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No man can interpret for another in what ways this assurance will come to him. There are certain well-defined ways—the sense of peace, the assurance of forgiveness, bubbling up sometimes like a fountain in tears of thankfulness. Varied experiences of God come through the changing weather of life.

There is no other way of certainty except what comes through faith. We 'could wish for more,' like Dr. Johnson. But no more comes, except what faith brings. If more were given us, we would lose that struggle of faith which keeps us alive. All living faith is something for which we have to do battle with what we call the facts of life. And the certainty of immortality is one we have to live for and may have to fight for. It is a living certainty which grows bit by bit and changes its face and sometimes dies, only to be reborn if we keep on fighting for it, trusting it; for 'faith,' says Chesterton, 'is the perpetually defeated thing that survives all its conquerors.'[1]

[1] J. Reid, *The Victory of God*, 86.

Recent Foreign Theology.

PROFESSOR WOBBERMIN advances steadily on his way; this is vol. iii. of his solid and most readable Systematic Theology.[1] It is devoted, as its title indicates, to two great problems: first, What *is* Christianity? and second, Is Christianity so conceived true and valid? In the discussion of these vast issues the writer sweeps over a wide range and conducts us with expert skill through most of the living questions of present-day divinity.

In accordance with his religio-psychological method, Wobbermin is at every point keen to press back behind the varied forms which a religious idea may take, to the fundamental conviction from which it springs. He would rightly have us peel off the temporally conditioned vestures an idea may assume, as a result of quasi-scientific interest or particular historical situations, so as to reach the deepest motives of living piety. True thinking about religion is that which begins with personal experience, launches out into the fruitful deeps of fact, and returns to shore again, there to enrich the original datum with the new gains of the voyage. He has much that is suggestive to say, at many points, of this 'religio-psychological circle.'

Wobbermin's own interpretation is usually set out against the foil of some recent notable theory. Thus his contention that primitive Christianity was uncompromisingly monotheistic is evolved in face of Bousset's hypothesis that the worship of Jesus as Lord first began in Gentile communities; he points out in effect that Jesus is Lord for the simple reason that He is Mediator, and that it is not worship that creates a conviction, but rather conviction that creates worship. Bousset has been too much preoccupied with the imaginative forms of cultus, and not enough with the basal attitude that inspires them. His position could only be defended if there were any trace in the New Testament of an estimate of Jesus which made Him either a substitute for, or a rival of, God.

The work before us also contains much sound thinking on the Trinitarian monotheism which Wobbermin finds to be native to apostolic religion. 'Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things'—this unchanging persuasion we meet at every turn. The traditional doctrine of the Trinity is criticised, though with a sound appreciation of its ontological quality. The realities given to faith in Jesus and in the new life generated by the Spirit are rooted in God's eternal being.

In chapter five Wobbermin recurs to a subject he had previously handled, and strives to work out the common faith or creed shared in by Catholicism and Protestantism. Here he takes the Nicene Creed (in its later form) as text, and comments on its details, laying them alongside of the Apostles' Creed. He concludes *inter alia* that the empty grave is not of ecumenical status, though a true Resurrection is; Wobbermin holds to the theory of 'objective visions,' although he dislikes the phrase. The question might be raised whether 'ecumenical' in such a context does not mean simply what this or that individual author accepts, and whether the whole problem is really not one for which it is impossible to find standards of judgment which are sufficiently objective.

[1] *Wesen und Wahrheit des Christentums.* Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1925. M.16.20.

Other matters of first-rank importance to be debated are Christianity and Ethics, a section leading up to a rewarding discussion of grace and freedom; the Christian faith in Creation; the meaning of providence and miracle, and their interrelations. In this last instance, we feel that Wobbermin's exclusion of miracle from the physical sphere has both faith and philosophy against it. The last chapter deals with the absoluteness of Christianity. Wobbermin here puts forward the interesting thesis that the question of the absoluteness is one which may legitimately be raised by scientific reflection; it is not simply a theme for faith. For we can ask: Supposing a more perfect religion were to appear, what would it have to do and be in order to justify its claim to superiority? He ends on the note that Christianity *is* unsurpassable; no higher religion is thinkable. Agreeing with his verdict on the faith by which we have been saved, we may yet feel a doubt regarding his arguments. There is no getting over the fact that in this sphere we have finally to *vote*, as for life and death. We know by faith that there can be nothing higher than personal fellowship with God through Christ. But could we *prove* this to an Indian thinker who held that personality is an evil?

The lucidity of Wobbermin's writing is not one of its least merits. No one need be in the least doubt as to his meaning. This is an inestimable benefit for the reader who wishes to take full advantage of a most erudite and important work.

The recent uprising of definite Calvinism in Continental theology is one of the most interesting and suggestive phenomena of our day. Barth of Göttingen and E. Brunner of Zürich are perhaps the best known leaders of the movement. A generation rightly alarmed by the horrors of war may well feel that the only hope for this misguided world of ours lies in the fact that over all its follies and passions there arches the sovereignty of God. P. Brunner's study of Faith in Calvin's thought is a timely contribution.[1] It is admirably written, with a lucidity not unworthy of Calvin's own. This brief work, though unpretentious, is in fact a useful and trustworthy survey of the Reformer's theology, and is based on his Commentaries equally with his *Institutio*. It is fully documented, and the translations of the Latin provided in the notes can be depended on.

