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fessor Buckham himself appears to feel that the future progress of theology will be in the main continuous with the work of these men. While the next generation of theologians will undoubtedly gain great inspiration from their courage and their human sympathies, they are likely also to be impressed with the fact of certain assumptions which should be more critically investigated.

The book is written partly in the form of biographies and partly in the form of theological interpretation. The great advantage of this presentation is that it permits the creative personalities of these leaders of thought to stand forth, and we thus see the making of theology in the actual life of men instead of having it discussed in terms of the development of ideas. Moreover, while all of these men had to face distrust and sometimes vigorous opposition, yet they continued honored and trusted leaders in the denomination. This is evidently due to the fact that their primary interest was in the promotion of genuine religion rather than in the indifferent discussion of theological questions. The practical conclusion to be drawn is that a liberalism which maintains social sympathy with the religious aims of the church will be permitted actively to make its contribution. It is only a liberalism which becomes indifferent to religious motives which is excluded from a place in the life of the church.

In a sense this book is a contribution to the celebration of the Pilgrim Tercentenary. These leaders of Congregational thought are the spiritual descendants of the Pilgrims. Professor Buckham has rendered a valuable service in furnishing so appreciative an interpretation of the expression of that Pilgrim spirit in the religious life and thinking in the generation immediately behind us.

GERALD BIRNEY SMITH

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE PROBLEM OF GOD

The life of modern man constantly expands with new interests, new hopes, new powers, and his vital religion, which embodies all of these things, tends ever to flow away from the dogmas of a more restricted past. One by one the ideas of the old Christian creeds have been revitalized or discarded. For this generation God has become a problem, and the task of the apologists is made more difficult through the thrusting of the fact of evil into the agonized consciousness of man during these last few pathetic years. Professor Sorley's book¹ must be counted as

¹ *Moral Values and the Idea of God*. By W. R. Sorley. New York: Putnam, 1919. xix+534 pages. \$5.00.

an *apologia* but of the better kind. His is an argument in clear, forthright English with no metaphysical fog to cover failure in thought. He manifestly desires to come to terms with reality as it is given in experience not to interpret experience in accordance with preconceived ideas of reality. As against philosophic naturalism he demands that all the facts be considered, especially moral facts. As against absolute idealism and all monisms he insists upon the reality of purpose and freedom in the activities and struggles of man. The argument begins from an empirical basis. The problem is not, Does God exist? but, How is the universe to be understood and interpreted? Given a world in which moral values have a place, what estimate may we make of the nature of reality?

By the following pathway, then, we come to God. Persons are part of the order of existence. Ethical ideas are facts of personal consciousness and are realized through the will and in the character of persons. They have therefore a place in existent reality. Hence a theory of the universe cannot be complete which ignores their existence as facts and forces. Moreover, these ethical ideas claim objective validity. But this validity differs from the validity of the laws of nature in that ideal values are not actualized at any specific time in existing persons. The ideal moral values are imperative for man whether or not he realizes them or accepts them or even is conscious of them. They may never find complete realization in time yet they are the limit toward which the nature of persons points. They are valid *of* reality and belong to the sum total of reality as an existing system. Ultimate reality must include the ideal moral order. This gives the setting for the moral argument for God's existence. "Persons are conscious of values and of an ideal of goodness which they recognize as having undoubted authority for the direction of their activity; the validity of these values or laws, or of this ideal, however, does not depend upon their recognition: it is objective and eternal: and how could this eternal validity stand alone, not embodied in matter and neither seen nor realized by finite minds unless there were an Eternal Mind whose thought and will are therein expressed? God must therefore exist and his nature must be goodness." (pp. 352-53).

But the world presents a difficulty. How are we to see any harmony between the natural order and the moral order? In the actual world there is evil, imperfection, suffering. The world as a causal system seems indifferent to a standard of good and evil. Moreover, persons in whom moral values must be realized, make painfully slow progress and realize goodness very imperfectly. This ancient problem of evil

the author faces with heroic postulates. He answers, first, that moral values can only be realized by free beings and freedom entails the possibility of failure and evil; secondly, that an imperfect world is necessary for the growth and training of moral beings. The world must be thought of as a purposive system. We must postulate purpose in the world as well as freedom in man. "The order of nature, therefore, intends a result which is not found at any particular stage in the process of existence. It requires an idea of the process as a whole and of the moral order to which it is being made subservient. It means therefore intelligence and the will to good as well as the ultimate source of power. In this way the recognition of the moral order and of its relation to nature and man involves the acknowledgment of the Supreme Mind or God as the ground of reality" (pp. 513-14).

The chasm in this argument yawns for the empiricist at the point where an eternal moral goodness of objective validity is assumed. For him moral values and ideals exist nowhere but in persons, find their place in reality in persons, change with persons, and beyond the purposive strivings of living beings they have no status. To speak of an eternal moral order of which man slowly becomes conscious is to assume the very thing he finds it impossible to demonstrate. The case is made more hopeless by the assumption of purpose in the natural order and the justification of evil in order that this eternal goodness may be realized by free spirits. Is there any purpose until living beings bring it into existence? To think of the world-process as the program of a God for the production of free moral agents is to put a heavy discount on his goodness and intelligence for in that program millions of living beings are subjected to the position of mere means, are given over to merciless pain and the long drama becomes a nightmare from the human standpoint. Since it is all to end, at last, in the production of perfect spirits who, like God, will will only the good, the question is inevitable. If the character and not the struggle is the goal would a perfect God be so disdainful of his own automatic will to goodness as to refuse to create the perfect spirits at the beginning? Moreover, for the wreckage as well as for the perfect spirits another assumption is necessary in the argument—immortality of personal existence. And even this seems to provide no place in the cosmic program for the idiot. He surely is a divine blunder.

But suppose one were not so impressed with the sacrosanct character of the God-idea of Graeco-Christian philosophy, were even willing to see that idea as a faulty attempt to envisage reality, then from Professor Sorley's starting-point there might be a path to another goal. One who

has "folded the silken wings" of metaphysics and given up his delight in absolutes might find still a ground for hope in the existence of moral values in a world of free, living beings. He might seek the value of God in the future rather than the existence of God at the beginning. In persons this cosmic process has become moral and is becoming increasingly intelligent and purposive. This is their achievement in the interest of their larger life. Evil then is reduced to that part of the natural world and of human social relationships not yet brought into subjection to the intelligence and purposes of man. With larger vision man might even find a religious enthusiasm in the challenge of the evil of the world as a task for the growing powers of intelligent purposive life, might accept the call to devotion and self-sacrifice in the co-operative effort of man to put purpose into the world, to organize cosmic life, and to construct a world social mind embodied in institutions which will guarantee the opportunity of the complete life to all men. So at last the value man has sought in the idea of God through the ages might be achieved. But this means a surrender of the quest for ultimate origins, a break with the old supernaturalism and a radically new idea of the cosmic support of men.

A. EUSTACE HAYDON

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO