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THE CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW

ITS RATIONAL ASPECTS

I

IN some of our published writings we have tried to uphold what we call "The Christian World View". In this article we desire to put our arguments in somewhat different form, order and verbiage. The term "World View" agrees quite well, we think, with the German terms, *Weltanschauung* and *Weltansicht*. At all events, we know of no better English mode of expression than the one designated. In this sense we shall use it in this article. Dr. James Orr put it more fully by calling it "The Christian View of God and the World".

We have ventured to call the Christian world view a philosophy. We might risk trying to give a somewhat jocose definition of human philosophy by saying, "It is a futile attempt to explain the inexplicable." However, to be serious, we take it that any philosophy that is worth while is a sincere effort to find an adequate cause and explanation of all the varied phenomena of this vast and diversified universe, from those of the lowest to those of the highest qualitative value. We hold that the Christian world view is such a philosophy. Dr. Alfred Weber defines philosophy as "an attempt at a universal explanation of things". Again he says that it is an endeavour "to explain the world as a whole . . . by the cause of the causes, or the first cause". Thus our own definition seems to be in good company.

However, we must hasten to add that the Christian world view is not a humanly invented philosophy. No; it is a divinely revealed system of truth; and the revelation of it is given in the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Christianity is not a human discovery; it is a divine disclosure. The Bible reveals the true religion and the true philosophy. As a divinely given religion, it is for everybody, the learned and the unlearned alike. As a divinely revealed philosophy, it is for thinkers who desire to give a reason for the hope that is in them. A *naive* faith is the condition of salvation for everybody; a

discursive faith seeks to set forth the *rationale* of the Christian view of the cosmos, its existence, purpose and destiny.

There is no call for pitting reason against faith or faith against reason. Of course, there is much false reasoning in the world ; but there are also much false faith and blind credulity. Both faith and reason are faculties of the human mind, and it stands to reason that both are to be used, each for its own purpose. We must not try to make reason do what faith is intended to do, nor the reverse. While faith is often commanded in the Holy Scriptures, reason is also frequently commended and appealed to. See 1 Sam. xii. 7 ; Isa. i. 18 ; xli. 20 ; Acts xvii. 2 ; xviii. 4, 19 ; xxiv. 25 ; 1 Pet. iii. 15. Our position is that, since the Christian world view has been revealed in the Bible, it can be shown to be " sweetly reasonable ".

Before going further, we must give some attention to the principle of causality. Simply stated, it is this : Every effect or event must have an adequate cause. That fact is an axiom to the human mind. It is an axiom, too, that can be demonstrated empirically. For example, you can move the book lying on your desk. Why ? Because there is an adequate cause in the strength of your arm moved and controlled by your will. The book surely would not have moved if an adequate cause had not been behind it. But suppose you try to push down a solid wall. You note it will not budge. Why ? The force employed is not sufficient.

We are aware that David Hume, the sceptic, tried to nullify the principle of causality by his speculations. His purpose was to show that what men call cause and effect are nothing more than cases of antecedent and consequent. He held that we cannot see the connection—the *nexus*—between what we call the cause and the effect ; therefore we cannot be sure that there is such a causal connection.

But the human mind readily—one might well say, intuitively—distinguishes between mere antecedent and consequent and real cause and effect. For example, day follows night on our globe ; but no one thinks for a moment that the night is the cause of the day. Immediately we look for some real cause to account for both day and night and their continual succession ; and when we search for the cause in a scientific way, we find it in the relative positions of the earth and the sun and the diurnal revolution of our globe on its axis. Take another case : When

you note that the sun warms the earth, you realize instinctively that you are tracing a causal relationship. You know that if the sun were not there in the heavens, or if it were a cold body instead of a hot one, the earth would not be warmed. All science and philosophy are based on this principle of causality. The discovery of Neptune—a story that is familiar to us all—illustrates this fundamental principle.

