the closing scene but the final step in a series of necessity; and our moral victory would then be only the self-assertion over our head of a latent spiritual nature, or the dénouement of a processional idea which carries us on its crest. Whereas the closest, the crucial relations of person to creating person can be no such evolved and coerced thing. Our moral best is not a great wave's crest. It is a victory crowning the free kind of energy peculiar to will. It is the consummation of a process of *creation*, of a 'creative synthesis' of powers, as Wundt calls it. By that suggestive phrase he means that in the world of life the new thing formed by the synthesis of converging forces or causes is more than their resultant. What causes the convergence of causes? There is a real novelty in the effect, a fresh contribution there, which is in its nature created and creative. The process is thus one whose inner nature all along is creation, fresh contribution, and which is, at its close, not less of a creation but more, than at the first. It is with a creation that the whole creation

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groans. Thus the grand reconciliation issuing in the new Humanity must be the supreme creation, the most excellent and characteristic act of a power whose native action is creation, and is more creative at the end than at the beginning. The beginning only exists because of the end, and exists to be glorified in the end. The world which begins in a creation must end in a creation, but in one far greater if evolution means progress at all. It is an evolution of creativeness. We were created to be recreated. The new creation is the destiny of the first. And it is the experience of the new creation crowning all that gives us any key to understand what creation everywhere is and intends, what it was at the first in a mystery, and aims to be in a manifestation.

In a world such as scientific thought presents to-day, whose atoms are nodules of power, whose reality is energy, and of which energy is the true substance, a distinct stream of that energy enters (according to even Ostwald) to raise the inorganic to the organic, with its power of evolution on the one hand, and on the other its metabolism, or change in the atomic parts. To make atoms behave in cells postulates a special and peculiar cause. In like manner, as life ascends to personality and society, a still newer stream of this energy flows in; and, most of all, as personality rises to spirituality, there is required such an agent and action as Christianity brings in the Holy Spirit, the new birth, *the* new creation. This is the last reality; and it casts its light back on all that went before. It illuminates its own wake, and lights up its origin. For its uses all things at bottom were and are created, and the course of their long stream does but roll to the top what was its deepest depth. The spiritual or regenerate person is the key of creation, as being its burthen and 'truth,' as being in the most direct contact and final relation with the ground of all things. The second birth is the final solution of the problem offered in the first. To understand creation requires a creative act. Why Nature was born is known only to the twice born soul.

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This new creation is an ethical matter, but much more. Regeneration is not merely sanctification. It is not merely ethical in its method. It is ethical, indeed, in its inmost nature, since it is a union with the holy ; but its method is not just the development of character by putting it upon action. It is an ethic not of spiritual self-culture but of divine redemption. It goes below sane character or conduct, behind ordered growth or process, to a birth, an irruption, which is the root of both. It is a transcendental ethic, and can never be reduced to an immanent. Order is kept up by the incessant initiatives and fresh departures of perpetual creation. It is a matter of personality, which is the only energy or initiative we really know at last. Though it is now well recognized that moral personality, as distinct from crude and elemental egoism, is a matter of life-discipline, growth, and acquirement, this very growth postulates an autonomy of the personality ; which again means an origin of its own, a new departure by a creative power acting on it directly at its incessant source. Such an autonomy is, like all the highest freedom, a divine creation. It implies a departure of a religious and super-rational kind, breaking free from the causal nexus that holds the natural world and much of the moral, and that controls the instinctive or natural man in so far as he is instinctive or cosmic and nothing more. It involves, therefore, our decisive release from the tyranny of science or its causality, on the one hand, but also, on the other, our release from an extreme social obsession by sympathy, which is apt to stifle the sense of personal responsibility and judgement before God, and so stunts the moral man. Moral culture, as the development of the real and moral personality, is something greater, deeper, more mysterious and divine, than the training of character. It is therefore a religious more even than an ethical matter. Yet it is the practice of action, and not mere behaviour, the practice not of the presence of God merely, but of His supreme divine Act. It is a thing of the living soul itself in its will and

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conscience, and not merely of its features. Great and mighty religion is the solution of an intolerable contradiction by a spark it strikes, rather than a light that dawns over it. And it arises in a creative act breaking in with a new nature on the instincts of nature (which carry us more than we carry them). It masters the necessities of this world with the miraculous power and command of another. Ripeness is not all. Our spiritual destiny is much more than the procession and expansion of a moral order to its flower and fruit. It has choice in it and responsible action. And it is impossible, amid the conditions of the world, without the invasive, creative, empowering act of a Creator whose chief creation is our freedom. This Eternal act (and not mere movement) is His vitality; which emerges for history in the Divine Person and holy work of Jesus Christ. This is, as Troeltsch says, 'an abruptly transcendental ethic,' an action far more revolutionary than evolutionary in its nature, and therefore more creative—though its introduction may be as imperceptible as the force that forms a curve. It makes men more thoroughly and radically than anything done in the first creation. It is a greater act of creation that Paul has to speak of than *Genesis*. It founds the real, personal life, individual or social, which is organic in itself, and whose organism 'is the life system of personality,' as Eucken calls it. And, with a creative selection, it builds up this life by a constant appropriation and assimilation of that in the natural and instinctive egoism which was getting most ripe for such distinction. Amid the vegetating vitality, the ferment, heat, and friction of the protoplast region of Humanity it starts a new process, a new departure (Wundt), which is not the action of previous process or causal entail, but of God's subtle will and choice. It attaches to that in the natural man which is most supernatural, most near the frontier of the Divine, and most of a prelude for the last creative action of God—it attaches to the moral will in its freedom, or at its height in the sense of the holy. The

