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THE RELATION OF THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION TO THE TRUTH OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

THE vindication of the truth of religion, and the history of religion, are of course, in our ordinary way of thinking, two different things. The attempt to deal with the first of these I should prefer to call the philosophy of religion, which thus would be distinguished from religion as an historical science. It is, no doubt, possible to hold that truth has no meaning except in terms of historical survival; but this view I shall not stop to dispute. Assuming the ordinary distinction, I wish to consider one point merely—the question in what sense the validity of religion should be regarded as necessarily affected by an historical investigation into its origins.

There is a prevalent tendency of thought which would have a short answer to this question. If it can be shown that religion has had a certain natural history, that its varying expressions can be traced back to the workings of undisciplined minds in reaction upon the unknown forces of the world about them, that it has its root in ancestor worship, or ghost-seeing, or fetichism, then we need, it is held, no longer bother about its credibility. It is discredited at once by its ancestry. And there is, without doubt, some force in the contention. It is not common sense to say that the question of origin is wholly irrelevant. Any man will instinctively feel some loss of confidence, if he can be shown that a developed belief rests historically upon foundations which, in the light of present knowledge, are illusory, and due to erroneous assumptions. There is need, therefore, of examining a little more closely the nature of the connection, if the prejudice is to be overcome which recent anthropological investigations have undoubtedly created in many minds against the validity of the religious consciousness.

Whatever definition we may finally give to religion, there are two aspects which every religion would appear to possess. It is both a religious feeling and a theological formulation. The last phrase, in particular, may seem too ambitious a one to apply to many religions;

but it represents an essential fact. No religion, in other words, is mere blind feeling. It always attaches itself to some object, to some way of looking at the world which can be put in intellectual terms. On the other hand, no real religion is mere theology. It may sometimes approach to this. But when it does so, at least it will be found to have grown out of what at one time was an actual religious feeling. And if it ever does lose entirely the feeling attitude towards its doctrinal belief, we should be justified in denying that we have a religion any longer, and in calling it mere philosophy or dogma.

Now to put the matter briefly, the difficulty in reconciling the truth of religion with our knowledge of its historical development has been due in part to the identification of religion with its theology. On such a basis it is not difficult to find grounds for the conclusion that the error in religion so far outweighs the truth as practically to condemn it as an historical phenomenon. The task of finding a core of truth in early religions, or an identity of belief reaching through the course of development, which would justify a preceding stage to a later one, might well appear hopeless. And even if some slight and abstract remnant of identical belief should be discovered, we should not be much better off. Intellectually, one is justified not by the fact that he has chanced to hit upon a bit of truth, but by the correctness of the reasoning through which this has been reached. A truth based on bad arguments is as good as no truth at all. Now at least it can hardly be held that there is an element of truth in earlier forms of religion which men were logically justified in holding, on our present basis of knowledge, and for which they could bring reasons that would not to-day be considered wholly misleading and false. And so, while it might possibly be granted that religious belief, in its very latest and most highly rationalized form, is capable of being intellectually justified, this would at best only be done at the expense of its connection with historical religions. It would be a wholly new thing, with no roots in the past. As opposed to it all early religions would stand as merely false and mistaken; the validity of religion as an historical phenomenon would be denied. If, then, religion is to be judged by the truth and adequacy of its intellectual formulations, its beginnings are laid in error; and there is seemingly no basis for a progressive development which shall gradually attain to truth. The natural impression which the history of religion will make upon us is inconsistent with the supposition that it has real validity.