Nor does the fact that the cause of a particular event may be quite complicated invalidate the law of cause and effect. We still maintain that the human mind is so constituted by its Maker that it must accept the axiomatic truth. If we understand some of our best scientists correctly, they find, in their ingenious analyses of the action of electrons and atoms, that they cannot adequately explain it save by positing back of it both will and intelligence. One of the foremost of these scientists holds that the power back of the cosmos must be an all-wise and all-powerful Mechanist ; another holds that the same power must be a profound Mathematician. All these terms connote personality, and personality in turn connotes God.

Now, it is on this fundamental principle of causality that the Christian world view is based. What is that view in its ultimate essence ? It is termed the view of Christian theism. First of all, the Christian Scriptures posit God back of and in the universe. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth", is the initial statement of the Bible. Is it not remarkable that this old Book should, in its very first verses, assert so lucidly and simply the only adequate explanation of the existence and constitution of this vast cosmos ?

II

It is freely and frankly admitted that the Bible does not employ the so-called "theistic arguments". But we hold that, when they are properly presented, they confirm the Biblical doctrine of theism. And this we believe in spite of Kant's effort, in his *Critique of the Pure Reason*, to demolish them. In his *Critique of the Practical Reason* he reasoned that the presence of the moral law and the fact of man's conscience pointed back to God, employing the same arguments that can be used effectively to make the other arguments convincing. We maintain that teleology in the cosmos proves just as effectively the existence of God as does the argument based on morality.

But we need not repeat the well known theistic arguments. Along just one line of thought do we desire to present a fundamental reason for belief in God. It may be stated in this way: There is something now; therefore there must have always been something. If there ever was a time when there was nothing, nothing could have ever been; nothing could have ever come into existence. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.* There must, therefore, be an ultimate and eternal Reality.

Let us reason further. What must be the character of that eternal Subsistence? It—no! no! HE—must be a Person—that is, God. Do you ask why? Because there are self-conscious persons in the cosmos now, myriads of them. And, as Hermann Lotze, the German scientist and philosopher, showed long ago, personality can come only from personality. The only thinkable adequate cause for sentient and self-conscious personalities like ourselves is a creative Personality. Ought not logical minds to accept the only reasonable solution of the problem of the origin of human personalities? But we will return to this part of our thesis further on.

Thus it would seem that fundamental reasoning confirms the Christian Theistic World View.¹ We do not mean to say that this rational process will give a man absolute assurance of the existence of God. It certainly proves, however, that theism is the only adequate and reasonable view; and that is surely something gained that is worth while. In order to receive absolute certitude of God's existence, love, grace and Fatherhood, one must come to Christ, and accept Him as Saviour and Lord by faith; for He said: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." The practical use of reason is that, like kindness and persuasion, it may sometimes lead the unregenerate man to bow the knee to Jesus Christ, and thus receive by the impact of the Holy Spirit the absolute assurance of God's reality and redeeming love.

Going back now to our original proposition, we contend that the Christian world view is the only adequate philosophy. And by all counts, it *is* adequate. By means of this view we can explain the origin and continued existence of all the *noumena*

¹ It is idle to raise the age-old question, "Who made God?" as John Stuart Mill and his father did in their day, and as Bertrand Russell has done in recent years. The question involves a contradiction, for if some other being made the being you call God, the latter would not be God. Thus you would have an unending series hanging on nothing—which is an absurdity. Reason teaches, we repeat, that, since, there is something now, there must be an eternal, infinite, uncreated Reality, and that that eternal Reality must be God.

and their varied *phenomena* in the universe. Let us see if this is not so.

You can thus account for the origin of matter, because a God of infinite wisdom and power, such as the Bible displays, could create it *ex nihilo*. There is nothing impossible with God. You can thus account for the existence of force or energy, because God is all-powerful, and certainly could create secondary forces of all kinds, if He desired to do so. You can account for the origin of motion. Science teaches that all things are in motion, not only the suns, stars and planets, but also the electrons and protons. But mind, with its power of volition, is the only entity of which we know anything that can originate motion. You can perform the experiment for yourself in many ways. So God, being infinite Mind or Spirit, could, by the self-determination and self-action of His will, have set all the varied entities of the universe in motion. Thus the Christian world view adequately accounts for the existence of matter, force and motion in the mechanistic part of the cosmos.