Brunner points out that Calvin is stronger in marking the negative aspects of faith—what faith is not, or rejects—than the positive. He has little to say about faith as an attitude of the soul, and is not interested in the psychology of religion; all his attention is given to the object of faith, namely, God as self-revealed in His Word. Ritschl has been blamed for making Christ the sole source of our genuinely religious knowledge of God, but Calvin agrees with him. Outside Christ is mere error and sin—illusion, not reality. He complains that Catholic theologians neglect Christ as the only true revealer. How could we know God by ourselves, who are like worms creeping over the earth, and whose sin fills us with fear? God speaks indubitably in His Word, but we cannot prove this by reasoning; it is the Spirit that gives certainty. Faith is really knowledge, of its own type; therefore Calvin has no patience with the Catholic notion of *fides implicita*, whereby a man says: I believe what the Church believes, though what that may be I may not know. This, he says excellently, is but 'ignorance tempered with humility,' and has no saving power. We are shown how large a place is taken in Calvin's mind by 'Holy fear,' and how saturated with eschatology all is.

We should have welcomed a modicum of criticism. Thus we should like to know how far Calvin tends to cancel his insistence on the great revelation in Christ by his constant emphasis on those aspects of God which are still hidden from us. What if the unknown be incongruous with the known, so that we lose the Fatherhood all over again?

We have received two papers by Professor Brunner of Zürich[2]—one of them his Inaugural—written in the provocative and stimulating tone to which he has accustomed us. In him and others of his group the spirit of Kierkegaard has risen again. Very strong things are said about the conflict that *must* wage between theologian and philosopher; in the main they are true and good for both sides to hear. Philosophy never says to a man: 'Face the judgment of God upon your life,' but Christianity ought to be saying that all the time. There is a more than Ritschlian stress on Christ as the only

[1] *Vom Glauben bei Calvin.* Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1925. Pp. 165. M.5.40.

[2] *Philosophie und Offenbarung.* J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1925. Pp. 52. M.1.50.

revelation, and such a revelation as comes home to us as sheer miracle. It eventually turns out that what theology is opposed to is not so much reason in itself, as reason trespassing where it has no rights. Brunner observes with point that a dash of pride in a philosopher is quite in place, for he represents human intelligence at its full stride, carrying on with confidence and verve. But pride in a theologian is ludicrous; it is a contradiction in terms; a man can only theologize properly if he has learned to tremble at the Word of God.

There are some questions on which Brunner has not yet clarified his thinking, able as he is. He scarcely explains why we believe one thing to be revelation rather than another; and when he tells us, truly enough, that faith affirms paradoxes, he offers no criterion to decide why it is only some paradoxes that are affirmed. We don't believe *every* paradox: not even Mr. Chesterton does. And further, he still leaves us uncertain what the relation is between the Word of God, on which he speaks so impressively, and Jesus Christ. Language now and then seems unequal to the strain of formulating Brunner's message. But we are debtors to a man who reminds us that theology goes bad when it begins to worship its own technique.

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A Promise of Spring.

BY THE REVEREND A. J. GOSSIP, M.A., ABERDEEN.

'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?'—Jn $11^{25.\ 26}$.

THIS is a passage which our minds associate, almost instinctively, with those solemn days when there was a hush and eerie stillness in the house, a loneliness and aching in the heart, with those dread moments when even the dear dust to which we clung had to be taken from us; and to poor souls, sitting tense, and gathering themselves together to see it through with honour, there came these healing words, like a cool hand laid on a hot and throbbing forehead. And, with that, somehow the wild surge and heaving of our unquiet spirits grew greatly calmer; a splendid hope, far off but really there, sprang up into being and burned steadily even in these fierce gusts. It was not over then, and what we loved had not gone out, but somewhere was still real as ever. And one day, please God, we should find and have and keep our own once more.

Without question, that is, of course, the original setting and final meaning of it all. Only, why should we limit it to that? Christ Himself never did. He had many metaphors to bring home to us something of the difference He makes, but this was His favourite which He often used. He drew many vivid pictures of it, trying now this, and now that—that peasant on his wind-swept mountain croft, gazing astounded at the glint and glitter of the gold he has unearthed, for ever done with poverty, he who had always been so very poor!—that foolish laddie safely home again, with more than his best dreams come really true; and ah! how good it is to be clean again from the filth round the swine-troughs yonder, no longer poor, starved, miserable, unregarded, but shut into an atmosphere of eager kindness, where love runs to meet him, delighting to heap up its best on his unworthiness, letting him see how much it means to it to have him really home—wonderful pictures. And yet, while He fingers this, and suggests that, always He turns back to this other, as being closest to the truth. Let Me have entrance into any life, He claims, the bleakest, barest, dullest, where everything looks withered and dry and wilted, and there is never a sound of running water anywhere, nothing but heat and glare and dust and deadness, and with My entrance spring has come, and everywhere there are life, greenness, colour; hopes, dead so long you had forgotten all about them, will emerge out of their deep, ancient graves; hearts, that had grown beaten and soured and cynical and worldly wise, will become young and like a child's again, with the old wonder, and the old enthusiasm, and the old daring and implicit faith. There will be life, where there is no life; and a resurrection where that seems impossible; and in yet another soul it will all have come true.