But now if we turn to the other side and find religion to consist, not first of all in a theology, but in a need of life or of feeling, the difficulty is sensibly weakened. From this standpoint what is back of religion is always a sort of practical and emotional attitude

towards the universe. This necessarily attempts to find for itself a foundation in belief. But the fact that a particular religious belief is, in the light of modern knowledge, untenable, does not at once discredit the whole religious phenomenon. That belief may be wholly inadequate. It may have been reached by intellectual processes which will not bear a moment's scrutiny. And yet it may stand for a real demand. Because religion does not go back to an intellectual process primarily, but to an emotional postulate, the fact that we find the belief false is still consistent with the possibility of there being an essential truth involved. As religion is not identical with the belief, the removal of it does not necessarily invalidate religion. This fundamental postulate may be justified, and may justify its rational foundation when that finally is attained, even though the first interpretation of it be quite mistaken. There is still the possibility of finding in the different and developing expressions of religion a core of truth. This core will not, indeed, give the final statement of religion; nor will it be represented by a definite belief or group of beliefs. It will rather be a working principle, essentially valid under all its varying and even contradictory expressions.

I can not attempt to justify here the validity of this conception of the grounds of belief. I shall only go on to consider a little more concretely the nature of historical religion, in order to show the relevancy of the statements just made. What, then, are the characteristics of the religious attitude? I think it will appear, in the first place, that religion involves a belief in some reality which is possessed of sufficient power or dignity to inspire respectful consideration, if not awe. This power may be regarded as personally wielded; this it commonly is. It may take a form which has to be put in terms of fate, or of logical necessity, like the God of Spinoza. But in any case the worshipper feels himself in the presence of that which is somehow at the center of things, at the helm, with a character such as the possession of power implies.

Furthermore, the being who is thus endowed always carries with it a certain flavor of mysteriousness—the basis of the religious awe. We may see power in objects, or in our fellow men; but that does not make our attitude towards it necessarily a religious one. If we can grasp it wholly, see into and around it, understand how it is exercised and what are its limits, we cease to stand in the religious relationship to it. The source of this opaqueness and mystery may be varying. It may be due to sheer ignorance at the one extreme, or to an awed sense of perfect goodness and holiness lying beyond our own powers of attainment. It includes the mystery of magic, and the mystery of godliness. But it has to be present, for one reason or another. And this variety of causes is one source of the differ-

ence in the objects to which religion attaches itself. The power which appeals to some men as mysterious is to others an open book. The priest who is in the secret of the thaumaturgy can scarcely be expected to have the religious feeling of him who worships from a distance. The modern man of science will find it difficult to put himself in the place of the uneducated devotee of the supernatural which he sees all about him in the world of nature. The frequenter of the court can hardly have much temptation to yield to the sense of that divinity which doth hedge a king, and which is indistinguishable at times from a genuinely religious spirit. The deification of rulers is, indeed, a frequent phenomenon of religion.

There is a third element of the religious consciousness which is implied in those already mentioned. This power would have no meaning for man, except as it stood in some practical relation to him. I am using 'practical' in the widest sense. But in this sense the statement is self-evident. We never should take the trouble to recognize that which had no possible bearing on the demands of our own nature. The further question is, therefore: How are we to state this relation? And in the most generalized form I think it would stand something in this way: God represents that power in the world, not wholly interpretable by us, and so striking us with some measure of awe, on whom depends such part of the attainment of the valuable ends of life as we feel lies outside the scope of our own unaided powers. God is the ultimate demand we make upon the universe, in the interests of our own complete living. He is the final conservation and guarantee of the values of life, in so far as they do not depend upon ourselves, or on those beings with which we consider ourselves so familiarly acquainted that we feel in a way master of their behavior, intellectually, if not practically.

I think that such a definition will include the great variety of expressions which the religious impulse has taken. For the chief occasion of this variety lies in the great range which the values of life cover. When man is simply on the plane of physical needs, then God necessarily takes the form of an instrument to be utilized in meeting the exigencies of the natural life. He is a fetish, a helper or protector to whom to appeal, a being whom magic can mysteriously summon to the worshipper's aid, and whose mysterious powers may be expected to work almost any needed miracle. Or, on the other hand, he may arouse primarily the emotion of fear, because the good of life calls also for an avoidance of surrounding dangers; and the more these dangers press, the more man is conscious of the forces which lie beyond his direct control, and of the need of warding off their power for harm. And since the demands of the physical life are always with us, it is not strange that throughout

the history of religion the thought of God as the dispenser of temporal blessings, or as a possible source of evils to be propitiated and his wrath averted, should have maintained itself persistently.