III

But we find something more than matter and mechanism in the world; we find life. We mean physical life—living organisms. How shall we account for the origin of living matter? Surely living matter could not evolve from non-living matter. We appeal to the foremost biologists and cytologists of the day—Vernon Kellogg, J. Arthur Thomson, E. C. Wilson, Lorande L. Woodruff, all of whom endorse the Latin adage: *Omne vivum ex vivo*—life comes only from antecedent life. Then whence came the primeval cell or germ-plasm? The cell, which is the unit of life, is a very complex physical and chemical organism, and can function only when it is a complete and matured entity; then only can it function in mitotic division and thus propagate and increase its life.

Materialism and naturalism cannot give an adequate account of the origin of life. But Christianity can. If you ask how and why, we reply: God is revealed in the Bible as “the *living* God”. Hence He could create life. Thus the scientific law of *biogenesis*, or life only from previous life, is upheld by the Christian World View. There seems to be no other thinkable and adequate way of explaining the origin of the primeval germ-plasm. And the

God who could create one living cell could just as easily create all the diversified germ-plasms of all the species of plants and animals, so that, as the Bible teaches, each type would reproduce "after its kind".

We must now move up into the sphere of higher qualitative values. We refer to the realm of personality. There are myriads of persons in the world. How can we find an adequate cause for their existence? What is a person? A person is a being who can say "I", and knows what he means by the pronoun. In other words, he is a self-conscious being—one who has self-hood; one might say Ihood. Of course, he must have a nature—that is, a *noumenon*—in which the power of self-consciousness subsists. A properly constituted person as we know him must also be endowed with the power of cognizing other objects and persons as well as himself; he must also have feeling, or emotion, and will, or the self-determining faculty.

Whence came the first sentient and self-conscious human personality? We maintain with all our might and main that naturalism cannot account for the origin of such a being—a being so highly endowed. That would be getting something out of nothing; getting an entity of a higher quality out of a lower, which is absurd. Again we insist on our basic apophthegm, *Ex nihilo nihil fit*.

Surely the unconscious could not evolve into the conscious by means of resident forces (which are not there), nor the non-personal into the personal, nor the non-sentient into the sentient, nor the non-moral into the moral, nor the non-spiritual into the spiritual. Reason ever seeks for an ultimate cause that is adequate.

Believe it or not, the Biblical account of man's origin is satisfyingly adequate, and we can think of no other attempted account that *is* adequate. According to Biblical teaching, God is the infinite and ultimate self-conscious Personality. Therefore it is reasonable to believe that He could and would and did create finite personalities in His own image. He has self-consciousness; therefore He could create a being with the same endowment. He knows objective existences; *ergo*, He could create a person having the same faculty. He has emotion and volition; therefore He could create a being with the same powers in a finite degree. He is a moral person; therefore He could create a finite person with conscience or the sense of right

and wrong. He is a spiritual personality ; therefore He could create a finite person with the spiritual capacity.

Moreover, to pursue our argument still further, we find that man is a dual being, possessed of mind and body. These two parts of his being are most intimately conjoined and integrated, so that there is constant interaction between them. Turn to Genesis ii. 7, and read : “ And the Lord God fashioned (moulded ; Hebrew, *yatsar*) man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives, and man became a living soul ” (*nephesh*, being). Here we see how the two parts of man’s personality, the psychical and the physical, were united : by the divine inbreathing of the mind, created in the divine image, into the corporeal entity moulded from the finest material of the soil.

Whatever men may think of this Biblical doctrine and interpretation, they must admit that in this way man and his composite nature are adequately accounted for. How otherwise can we give the *raison d’être* of his being what he is ? Naturalism and humanism are here weighed in the balance, and found wanting their attempt to explicate the origin of *genus homo*.