natural exercise of that free will is not yet the new creation, but it is the postulate of it, its anticipation and point of entry. In this supremely new departure we are delivered from the bondage of the ethical, or rather from the ethical as a bondage, into the ethical as the *milieu* of the new power. We are saved from the love of law to the law of love. We are lifted even from the pressure of the ideal, or its mockery of us and our impotence, to its resurrection of us by the Spirit of Holiness into our distinction as sons of God. We rise, by a new spiritual upheaval, to a life that is ethical because it is so much more. It is 'beyond our good and evil'; it is the holy. And the old prophecy in our free-will then receives effect and fulfilment, it comes to its own, by the moral regeneration in evangelical faith. Psychological freedom becomes true moral freedom in obedience. Such Faith is a regeneration, it is not a mere condition of it. For it answers a God who is not only credible but creative, and creative above all of that true, free, and holy personality which is freedom set free, which is in command of the world, and which has the reversion of all things. The Christ, who stirs our faith, does it as no mere passing impressionist, but as the soul's new Creator for good and all, the source of that which only a Creator can produce—a new personality within the lines of the old, but with another centre and another note. This alone also survives, ruling the death and dust of the old assertive, egoistic, self-destructive self. Christ, is, indeed, our new spiritual world, 'become our universe that feels and knows.'

Hence it is no true worship of Christ to treat Him as differing from ourselves but in degree and not in kind. And it is below the authentic note of Christian faith to regard His person apart from the Cross, to treat Him as Jesus, the soul's dear friend, or as the gracious figure of certain artists and happy pietists. Christians are those in whom there works the power of that personality who, by His redemption, creates from creation. They carry the mark of

the second Creator, who works with a finer clay, but from a worse chaos than the first. They are made neither by Divine dignity alone, nor by kindness alone, but by the grace of the Father holy and royal in the Son—in the attracting and offending, the saving and judging Son, with all the strange, mastering, stern, melting, majestic, and adorable features of Eternity in His conquering face.

His redemption is the redemption of *the race*. And, being of Christian quality, being perfectly holy, it is the action of that of which the holy is but the moral name—it is final, eternal, and absolute. But the relation of the absolute to the world is that of Creator. Christ's Redemption is, therefore, God's second and supreme creation of the race into the communion and likeness, not simply of His freedom in Nature, and dominion over it, but of the ulterior liberty and final wealth of His personal holiness.

The Divine unity is the unity of an organism, not of a unit but of a whole, whose positive and creative energy is constantly subduing everything negative to itself. It is the unity of a life triumphing in a standing conflict and paradox. For without paradox and absurdity, no religion. It is no simple unity that we adore, either domestic or monistic. And the relation between the personal unity of Christ and the racial unity of man is of this dynamic kind. It does not merely confront us as a divine essence might. It masters us. It is a process of collision and conquest, which is the movement of a new creative act of Reconciliation between the Holy God and guilty man, an act, therefore, supremely moral. This is the final theodicy and harmony of good and evil, ineffable as a creation must be, and beyond all reason we can set forth. It takes effect in no adjusted system, not in a symmetrical scheme of eudemonist teleology, but in the communion of living persons. It proceeds in the communion of the holy and the sinful soul on the whole scale of God and man.

Such is a shadow of what is meant when we speak of the

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new creation as the necessary belief of a radical moral consciousness when it escapes from the platypod type of thought and works with the depth, height, and urgent passion of a penetrative spiritual imagination. It is the discovery of such ethical and ample veracity, such searching and sweeping intelligence, or else it is such stuff as dreams are made of. It is either fundamental or fantastic, according as it is our deep moral soul that gives the last anchorage for eternity, or as our ethic is the mere adjustment of the day's conduct in a way that seems to work out—we know not what.

When we come to view things thus, we may discover what the element was that we so vaguely missed at the outset in much of the able and interesting preaching of the time. For all its zest, it left us untouched where to be touched were to have loosed in us the spring of a new life-joy and a ruling power. What we need for our worship is the kind of power involved in a religion whose inmost nature of freedom and wonder is miracle, i.e. creation. The thing we missed is the one thing that creates worship as the crown of faith—the contact with a miraculous God, a holy and gracious God—a forgiving, regenerating, commanding, and pacifying God. No amount of delightful talk about the love of God can do for a sinful race the regenerating work of the miraculous grace of God; nor can the tender recreate and rule as the holy does. Though we need comfort much, we need command more. There are, perhaps, more moments in life when we need kindness; but, in our few great and decisive hours it is much more than kindness we need. 'With everlasting kindness—will I have mercy upon you.' It is more that must rule in a gospel which proposes to change the heart, reverse the will, and take command of the social conscience on the scale of a whole Humanity. A fatherhood without holy sovereignty is not adequate to the world's conscience; and it is in the holy grace of God that the sovereign authority lies of that Fatherhood whose

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grace goes deeper than all kindness to touch with moral tenderness and healing the sorest and deadliest regions of our guilty need. The world's need is far greater than its power and glory. And the supreme proof of Christ is His power to treat that need wherever it is felt with the unsparing keenness of the last moral veracity and the creative mercy of the last moral reality, whose judgement leaves nothing unsearched or unsounded, and, therefore, nothing unforgiven. It is His powerful patience to wait till a disillusioned world come to drink of Him, despairing of every other spring. Only the infinite power of a world Creator has at command the ageless patience of a world Redeemer.

P. T. FORSYTH.