But as man rises out of the limitations of his more primitive ends, other values more and more become significant for determining the conception of God. In particular do ethical and social values begin to stand as the fundamental ones. These demands, again, take many different forms, and are interpreted in many different ways. To the one whose interests are in the realm of practical social good, and who has no metaphysical turn of mind, humanity may take the place of God, and become a religion. To another, personal relationships seem most significant, and personality is called for as an essential element in his conception. To the mystical temperament which is impressed most profoundly with the impermanence of the finite and the vanity of earthly things, God means the negation of all that is particular and that can be put in terms of human thought, the guarantee of the eternal peace of nothingness. Or, again, the esthetic value may rule, as in the poetic glorification of nature and beauty, which is essentially religious in its character. Or, still again, an absolute of logic may be the ground of all things, where zeal for truth represents the great value of life.

The philosophical justification of religion has, therefore, a distinct and an entirely justifiable task. Recognizing that all historical religious beliefs are the outcome of practical and emotional needs, it has to determine what conceptions will most adequately satisfy the demands of life, and the facts of experience, in their completeness. It can readily admit that religion has had numerous expressions which men have outgrown. Its own work is not in the least invalidated by the intellectual blunders which have grown up in the history of religious thought. It will not, indeed, attempt to manufacture a new religion, independent of the religious experience of the race. But the way in which, most fundamentally, it will base itself upon this experience, will be in connection with the revelation which it affords of what the real needs of man's life are. It is the fault of rationalism in religion, not so much that it reconstructs religious beliefs, as that it reconstructs them without due reference to these fundamental needs. A philosophy of religion will attempt to clear up the inconsistencies in the way in which these postulates have been interpreted, rather than reject the postulates themselves, in the interests of a purely abstract intellectual statement. It will, indeed, suspect that, in the higher and more developed religions, the intellectual form is not separable in any thorough-going way from the religious need lying back of it. It will naturally expect to find the development of religion more and more in the direction of a substan-

tial truth of doctrine. But the truth which it tries to justify will be an inclusive truth, not any irreducible minimum of agreement.

The science of religion, on the other hand, has no necessary connection with the truth of the beliefs which it studies. It will be concerned simply, on the basis of this same general conception of the religious phenomenon, to investigate the details of its varying expression. It will hardly attempt the impossible task of reducing all religion to a single primitive type. As men have many wants, and many ways of interpreting each of them, it is to be expected that, under different conditions, there will be different religious expressions. Fetichism, ancestor worship, nature worship and many other forms, are to be recognized, some of them perhaps equally primitive. The history of religion will find its task in showing under what conditions these originated—what social and individual interests they served, and what in the environment led to the special form they assumed. And it can do so, unhampered by the question whether or not religion will be discredited by its results. For religion is simply the recognition that life has values, and the demand that the world shall be so conceived as to give a basis and guarantee for these values. Such a postulate can be disputed only by a philosophy, not by a history of religion. That the earlier forms to which the postulate gives rise are inadequate, no more discredits the postulate itself, than the vagaries of alchemy discredit the science of chemistry, and the postulate of order and law in nature.

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THE CONCEPT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

THERE is, I believe, no term in our philosophical vocabulary about which hovers more persistent ambiguity than about the term 'consciousness'; and there is no one of our concepts leading so inevitably and often to *petitio principii* in argument as that for which this term stands.

I. The common-sense view of consciousness is distinctively from a third person's standpoint. It is unreflective and unanalytical,—as it should be. We learn in our physiologies that the brain is the 'seat' of consciousness, and taking this figure to mean that the mind is somehow enclosed within the brain, we accept the solution as sufficient unto our need. If we stop to think what consciousness itself may be like, we are apt to imagine a pallid vapor hovering as a halo about the head or permeating the pores of the brain. If we enquire more narrowly concerning the nature of its content, we dream vaguely of thoughts and feelings and diaphanous images, and