IV

Next, there is the difficult and mooted sin-problem. According to any view, it has its difficulties. But the most reasonable explanation of the origin of sin is that given in the Bible. It relieves us of the fatal difficulty of making God the author of sin. God created moral agents, it is true, but He did not cause them to sin. It must have been better for God to create a moral economy than to make a universe of mere mechanisms. The latter view would not assign a sufficient reason for creating a universe. To create ethical, spiritual and rational personalities with whom God could have loving fellowship, who would freely and gladly do His will, and upon whom He could lavish His affection and bestow upon them joy and blessing for ever and ever—these considerations, it would surely seem, would make it worth while for Him to create this vast and marvellous universe to be the arena of mankind’s holy, joyful and immortal activities.

But a real moral agent must be free. If he had no power of choice, he might be happy, but he would be a mere automaton,

a robot, and so his happiness would be of a very inferior quality. Well, then, sin originated in the wrong choice of free moral agents. How else could sin have originated and be sin in the sense of guilt? This, we believe, is the most reasonable explanation of the entrance of sin into the world. Will somebody state how else sin could have originated?

But according to Christian teaching, God did not leave man in his miserable state when he fell into sin and brought misery upon himself. No; in His first interview with our progenitors after their fall into sin, He proclaimed to them the protevangelium, saying, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Then all through the Old Testament dispensation there is recorded the divine-human preparation for redemption, until at length, in the fulness of time, in the New Testament dispensation, God sent forth His Son into the world, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them that are under the law, and give them the adoption of sons. Could anything be better than that? Can human wisdom devise, or conceive of, anything that is equal to it? It would seem that the whole world of mankind should break into hallelujahs and hosannas of gratitude and praise because God has revealed such a wonderful and satisfying *rationale* of the universe.

But there are further reasons for accepting the Biblical World View. Man is innately a religious being. If there is nothing but material substance, how could man evolve religion, which is a spiritual quality? Almost all people believe in God, or gods, or at least in supernatural beings who bear an important relation to them. How can materialism and pantheism account for this universal phenomenon? But Christian theism can very readily account for man's religiousness, seeing it teaches that man was created in the divine similitude.

There is one more outstanding phenomenon which the Christian World View alone can effectively explain, but which natural theism, valuable as its arguments may be in some respects, cannot account for. I refer to the fact of redemption and the experience that pertains thereto. An adequate philosophy must give a sufficient and rational explanation of all phenomena, especially those of an outstanding character. Well, millions of people in the history of the world have had the experience of redemption and salvation, and—mark this!—the experience has always come through faith in Jesus Christ. And this experience

has not only produced a change of intellectual attitude, but has ever transfigured life and character ; and, moreover, the change has always been salutary both ethically and spiritually. It has put the impact of truth and certitude upon the consciousness of those who have thus come to Christ in repentance and faith. Think of all the "twice-born" men and women in the history of the world. Remember Paul, Justin Martyr, Augustine, Luther, Knox, Latimer, Chalmers, Spurgeon, Philips Brooks, Jerry MacAuley, and many, many others.

The only adequate explanation of these experiences of truth and redemption is that the Christian system is true. If it is true, we have assigned a sufficient cause for the blessed experience ; if it is not true, there is no rational explanation. It is absurd to believe that materialism or pantheism could effect an ethical and spiritual change of heart and mind, and accompany it with the assurance of truth. Here in the Bible is the altogether sufficient explication : " If ye abide in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Or this : " If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." Or this : " The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

V

There is still something more, and perhaps it is the best of all. The Christian World View sets forth a sufficient purpose for the creation and existence of human personalities, and satisfies the desire of the human soul for an immortal destiny of a worth-while character for the human race and the universe. An immortality of bliss in the vast, illimitable cosmos, redeemed and glorified, in fellowship with God, and angels and archangels, and " the spirits of just men made perfect "—what an alluring prospect ! Yes, " our light affliction, which is but for the moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory " ; for " godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come ". According to the Christian system of truth and salvation, " there shall be new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness ". Then God's people shall no longer " see through a glass darkly, but face to face ". They shall have the vision beatific and beautiful.

Let the poet close our meditation on the Christian World
View :

A wonderful way is the King's Highway ;
It runs through the nightland up to the day ;
From the wonderful *was*, by the wonderful *is*,
To the still more wonderful *is to be*—
Runs the King's Highway.

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